 Modeling and Analysis of Gate Line Edge Roughness Effect on CMOS Scaling Towards Deep Nanoscale Gate Length

Seong-Dong Kim, Sungkwoon Hong, Jae-Kwan Park and Jason C. S. Woo

Department of Electrical Engineering, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA
Phone: +1-310-794-1296  Fax: +1-310-206-8495  E-mail: sdkim@ee.ucla.edu

1. Introduction

The gate line edge roughness (LER) of photoresist patterns may be a serious limiting factor in CMOS scaling into the nanometer regime [1][2], because the current state-of-the-art edge roughness of the gate poly lines is of order of several nanometers (>5 nm), leading to significant performance fluctuations in the devices with extremely small dimensions. In this work, we have employed two-dimensional simulation approach and the simplified physical modeling for on- and off-state current variations to understand and analyze the impact of statistical gate line edge roughness on (1) the device parameter fluctuations, (2) the short channel performance associated with minimum gate length, (3) conventional effective channel length extraction methods such as Shift & Ratio method, and (4) the future CMOS technology generation.

2. Modeling and Simulation Approach

In order to evaluate LER effect on the device current behavior, the total gate width (W) is divided into N segments with a certain width (ΔW) indicating the spatial frequency of W/ΔW which is attributed to process conditions. Each segment has a different gate length obeying Gaussian statistics with a specific standard deviation of line edge fluctuation (Fig.1). The mean value of N gate lengths which form a gate poly line of one transistor is adjusted to be equal to the given nominal gate length, Lg. Two-dimensional (2-D) device simulations using MEDICI are performed to obtain the device current characteristics of each segment of which gate lengths are randomly generated using Gaussian distribution. The sum of N current segments yields the current characteristics of one transistor having specified LER. In this modeling approach, the non-uniform current flow effects such as current crowding near the source/drain extension junction due to non-uniform junction edge alignment between neighborhood segments are neglected, so that we can estimate minimum performance fluctuation trends with the assumption of identical standard deviations of the device parameters with real devices.

3. Gate Line Edge Roughness Effect

Device Parameters and Performance Fluctuation

From the Lg-Vth characteristics of 30 devices with different gate line edge distribution with σLg = 5 nm, the LER effect is found to be very severe in deep nano-scale gate length devices (Fig.2). Specifically, LER causes the exponential fluctuation dependence behavior of the subthreshold current due to short channel effect (SCE) induced saturation threshold voltage reduction, resulting in the significant increase of off-leakage current (Ioff). The important device parameters such as threshold voltages, subthreshold swing (S), Ioff and Vth are investigated as a function of process parameters such as σLg, spatial frequency, and minimum gate length. More than 100 mV of high saturation voltage uncertainty (σVth) and ~10 times increased Ioff and its increased variance will be resulted in the 35 nm gate length technology, if the current LER is employed and more severe as devices are narrower (lower special frequency) (Fig. 3-5). The simplified physical expressions are developed and indicate that the key parameters determining Ioff fluctuation are the spatial frequency, the ratio of gate length variation (ΔLg/Lg), and the saturation threshold voltage deviation (ΔVth).

Impact on Channel Length Extraction Method

The conventional channel length extraction methods based on the linear drain current measurement such as Shift & Ratio method are also affected by LER effect. The extracted gate lengths are found to be shorter than the real average gate lengths and much shorter as σLg increases or Lg,min decreases, since the linear drain current (Ig) also decreases in proportion to gate LER due to negative Vth shift (Fig.6). The impact of LER on the extracted effective gate length (Lg,eff) can be analyzed with simple model.

Impact on Nanometer CMOS Scaling

On the basis of this modeling and characterization methodology, we have investigated LER effect on the nano-scale CMOS technology generation using σVth projection of ITRS to provide a guideline for the future process technology improvement. It is suggested that less than 2 ~ 3 nm of LER is required to reduce Ioff and Vth fluctuation for a successful CMOS scaling into deep nano-scale physical gate length regime (Fig.7).
process technology will be highly required to meet ITRS requirement and successful CMOS scaling.

References

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Fig. 1 (a) The schematic diagram for modeling the gate line edge roughness effect using 2-D simulation tool and (b) histogram showing gate length variation in each segment following Gaussian distribution.

Fig. 2 $I_D$ vs. $V_g$ for 35 nm gate length MOSFET with LER $\sigma_{gL} = 5$ nm. 30 devices with different gate line segments were calculated. It is shown that LER effect becomes very severe in 35 nm technology.

Fig. 3 Threshold voltage shift as a function of gate LER $\sigma_{gL}$ for 35 nm devices. $V_{th}$ shift is toward the negative direction and $\Delta V_{th}$ is significantly degraded due to high LER.

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Fig. 4 Off current variation as a function of gate LER $\sigma_{gL}$ for 35 nm devices. The simplified modeling results are included. $I_{off}$ is exponentially increased more than 10 times at $\sigma_{gL} > 5$ nm.

Fig. 5 Standard deviation of threshold voltage as a function of spatial frequency $(W/\Delta W)$ for 35 nm devices. The variance decreases with increasing spatial frequency.

Fig. 6 LER effect on conventional effective gate length extraction method as a function of minimum gate length for 35 nm devices. The extracted electrical gate lengths are found to be shorter than real average gate lengths and much shorter as $\sigma_{gL}$ increases or $L_{gmin}$ decreases due to LER effect.

Fig. 7 Standard deviation of threshold voltage due to LER as a function of CMOS technology generation predicted by this work. To meet projection of ITRS roadmap, much more accelerated progress in lithography and gate line formation process must be challenged for reducing LER.

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