LETTER

Grouped Scan Slice Repetition Method for Reducing Test Data Volume and Test Application Time

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SUMMARY This paper presents a grouped scan slice encoding technique using scan slice repetition to simultaneously reduce test data volume and test application time. Using this method, many scan slices that would be incompatible with the conventional selective scan slice method can be encoded as compatible scan slices. Experiments were performed with ISCAS’89 and ITC’99 benchmark circuits, and results show the effectiveness of the proposed method.

key words: design for testability (DfT), scan testing, test data compression

1. Introduction

In modern semiconductor manufacturing testing, the increase in test data volume is a major contributor to high test costs. A large test data volume requires not only a long test application time but also automatic test equipment (ATE) with greater memory capability. Moreover, test data volume continues to increase as the design complexity grows. Integration of embedded cores in system-on-chip (SoC) applications also increases the test data volume. Multiple scan chains may reduce the test application time, but the limited number of ATE channels cannot support a high enough pin count for internal scan chains.

A test data compression technique may prove to be a promising solution to this problem. Test data compression methodologies use a specific test data encoding scheme to compress huge test data volumes. The original test data is decompressed by an on-chip decoding logic. The reduced test data volume can be loaded to the ATE memory at a time, and the many internal scan chains are also applied with small ATE channels. Many compression techniques have been developed to reduce test data volume and test application time [1]–[3]. These methods utilize the fact that test patterns tend to contain many unspecified bits. Recent research shows that only a few specified bits are included in the test cubes [4]. In [1], a constrained automatic test pattern generation (ATPG) method was proposed to enhance the Illinois scan architecture. However, this ATPG requires very complex procedures and increases the number of test patterns. A decomposition hardware generation scheme for a linear decompression network was developed to share a single input for many scan chains [2]. However, the compression of the linear decompression network is based on the test set. Therefore, redesign of the on-chip decoder is also required if any design modification is required that changes the test set. The selective scan slice encoding method has been proposed to reduce the test data volume and the test application time [3]. However, this method shows good results only when the density of the unspecified bits is very high. In addition, the various decoding modes require a complex on-chip decoder.

In this paper, we propose a test data compression technique based on grouped scan slice repetition. Using this method, both the test data volume and the test application time are dramatically reduced. Moreover, the on-chip decoder, based on a one-hot decoder, does not require any information regarding the design or the test set. Therefore, the proposed test data compression method could be a promising solution for efficient scan-based testing.

2. Proposed Test Data Compression Technique

In proposing our test data compression technique, it is important to define some terms concerning the relationship of scan slices. First, two scan slices are compatible if they can be identical with each other. The unspecified bits can be properly allocated for making compatible scan slices. For example, scan slices XX0 and 01X are compatible if the second X bit of XX0 is assigned as 0 and the remaining Xs are assigned as 0s. Two scan slices are inverse-compatible if each bit of a scan slice is reversed as compared to the other one. For example, scan slices XX0 and 01X are inverse-compatible if the second X bit of XX0 is assigned as 0 and the remaining Xs are assigned as 1s. Two scan slices are incompatible if they are neither compatible nor inverse-compatible. A conflict bit depicts the position of a bit which makes scan slices incompatible. For example, scan slices 01100 and 11000 are incompatible due to the first and third bits of each scan slice; these two bits are conflict bits. Of course, the second, fourth, and fifth bits can be conflict bits from an inverse-compatibility point of view, but the fewer number of conflict bits is preferred for a better compression ratio.

The overall architecture of the proposed method is shown in Fig. 1. This structure is based on the repetition of successive scan slices. When successive scan slices are compatible or inverse-compatible, the latter scan slice can be decoded without detailed data bits. However, this scheme

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is not good enough to make compatible scan slices composed of large scan chains, since the conflict bits may exist at shorter intervals. Therefore, we also propose a scan chain grouping method. Using this method, each scan group shares separate common inputs, leading to the enhancement of encoding efficiency. To implement the conventional selective scan method [3], at least \( n = \lceil \log_2 N \rceil \) input signals are required to compose \( n : N \) decoding logic. Accordingly, we can use these input signals as the group inputs without any pin overhead as compared to the conventional method. Therefore, the number of scan groups is determined as \( n \), and each scan group holds \( \lceil \frac{n}{2} \rceil \) scan chains.

Figure 2 shows the repeater input selector. It controls the \( N \)-bit scan input repeaters with \( N \)-bit \( \text{sel}\_out \) signals. When the successive scan slices are compatible or inverse-compatible, the \( \text{control} \) signal goes logic 0 and the \( \text{select}[k] \) signal is directly delivered to the scan input repeater, which is connected to the \( k \)-th group using the criteria (0 ≤ \( k \) ≤ \( n \)). If \( \text{select}[k] \) is logic 0, the \( k \)-th group is in a compatible mode. If \( \text{select}[k] \) is logic 1, the \( k \)-th group is in an inverse-compatible mode. For an incompatible mode, the \( \text{control} \) signal goes logic 1, and now these scan chains are grouped into \( \lceil \log_2 N \rceil \) scan groups. Hence, the bit width of the scan slice is \( N \), and the control and select codes are encoded as follows. A scan slice \( X1X1X0X \) is \( X1X, X1X, \) and \( 0X \); the first and second groups are inverse-compatible and the third group is compatible with the present repeater state. Therefore, the scan slice is encoded at a time as \( \text{Control}=0 \) and \( \text{select}=110 \). Next, \( X1100X10 \) is also compatible for the first and second groups. They are compatible and inverse-compatible, respectively. However, the third group is incompatible. Therefore, this scan slice cannot be encoded with a single encoding unit. \( \text{Control}=0 \) and \( \text{select}=010 \) make the next state \( 11100000 \). In this state, the conflict bit can be decoded by \( \text{control}=1 \), and now \( \text{select} = 110 \) points out the position of the conflict bit as 110. Consequently, additional encoding data is required to encode the position of the conflict bit. Using these encoding processes, many scan slices that would be incompatible with the conventional selective scan slice encoding method can be encoded as compatible scan slices. In addition, the number of conflict bits in the incompatible scan slices is dramatically reduced due to the grouping method. The detailed grouped scan slice encoding algorithm is shown in Fig. 4. First, a scan chain is segmented into \( N \) scan chains, and then these scan chains are grouped into \( n = \lceil \log_2 N \rceil \) scan groups. Hence, the bit width of the scan slice is \( N \), and the control and select codes are encoded as follows. A scan slice is inserted, and each scan group \( G_x \) is compared with the present values (0 ≤ \( x \) ≤ \( n \)). If \( G_x \) is compatible or inverse-compatible, the \( x \)-th bit of select code is 0 or 1, respectively. In this case, the control code holds logic 0. If there is a conflict bit, the control code is encoded as logic 1, and the select code is encoded as the position of the conflict value. The encoding procedure is completed when every scan slice is encoded under these criteria.
### Table 3: Comparisons of test data volume and test application time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circuits</th>
<th>SC/CH</th>
<th>(T_E) (b)</th>
<th>(\text{Red}_{\text{vol}}) (%)</th>
<th>(\text{TAT}) (cycles)</th>
<th>(\text{Red}_{\text{TAT}}) (%)</th>
<th>Proven method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>s13207</td>
<td>127/9</td>
<td>41,751</td>
<td>61.28</td>
<td>4,808</td>
<td>60.49</td>
<td>64/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s38584</td>
<td>63/8</td>
<td>270,400</td>
<td>69.42</td>
<td>34,420</td>
<td>69.16</td>
<td>128/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b17</td>
<td>1023/12</td>
<td>257,652</td>
<td>71.19</td>
<td>22,150</td>
<td>70.61</td>
<td>128/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b18</td>
<td>2047/13</td>
<td>1,814,813</td>
<td>87.27</td>
<td>144,254</td>
<td>86.92</td>
<td>256/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b19</td>
<td>2047/13</td>
<td>5,871,628</td>
<td>91.66</td>
<td>508,068</td>
<td>90.65</td>
<td>512/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3. Experimental Results

Experiments were performed on the largest ISCAS’89 and ITC’99 benchmark circuits. Each circuit was synthesized using Design Compiler [5] and the test patterns were generated by TetraMax [6]. The main features of the benchmark circuits are presented in Table 2. Each column shows the circuit names, the number of scan cells, the number of test patterns, the size of the test data volume \((T_D)\), and the density of specified bits \((D_2)\). The density of the specified bits in the original test data averaged 4.78%.

Table 3 presents the comparison of the test data volume and the test application time. SC, CH, \(T_E\), and \(\text{TAT}\) represent the number of scan chains, the number of ATE channels, the size of the encoded data, and the test application time, respectively. The CH of [3] and the proposed method is calculated as \(\lceil \log_2(N+1)\rceil + 2\) and \(\lceil \log_2(N)\rceil + 1\), where \(N\) is the number of scan chains. As shown in the table, the proposed method presents a better compression ratio than [3] due to the increase in the number of compatible scan slices and the decrease in the number of conflict bits. The test application time is also less than it is for [3], since it is proportional to the size of the compressed data. Moreover, the number of ATE channels for the proposed method is less than that of [3]. Therefore, more chips can be simultaneously tested when this new compression technique is applied, and grouped scan slice repetition can be used as an effective test data compression technique.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, we have proposed a test data compression technique for reducing test data volume and test application time using scan slice repetition and grouping. This new method dramatically increases the number of compatible scan slices and decreases the number of conflict values. In addition, the on-chip decoder used for the proposed method is determined by the number of scan chains, and no circuit information, such as design and test set data affects the decoder. Therefore, the proposed method shows promise as a solution for efficient scan-based testing.

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References


