



Blind Multiuser Detection in Asynchronous Variable Processing Gain in Spread Spectrum IoT Systems

Farid Samsami Khodadad *¹

¹ Faculty of Engineering Modern Technologies, Amol University of Special Modern Technologies (AUSMT), Amol, Iran.

Article Info

Received 23 May 2025

Accepted 4 August 2025

Available online -----

Keywords:

Asynchronous VPG DS-CDMA;

Secure Internet of things (IoT) Communication;

Autocorrelation-Based Detection;

Low Probability of Detection (LPD);

Physical layer Security.

Abstract:

In the context of rapidly expanding Internet of Things (IoT) deployments, ensuring reliable detection and decoding of low-power, wideband signals from numerous asynchronous devices is a critical challenge. This paper presents a novel blind multiuser detection technique for Variable Processing Gain Direct-Sequence CDMA (VPG-DS/CDMA) tailored to IoT networks. Building on prior fluctuation-based autocorrelation estimators, our method removes all constraints on individual spreading gains and operates effectively in multipath fading channels. By dynamically adjusting each device's spreading length, we demonstrate both an amplified periodic fluctuation signature and a direct relationship between fluctuation peak amplitude and spreading factor, enabling robust user separation even when signals are buried below the noise floor. Theoretical analysis proves reliable detection at extremely low SNR levels, a scenario common in battery-powered IoT sensors. We validate our approach via simulations over realistic IoT channel models and employ the Minimum Description Length (MDL) criterion to accurately estimate the active user count. Our results indicate that this blind multiuser detector can substantially improve network throughput and device scalability in dense IoT environments without prior synchronization or pilot overhead.

© 2025 University of Mazandaran

*Corresponding Author: samsami@ausmt.ac.ir

Supplementary information: Supplementary information for this article is available at <https://frai.journals.umz.ac.ir/>

Please cite this paper as:

1. Introduction

The evolution of communication infrastructures to support the Internet of Things (IoT) has introduced complex demands on signal transmission technologies [1]. These systems must not only be energy-efficient but also capable of functioning in noisy and congested environments, all while maintaining secure data transmission [2]. Among various modulation schemes, Direct Sequence Spread Spectrum (DSSS) has emerged as a viable solution due to its ability to disperse signals over a broad frequency range, inherently reducing susceptibility to interference and enabling data recovery through correlation methods at the receiver side [3].

In multi-device networks, where simultaneous communication is essential, DSSS allows independent transmissions by assigning distinct spreading sequences to each terminal, a principle aligned with Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) techniques [4]. This makes DSSS highly suitable for asynchronous, high-density IoT applications where synchronization cannot be guaranteed [5]. Recent efforts to improve DSSS performance in IoT

settings include innovations in signal processing and detection mechanisms [6]. For instance, novel filtering methods utilizing time-domain transformations have shown promise in enhancing signal clarity and suppressing interference [7]. Likewise, artificial intelligence models, especially those based on neural networks, have been integrated into receivers to boost detection accuracy under harsh signal-to-noise conditions [9]. Security has also become a critical concern. Modifications to the statistical properties of DSSS signals, such as altering their spectral distribution, have proven effective in minimizing the probability of unauthorized interception or disruption [10]. Such adaptations are essential for IoT networks operating in contested or covert environments [11]. As wireless systems continue to scale, the need to support heterogeneous data rates and variable quality-of-service requirements grows [12]. CDMA systems can accommodate these needs using two primary methods: variable spreading factor schemes, where processing gain changes according to user data rate, and multi-code transmission, where high-rate data is partitioned into parallel lower-rate streams [13]. However, in scenarios where prior knowledge of system parameters is



© 2025 by the authors. Licensee FRAI, Babolsar, Mazandaran. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en>)

unavailable, such as blind detection in military or surveillance settings, these strategies face significant limitations [14]. A key challenge in such environments is the identification of the spreading code length, which plays a pivotal role in signal detection and synchronization [15, 16, 17]. This research proposes a blind multiuser detection framework designed specifically for asynchronous VPG DS-CDMA systems, eliminating the need for prior knowledge of processing gain or user count. The method is tailored to operate under multipath propagation and extremely low signal-to-noise ratios, conditions typical in dense IoT deployments.

This paper is organized as follows: Section II introduces the mathematical foundations and system architecture. Section III outlines the proposed blind detection algorithm. Section IV presents simulation results under various transmission scenarios, and Section V concludes with a summary of contributions and potential avenues for future exploration.

2. Method

2.1. Mathematical System Model

We consider a multiuser transmission model where each user operates within an asynchronous direct sequence CDMA system, employing a distinct processing gain. Let user i transmit a binary information sequence $\{b_i(j)\}$, where j indexes the bit position. This sequence is spread using a pseudo-random code $\{c_i(k)\}$ of length L_i , specific to the user's data rate.

The discrete-time baseband representation of the transmitted signal at the chip rate is formulated as:

$$x_i(k) = \sum_j b_i(j) \cdot c_i(k - jL_i) \quad (1)$$

This model captures the spreading operation by associating each bit with a sequence of L_i chips. The transmitted waveform is constructed by modulating the data over these chip sequences. As the signal propagates through a multipath channel, its structure is distorted by time-varying impulse responses. Let $h_i(k)$ denote the baseband-equivalent channel impulse response for user i . The signal received at the destination is composed of the aggregate of these transmitted signals convolved with their respective channels, plus additive white Gaussian noise $n(k)$. Thus, the received discrete-time signal becomes:

$$r(k) = \sum_{i=1}^N x_i(k) * h_i(k) + n(k) \quad (2)$$

The convolution in (2) accounts for the multipath propagation effects specific to each user's channel.

For analysis and detection purposes, it is often useful to define the effective impulse response as the combination of the spreading code and the channel impulse response. This effective channel, which captures both code modulation and channel distortion, is given by:

$$h_i^{eff}(k) = c_i(k) * h_i(k) \quad (3)$$

This representation allows the received signal to be interpreted as a superposition of symbol sequences passed through effective linear systems, where detection can be approached via correlation, estimation, or blind techniques, depending on available information.

3. Novel Detection Approach

The proposed blind detection algorithm is designed to estimate the code length in asynchronous DS-CDMA systems with variable processing gains, even in the presence of noise and multipath propagation. It operates by adaptively selecting a data window and analyzing periodic fluctuations in the second-order statistics of the received signal.

The algorithm consists of two main components:

1. **Adaptive Window Selection** – to enhance the visibility of autocorrelation peaks related to the spreading sequence;

2. **Threshold Evaluation** – to discriminate between significant peaks and background noise.

The following steps summarize the complete procedure:

1. **Set a detection threshold (TL)** to differentiate between meaningful signal components and noise-induced fluctuations.

2. **Initialize a counter (TC)** to track the frequency of occurrence of potential code lengths across analysis windows.

3. **Construct a two-dimensional data structure** to store peak distances and support temporal averaging across multiple windows.

4. **Select a test range (TR)** for candidate code lengths. Adjust TR to ensure multiple peaks appear in each window; larger TR values correspond to detecting longer spreading sequences.

5. **Compute the difference between detected peaks** in each window and store these values in a matrix D , which quantifies the spacing between successive fluctuation peaks.

$$D = \{d_{i,j}\} \text{ where } d_{i,j} = \text{distance between peaks } i \text{ and } j \quad (6)$$

6. **Assign likelihood values** to a matrix P , where each element $P_{i,j}$ reflects the probability that a specific code length corresponds to a real user. This is based on both the amplitude of detected peaks and their frequency of occurrence:

$$p_{i,j} = f(d_{i,j}, A_{i,j}, R_{i,j}) \quad (7)$$

Where $A_{i,j}$ is the amplitude of the j -th peak and $R_{i,j}$ represents its repetition count across windows.

7. **Aggregate the results** across multiple windows. The candidate code length with the highest cumulative probability in matrix P is selected as the estimated spreading factor.

4. Results

This section evaluates the effectiveness of the proposed code length estimation algorithm through numerical simulations under realistic operating conditions, including additive noise and multipath effects.

In the first experiment, we simulate a scenario with three active users, each assigned an m-sequence with a distinct length: 31, 63, and 127. These values correspond to different processing gains. The system operates with a chip rate of $F_c = 1.5\text{MHz}$ and a sampling frequency of $F_s = 10\text{MHz}$. The signal-to-noise ratio is set to $\text{SNR} = -5\text{dB}$, and the number of users is fixed at $K = 3$. The simulation focuses on the uplink direction, where all users transmit asynchronously.

Figure 1 illustrates the correct detection of the pseudo-noise (PN) period in this 3-rate system, even under low SNR conditions.

Figure 2 presents the selection of the first adaptive analysis window when channel fading is introduced. The results show that the algorithm identifies the most probable spreading lengths with high accuracy. This is confirmed by the structure of the P and R matrices computed during detection:

$$P = \{p_{i,j}\}, R = \{r_{i,j}\} \quad (9)$$

Where P contains the probability scores for each candidate code length, and R counts how often each value is detected across all windows.

In the **second experiment**, the simulation is extended to more complex systems. Here, spreading sequences are randomly generated (non-m-sequences) to mimic less structured real-world transmissions. A multipath channel is modeled using a finite impulse response filter. The MDL criterion is first used to estimate the number of active users. Once K is determined, the algorithm applies fluctuation-based detection to estimate the code lengths.

Figures 3 through 5 present the outcome of these tests under two scenarios: one with five users (5-rate) and another with eight users (8-rate), each employing a distinct random spreading code. These figures demonstrate that the detection process remains effective despite the use of non-ideal codes and variable user counts.

Lastly, Figure 6 plots the probability of accurate PN period detection versus SNR for multiple system configurations. It is evident that as the number of users and the rate diversity increase, the detection performance declines, particularly under poor signal conditions. However, the use of adaptive window sizes enables the algorithm to maintain satisfactory performance by enhancing the observability of periodic peaks.

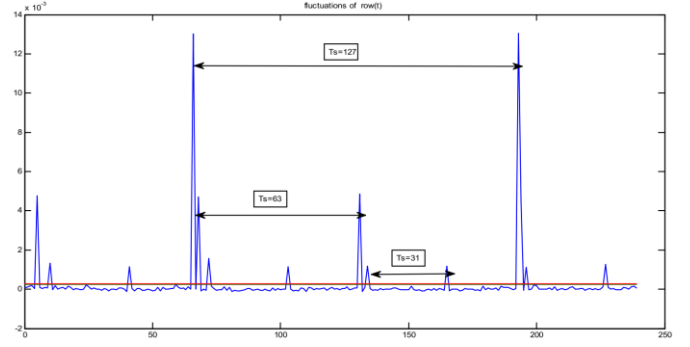


Figure 1. Estimation of PN period in 3-rate system under AWGN for SNR= -8dB.

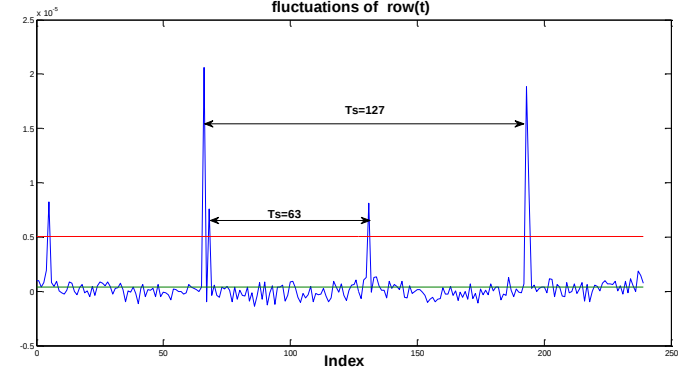


Figure 2. Initial adaptive window selection for PN detection in fading channel.

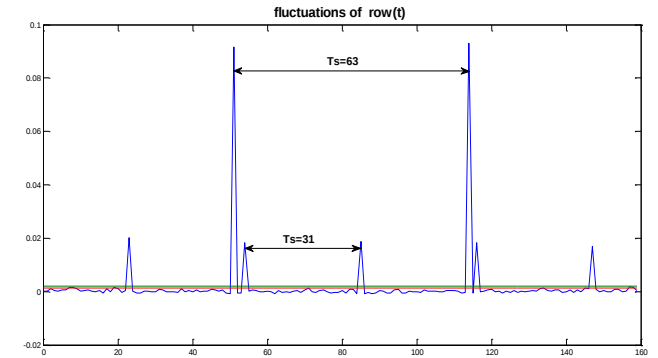


Figure 3. Secondary window adjustment in multipath fading.

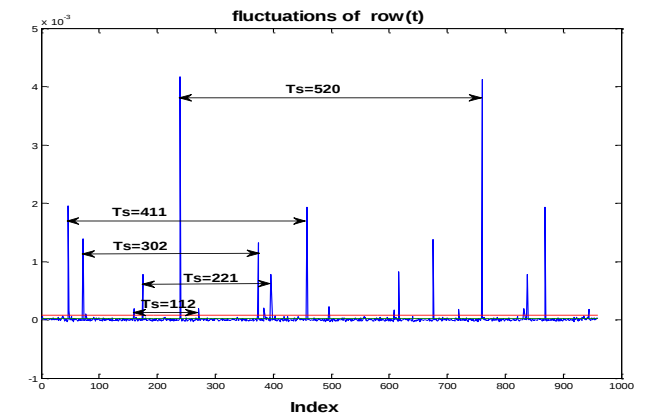


Figure 4. Detection of PN period in 5-rate system at SNR=-5dB.

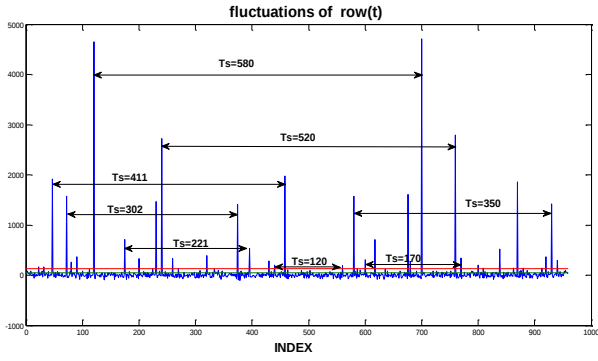


Figure 5. Detection in 8- rate system under same SNR.

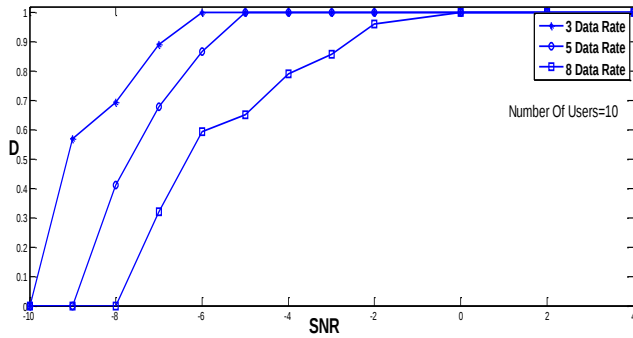


Figure 6. Detection probability vs. SNR for systems with different rates.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, a novel approach for estimating the pseudo-noise (PN) period in asynchronous VPG DS-CDMA systems under multipath channel conditions was presented. The proposed method leverages fluctuations in signal amplitudes and sequence lengths to construct a correlation matrix from data arranged within a single analysis window. Unlike previous studies, the adaptive selection of window length and number provides flexibility and enhanced performance under varying processing gain scenarios. This makes the technique particularly suitable for dynamic and heterogeneous environments such as the Internet of Things (IoT), where multiuser wideband signals are prevalent. The improved adaptability and robustness of the method offer a promising solution for efficient signal detection in future IoT-based communication systems.

6. Acknowledgement

To improve the language and enhance clarity, writing software, such as Grammarly, was employed in the process of manuscript preparation.

References

[1] Y. Zhang and H. Xu, "A Novel Recognition Method for Direct Sequence Spread Spectrum (DSSS) Signals Based on Secondary Power Spectrum," *Adv. Compute. Signals Syst.*, vol. 7, pp. 80–86, 2023.

[2] L. Wang, J. Zhang, and M. Wang, "A time-reversal based uplink multi-user DSSS system for IoT applications," *Phys. Commun.*, vol. 59, p. 102622, Mar. 2024.

[3] Z. Wei and Y. Xu, "DSSS Signal Detection Based on CNN," *Sensors*, vol. 23, no. 15, p. 6691, 2023.

[4] M. Li and J. Chen, "Gaussian-Distributed Spread-Spectrum for Covert Communications," *Sensors*, vol. 23, no. 8, p. 4081, 2023.

[5] Farid Samsami Khodadad, Shakiba Janalizadeh, An expert algorithm for spectrum sensing and signal detection in NOMA-enabled 5G networks, *Expert Systems with Applications*, Volume 214, 2023.

[6] M. Forouzes, F. Samsami Khodadad, P. Azmi, A. Kuhestani and H. Ahmadi, "Simultaneous Secure and Covert Transmissions Against Two Attacks Under Practical Assumptions," in *IEEE Internet of Things Journal*, vol. 10, no. 12, pp. 10160-10171, 15 June 15, 2023.

[7] Nzea CN, Gautier R, Burel G. "Blind synchronization and sequences identification in CDMA transmissions". *MILCOM*; November 2004. p. 1384–90

[8] Nzea CN, Gautier R, Burel G. Parallel "blind multiuser synchronization and sequences estimation in multirate CDMA transmissions.", *IEEE-ACSSC*; November 2006. p. 2157–61.

[9] Nzea CN, Gautier R, Burel G. "Blind multiuser identification in multirate CDMA transmissions: a new approach" *IEEE Conference on Signals, Systems and Computers*; October–November 2006. p. 2162–66

[10] G. Burel, C. Boudier, "Blind estimation of the pseudo-random sequence of a direct sequence spread spectrum signal", *Proc. of Military Communications Conference (MILCOM)*, October 2000.

[11] C. Boudier, S. Azou, G. "Burel, "Performance analysis of a spreading sequence estimator for spread spectrum transmissions", *J. Franklin inst.* vol. 341, no. 7, October 2004, pp. 595–614.

[12] C. N. Nsiala, R. Gautier, G. Burel "Parallel blind multiuser synchronization and sequence estimation in multirate CDMA transmission", *Proc. 40th Asilomar Conference on Signals, Systems and Computers*, Pacific Grove, 2006

[13] M.K. Tsatsanis, G.B. Giannakis, "Blind estimation of direct sequence spread spectrum signals in multipath", *IEEE Trans. Signal Process.* vol. 45, no. 5, May 1997, pp. 1241–1252.

[14] K. K Chawla and D. V. Sarwate, "Parallel acquisition of PN sequences in DS-SS Systems", *IEEE Trans. Commun.*, vol. 42, pp. 2155–2163, May 1994.

[15] K. K Chawla and D. V. Sarwate, "Acquisition of PN sequence in chip synchronous DS-SS systems using a random sequence model and the SPRT", *IEEE Trans. Commun.*, vol. 42, pp. 2325–2333, June 1994.

[16] L. Guolin, H. Min, Z. Ying, "PN code recognition and parameter estimation of PN-BPSK signal based on synchronous demodulation", *Proc. 8th International*

Conference on Electronic Measurement and Instruments
(ICEMI), 2007.

- [17] T. Zhang, X.lin and Z. Zhou, "Blind estimation of the PN Sequences in lower SNR DS-SS signals, "IEICE trans, commun vol. E88-B, no7,pp. 3087-3089, July 2005.