Multiple Access Techniques for Wireless Communications

Multiple access schemes are used to allow many mobile users to share simultaneously a finite amount of radio spectrum. The sharing of spectrum is required to achieve high capacity by simultaneously allocating the available bandwidth (or the available amount of channels) to multiple users. For high quality communications, this must be done without severe degradation in the performance of the system.

9.1 Introduction

In wireless communications systems, it is often desirable to allow the subscriber to send simultaneously information to the base station while receiving information from the base station. For example, in conventional telephone systems, it is possible to talk and listen simultaneously, and this effect, called *duplexing*, is generally required in wireless telephone systems.

Duplexing may be done using frequency or time domain techniques. *Frequency division duplexing* (FDD) provides two distinct bands of frequencies for every user. The *forward band* provides traffic from the base station to the mobile, and the *reverse band* provides traffic from the mobile to the base station. In FDD, any *duplex channel* actually consists of two simplex channels (a forward and reverse), and a device called a *duplexer* is used inside each subscriber unit and base station to allow simultaneous bidirectional radio transmission and reception for both the subscriber unit and the base station on the duplex channel pair. The frequency separation between each forward and reverse channel is constant throughout the system, regardless of the particular channel being used.

Time division duplexing (TDD) uses time instead of frequency to provide both a forward and reverse link. In TDD, multiple users share a single radio channel by taking turns in the time domain. Individual users are allowed to access the channel in assigned *time slots*, and each
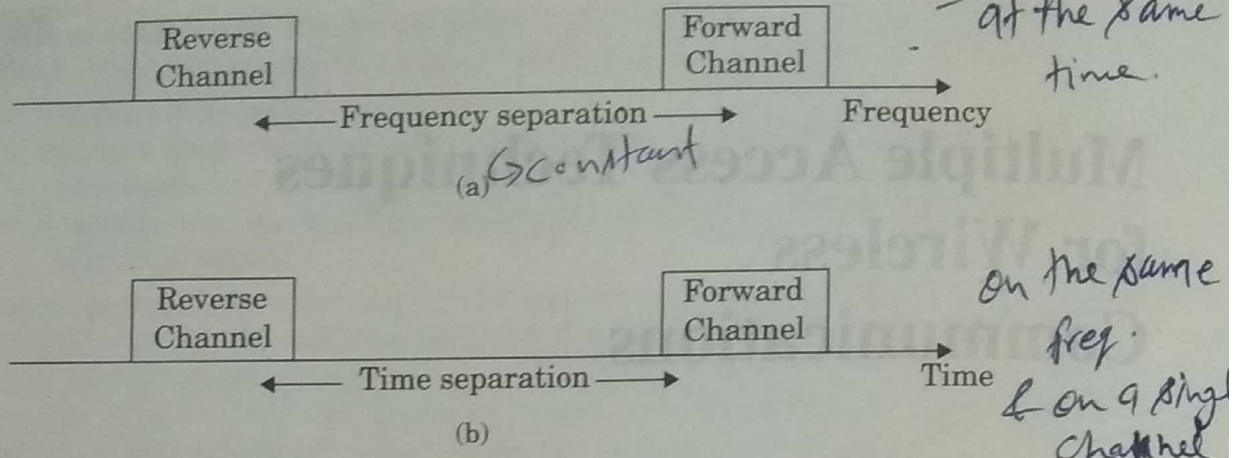
[handwritten margin notes: — 2 simplex; — Duplexer; — at the same time; on the same freq. & on a single channel]

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┌─────────────┐                    ┌─────────────┐
│   Reverse   │                    │   Forward   │
│   Channel   │                    │   Channel   │
└─────────────┘                    └─────────────┘
        ←──── Frequency separation ────→    Frequency
                    (a)
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[handwritten: Constant]

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┌─────────────┐                    ┌─────────────┐
│   Reverse   │                    │   Forward   │
│   Channel   │                    │   Channel   │
└─────────────┘                    └─────────────┘
        ←──── Time separation ────→       Time
                    (b)
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Figure 9.1 (a) FDD provides two simplex channels at the same time; (b) TDD provides two simplex time slots on the same frequency.

duplex channel has both a forward time slot and a reverse time slot to facilitate bidirectional communication. If the time separation between the forward and reverse time slot is small, then the transmission and reception of data appears simultaneous to the users at both the subscriber unit and on the base station side. Figure 9.1 illustrates FDD and TDD techniques. TDD allows communication on a single channel (as opposed to requiring two separate simplex or dedicated channels) and simplifies the subscriber equipment since a duplexer is not required.

There are several tradeoffs between FDD and TDD approaches. FDD is geared toward radio communications systems that allocate individual radio frequencies for each user. Because each transceiver simultaneously transmits and receives radio signals which can vary by more than 100 dB, the frequency allocation used for the forward and reverse channels must be carefully coordinated within its own system and with out-of-band users that occupy spectrum between these two bands. Furthermore, the frequency separation must be coordinated to permit the use of inexpensive RF and oscillator technology. TDD enables each transceiver to operate as either a transmitter or receiver on the same frequency, and eliminates the need for separate forward and reverse frequency bands. However, there is a time latency created by TDD due to the fact that communications is not full duplex in the truest sense, and this latency creates inherent sensitivities to propagation delays of individual users. Because of the rigid timing required for time slotting, TDD generally is limited to cordless phone or short range portable access. TDD is effective for fixed wireless access when all users are stationary so that propagation delays do not vary in time among the users.

9.1.1 Introduction to Multiple Access

Frequency division multiple access (FDMA), *time division multiple access* (TDMA), and *code division multiple access* (CDMA) are the three major access techniques used to share the available bandwidth in a wireless communication system. These techniques can be grouped as *narrowband* and *wideband* systems, depending upon how the available bandwidth is allocated to the users. The duplexing technique of a multiple access system is usually described along with the particular multiple access scheme, as shown in the examples that follow.

coherence bandwidth → sepration in freq. after which 2 signals will experience uncorrelated fading.

Narrowband Systems — The term *narrowband* is used to relate the bandwidth of a single channel to the expected coherence bandwidth of the channel. In a narrowband multiple access system, the available radio spectrum is divided into a large number of narrowband channels. The channels are usually operated using FDD. To minimize interference between forward and reverse links on each channel, the frequency separation is made as great as possible within the frequency spectrum, while still allowing inexpensive duplexers and a common transceiver antenna to be used in each subscriber unit. In narrowband FDMA, a user is assigned a particular channel which is not shared by other users in the vicinity, and if FDD is used (that is, each duplex channel has a forward and reverse simplex channel), then the system is called FDMA/FDD. Narrowband TDMA, on the other hand, allows users to share the same radio channel but allocates a unique time slot to each user in a cyclical fashion on the channel, thus separating a small number of users in time on a single channel. For narrowband TDMA systems, there generally are a large number of radio channels allocated using either FDD or TDD, and each channel is shared using TDMA. Such systems are called TDMA/FDD or TDMA/TDD access systems.

Wideband systems — In wideband systems, the transmission bandwidth of a single channel is much larger than the coherence bandwidth of the channel. Thus, multipath fading does not greatly vary the received signal power within a wideband channel, and frequency selective fades occur in only a small fraction of the signal bandwidth at any instance of time. In wideband multiple access systems a large number of transmitters are allowed to transmit on the same channel. TDMA allocates time slots to the many transmitters on the same channel and allows only one transmitter to access the channel at any instant of time, whereas spread spectrum CDMA allows all of the transmitters to access the channel at the same time. TDMA and CDMA systems may use either FDD or TDD multiplexing techniques.

In addition to FDMA, TDMA, and CDMA, two other multiple access schemes will soon be used for wireless communications. These are *packet radio* (PR) and *space division multiple access* (SDMA). In this chapter, the above mentioned multiple access techniques, their performance, and their capacity in digital wireless systems are discussed. Table 9.1 shows the different multiple access techniques being used in various wireless communications systems.

9.2 Frequency Division Multiple Access (FDMA)

Frequency division multiple access (FDMA) assigns individual channels to individual users. It can be seen from Figure 9.2 that each user is allocated a unique frequency band or channel. These channels are assigned on demand to users who request service. During the period of the call, no other user can share the same channel. In FDD systems, the users are assigned a channel as a pair of frequencies; one frequency is used for the forward channel, while the other frequency is used for the reverse channel. The features of FDMA are as follows:

- The FDMA channel carries only one phone circuit at a time.
- If an FDMA channel is not in use, then it sits idle and cannot be used by other users to increase or share capacity. It is essentially a wasted resource.

Table 9.1 Multiple Access Techniques Used in Different Wireless
Communication Systems

Cellular System	Multiple Access Technique
Advanced Mobile Phone System (AMPS)	FDMA/FDD
Global System for Mobile (GSM)	TDMA/FDD
US Digital Cellular (USDC)	TDMA/FDD
Pacific Digital Cellular (PDC)	TDMA/FDD
CT2 (Cordless Telephone)	FDMA/TDD
Digital European Cordless Telephone (DECT)	FDMA/TDD
US Narrowband Spread Spectrum (IS-95)	CDMA/FDD
W-CDMA (3GPP)	CDMA/FDD CDMA/TDD
cdma2000 (3GPP2)	CDMA/FDD CDMA/TDD
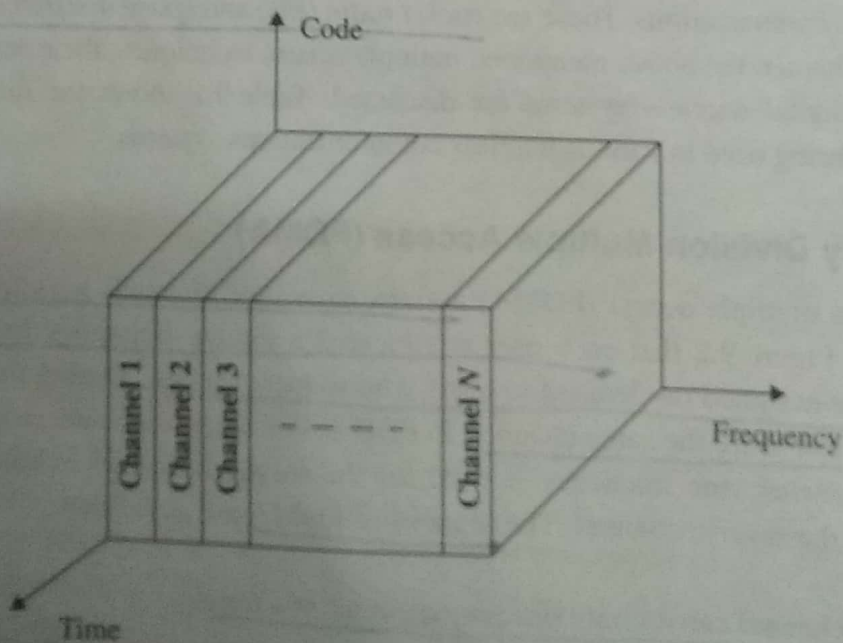
Figure 9.2 FDMA where different channels are assigned different frequency bands.

- After the assignment of a voice channel, the base station and the mobile transmit simulta-neously and continuously.
- The bandwidths of FDMA channels are relatively narrow (30 kHz in AMPS) as each chan-nel supports only one circuit per carrier. That is, FDMA is usually implemented in narrow-band systems.
- The symbol time of a narrowband signal is large as compared to the average delay spread. This implies that the amount of intersymbol interference is low and, thus, little or no equalization is required in FDMA narrowband systems.
- The complexity of FDMA mobile systems is lower when compared to TDMA systems, though this is changing as digital signal processing methods improve for TDMA.
- Since FDMA is a continuous transmission scheme, fewer bits are needed for overhead purposes (such as synchronization and framing bits) as compared to TDMA.
- FDMA systems have higher cell site system costs as compared to TDMA systems, because of the single channel per carrier design, and the need to use costly bandpass filters to eliminate spurious radiation at the base station.
- The FDMA mobile unit uses duplexers since both the transmitter and receiver operate at the same time. This results in an increase in the cost of FDMA subscriber units and base stations.
- FDMA requires tight RF filtering to minimize adjacent channel interference.

Nonlinear Effects in FDMA — In a FDMA system, many channels share the same antenna at the base station. The power amplifiers or the power combiners, when operated at or near satura-tion for maximum power efficiency, are nonlinear. The nonlinearities cause signal spreading in the frequency domain and generate *intermodulation* (IM) frequencies. IM is undesired RF radiation which can interfere with other channels in the FDMA systems. Spreading of the spectrum results in adjacent-channel interference. Intermodulation is the generation of undesirable harmonics. Harmonics generated outside the mobile radio band cause interference to adjacent services, while those present inside the band cause interference to other users in the wireless system [Yac93].
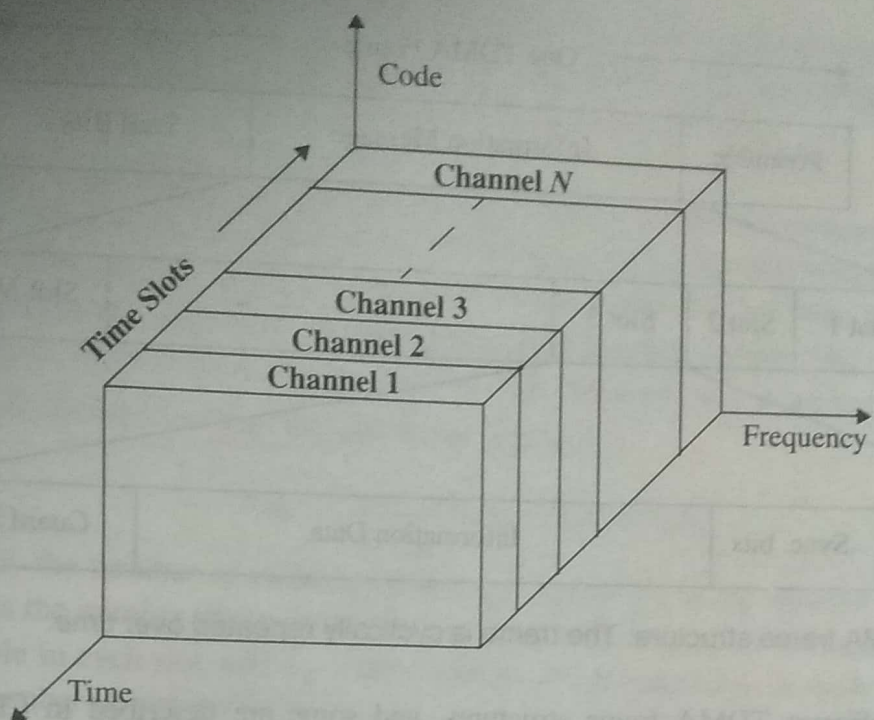
Figure 9.3 TDMA scheme where each channel occupies a cyclically repeating time slot.

9.3 Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA)

Data transmission in Bursts not in Continuous nature

Time division multiple access (TDMA) systems divide the radio spectrum into time slots, and in each slot only one user is allowed to either transmit or receive. It can be seen from Figure 9.3 that each user occupies a cyclically repeating time slot, so a channel may be thought of as a particular time slot that reoccurs every frame, where N time slots comprise a frame. TDMA systems transmit data in a *buffer-and-burst* method, thus the transmission for any user is noncontinuous. This implies that, unlike in FDMA systems which accommodate analog FM, digital data and digital modulation must be used with TDMA. The transmission from various users is interlaced into a repeating frame structure as shown in Figure 9.4. It can be seen that a frame consists of a number of slots. Each frame is made up of a preamble, an information message, and tail bits. In TDMA/ TDD, half of the time slots in the frame information message would be used for the forward link channels and half would be used for reverse link channels. In TDMA/FDD systems, an identical or similar frame structure would be used solely for either forward or reverse transmission, but the carrier frequencies would be different for the forward and reverse links. In general, TDMA/FDD systems intentionally induce several time slots of delay between the forward and reverse time slots for a particular user, so that duplexers are not required in the subscriber unit.

half T.S.

In a TDMA frame, the preamble contains the address and synchronization information that both the base station and the subscribers use to identify each other. Guard times are utilized to allow synchronization of the receivers between different slots and frames. Different TDMA wireless
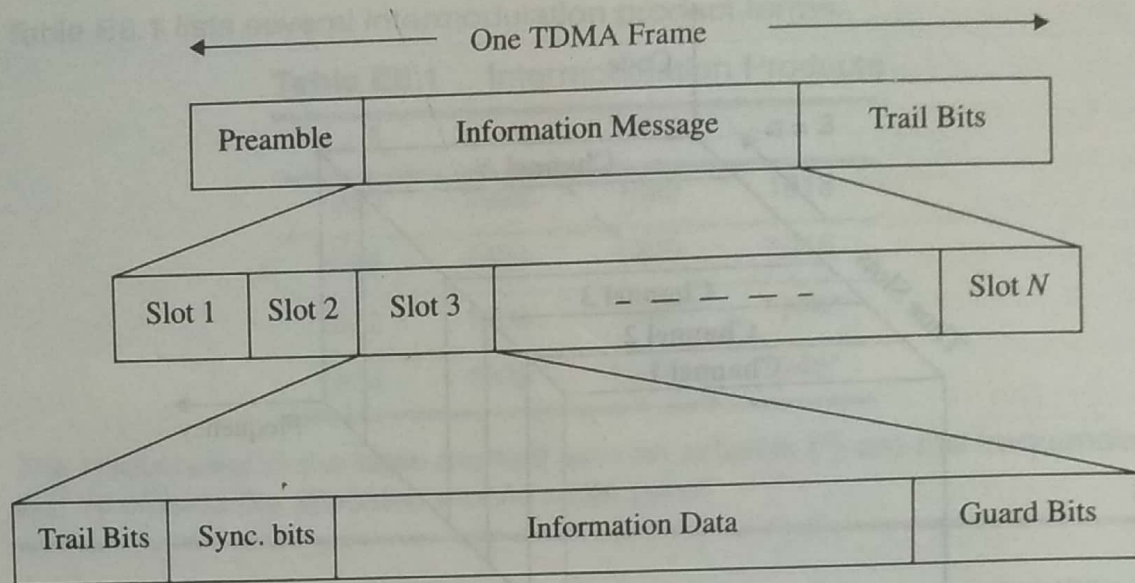
Figure 9.4   TDMA frame structure. The frame is cyclically repeated over time.

standards have different TDMA frame structures, and some are described in Chapter 11. The features of TDMA include the following:

- TDMA shares a single carrier frequency with several users, where each user makes use of nonoverlapping time slots. The number of time slots per frame depends on several factors, such as modulation technique, available bandwidth, etc.

- Data transmission for users of a TDMA system is not continuous, but occurs in bursts. This results in low battery consumption, since the subscriber transmitter can be turned off when not in use (which is most of the time).

- Because of discontinuous transmissions in TDMA, the handoff process is much simpler for a subscriber unit, since it is able to listen for other base stations during idle time slots. An enhanced link control, such as that provided by *mobile assisted handoff* (MAHO) can be carried out by a subscriber by listening on an idle slot in the TDMA frame.

- TDMA uses different time slots for transmission and reception, thus duplexers are not required. Even if FDD is used, a switch rather than a duplexer inside the subscriber unit is all that is required to switch between transmitter and receiver using TDMA.

- Adaptive equalization is usually necessary in TDMA systems, since the transmission rates are generally very high as compared to FDMA channels.

- In TDMA, the guard time should be minimized. If the transmitted signal at the edges of a time slot are suppressed sharply in order to shorten the guard time, the transmitted spectrum will expand and cause interference to adjacent channels.

- High synchronization overhead is required in TDMA systems because of burst transmissions. TDMA transmissions are slotted, and this requires the receivers to be synchronized for each data burst. In addition, guard slots are necessary to separate users, and this results in the TDMA systems having larger overheads as compared to FDMA.
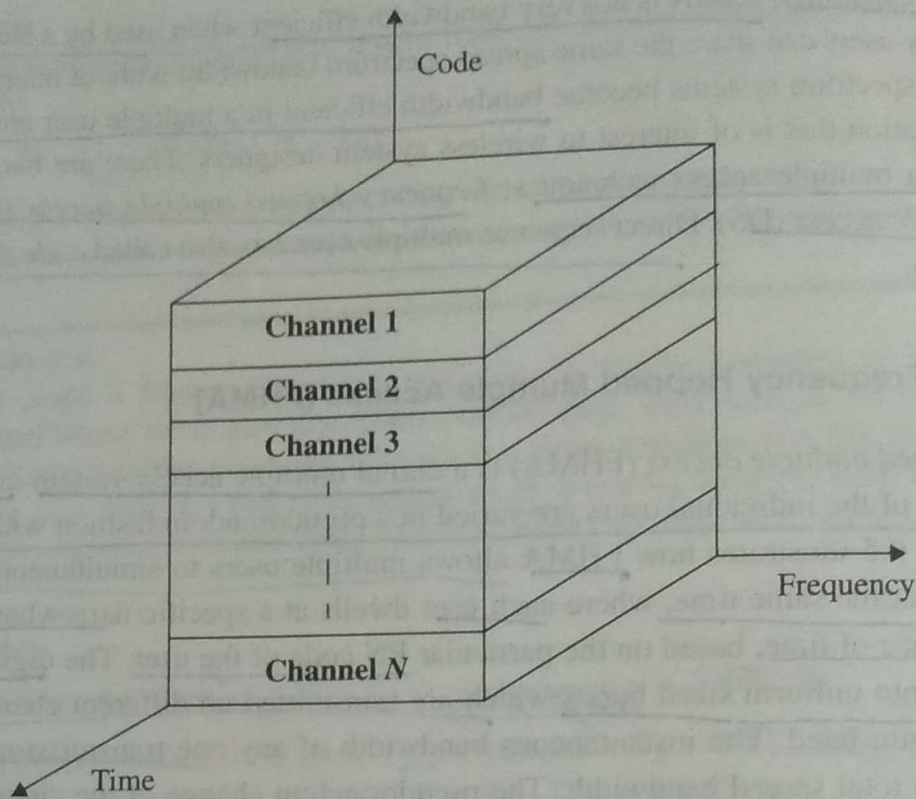
Figure 9.5 Spread spectrum multiple access in which each channel is assigned a unique PN code which is orthogonal or approximately orthogonal to PN codes used by other users.

9.4.2 Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA)

In *code division multiple access* (CDMA) systems, the narrowband message signal is multiplied by a very large bandwidth signal called the *spreading signal*. The spreading signal is a pseudo-noise code sequence that has a chip rate which is orders of magnitudes greater than the data rate of the message. All users in a CDMA system, as seen from Figure 9.5, use the same carrier frequency and may transmit simultaneously. Each user has its own pseudorandom codeword which is approximately orthogonal to all other codewords. The receiver performs a time correlation operation to detect only the specific desired codeword. All other codewords appear as noise due to decorrelation. For detection of the message signal, the receiver needs to know the codeword used by the transmitter. Each user operates independently with no knowledge of the other users.

In CDMA, the power of multiple users at a receiver determines the noise floor after decorrelation. If the power of each user within a cell is not controlled such that they do not appear equal at the base station receiver, then the *near–far problem* occurs.

The near–far problem occurs when many mobile users share the same channel. In general, the strongest received mobile signal will *capture* the demodulator at a base station. In CDMA, stronger received signal levels raise the noise floor at the base station demodulators for the weaker signals, thereby decreasing the probability that weaker signals will be received. To combat the near–far problem, *power control* is used in most CDMA implementations. Power control is pro-→

vided by each base station in a cellular system and assures that each mobile within the base station coverage area provides the same signal level to the base station receiver. This solves the problem of a nearby subscriber overpowering the base station receiver and drowning out the signals of far away subscribers. Power control is implemented at the base station by rapidly sampling the radio signal strength indicator (RSSI) levels of each mobile and then sending a power change command over the forward radio link. Despite the use of power control within each cell, out-of-cell mobiles provide interference which is not under the control of the receiving base station. The features of CDMA including the following:

- Many users of a CDMA system share the same frequency. Either TDD or FDD may be used.
- Unlike TDMA or FDMA, CDMA has a soft capacity limit. Increasing the number of users in a CDMA system raises the noise floor in a linear manner. Thus, there is no absolute limit on the number of users in CDMA. Rather, the system performance gradually degrades for all users as the number of users is increased, and improves as the number of users is decreased.
- Multipath fading may be substantially reduced because the signal is spread over a large spectrum. If the spread spectrum bandwidth is greater than the coherence bandwidth of the channel, the inherent frequency diversity will mitigate the effects of small-scale fading.
- Channel data rates are very high in CDMA systems. Consequently, the symbol (chip) duration is very short and usually much less than the channel delay spread. Since PN sequences have low autocorrelation, multipath which is delayed by more than a chip will appear as noise. A RAKE receiver can be used to improve reception by collecting time delayed versions of the required signal.
- Since CDMA uses co-channel cells, it can use macroscopic spatial diversity to provide soft handoff. Soft handoff is performed by the MSC, which can simultaneously monitor a particular user from two or more base stations. The MSC may chose the best version of the signal at any time without switching frequencies.
- Self-jamming is a problem in CDMA system. Self-jamming arises from the fact that the spreading sequences of different users are not exactly orthogonal, hence in the despreading of a particular PN code, non-zero contributions to the receiver decision statistic for a desired user arise from the transmissions of other users in the system.
- The near–far problem occurs at a CDMA receiver if an undesired user has a high detected power as compared to the desired user.