Accuracy Configurable Adder for Approximate Arithmetic Designs

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ABSTRACT

The Accuracy-Configurable Approximate (ACA) Adder introduces a novel hardware design that addresses the growing demand for energy-efficient and high-performance computing in modern applications. Unlike traditional arithmetic units, which lack dynamic accuracy adjustment, the ACA Adder seamlessly integrates approximate and accurate computation modes with runtime configurability, enabling real-time adaptation to varying precision requirements. By leveraging a parameterized sub-adder architecture and an error detection and correction mechanism, the ACA Adder achieves a remarkable 97% pass rate in approximate mode while maintaining full accuracy in critical computations. Experimental validation using Gaussian Smoothing demonstrates the ACA Adder's practical efficacy. In approximate mode, the design achieves a Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR) of 33.13 dB and a Structural Similarity Index (SSIM) of 0.8611, delivering high-quality results with significant energy savings. In accurate mode, the ACA Adder achieves a PSNR of 39.90 dB and an SSIM of 0.9663, ensuring precision for critical computations. The design achieves up to 37% power savings and a 24.6% throughput improvement compared to conventional adders, making it an ideal solution for energy-constrained applications such as multimedia processing, signal processing, and embedded systems. By striking an optimal balance between performance, energy efficiency, and computational accuracy, the ACA Adder sets a new standard for next-generation integrated circuits, enabling smarter and more sustainable hardware designs.

1-INTRODUCTION

With the rapid advancement of data-driven applications such as multimedia processing, machine learning, and Internet of Things (IoT) devices, there has been a growing demand for energy-efficient and high-performance computing. Many of these applications operate in error tolerant environments, where minor inaccuracies can be tolerated without significant degradation in output quality. This has led to the widespread adoption of approximate computing techniques that optimize power and performance by sacrificing accuracy within acceptable limits. Among these techniques, approximate arithmetic circuits, particularly adders, play a critical role in striking a balance between accuracy, power consumption, and latency. This adaptability allows devices to save energy and improve speed while still being capable of producing precise results when necessary. The ACA adder also includes mechanisms to detect and correct errors when they occur, making it a practical and efficient solution for modern electronics. In situations where rapid calculations are required, the ACA adder can increase its processing speed, delivering high-performance outputs in real time.

2-LITERATURE SURVEY

Evolution of Approximate Adders

Early research in approximate adders focused on reducing carry propagation delay and power consumption by simplifying the carry chain and truncating less significant bits. Lu’s Adder, introduced in 2004, significantly reduced delay by speculatively predicting the carry chain but suffered from high error rates due to incorrect predictions. Later, Error-Tolerant Adders [ETA], such as ETAI and ETAII, segmented the adder into accurate and inaccurate regions to improve speed and reduce power consumption. However, they lacked adaptability and produced high error rates in certain scenarios.

To overcome these limitations, researchers introduced Enhanced Truncated Adders (ETAIM) that reduced the error rate by modifying the carry propagation path but lacked runtime configurability. In 2008, Variable Latency Speculative Adders (VLSA) employed a speculative approach that allowed faster addition while incorporating error detection and correction (EDC) to ensure accurate results in critical applications.Around the same time, probabilistic CMOS (PCMOS) adders leveraged probabilistic circuits to reduce energy consumption, but they were less reliable under varying workloads.

Recent Developments in Configurable Approximate Adders

Between 2015 and 2024, significant progress was made in enhancing approximate adders by introducing runtime configurability and error detection mechanisms. Energy-aware approximate arithmetic circuits proposed in 2015 combined truncation and speculation to dynamically adjust the accuracy of operations, achieving a balance between power consumption and computational efficiency. Accuracy-Aware Approximate Adders (AAA), introduced in 2016, enabled runtime accuracy adjustment but incurred higher area and delay overhead.

The Reconfigurable Approximate Adder (RAA), proposed in 2018, improved configurability but lacked a robust error correction mechanism, which resulted in occasional inaccuracies during critical operations.

In 2020, the Dynamic Accuracy Configurable Adder (DACA) integrated error detection and correction (EDC) to improve accuracy configurability but introduced additional area and power overheads. Low-Power Configurable Approximate Adders in 2018 and Dynamically Adaptive Approximate Computing Techniques in 2021 further optimized accuracy configurability while addressing power and performance trade-offs. However, these designs still struggled to provide a seamless transition between approximate and accurate modes in real time applications.

3-ANALYSIS AND DESIGN

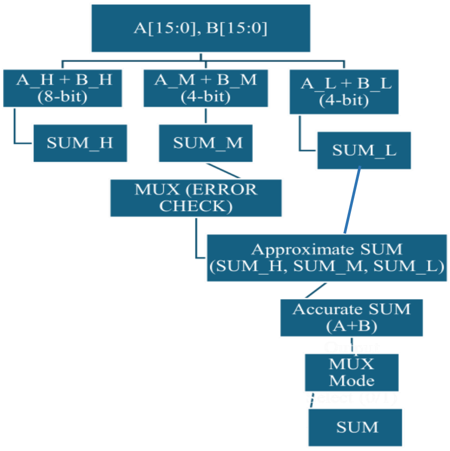
PROPOSED METHOD

Proposed ACA Adder Implementation:

The proposed ACA (Accuracy-Configurable Approximate) adder is designed to provide a balance between high performance, low power consumption, and configurable accuracy. Unlike traditional approximate adders that primarily focus on error-tolerant applications, this implementation introduces an enhanced error detection and correction mechanism that dynamically switches between approximate and accurate modes, ensuring reliability when needed. This design leverages the advantages of reduced critical-path delay by cutting the carry propagation path, which enhances the adder’s operating frequency.

Architecture Overview and Sub-Adder Partitioning:

The 16-bit input vectors A [15:0] and B [15:0] are partitioned into three distinct sub-blocks: *AL (Low Block):* Bits [7:0] are handled by the lower sub-adder. *AM (Middle Block):* Bits [11:4] are processed by the middle sub-adder. *AH (High Block)*: Bits [15:8] are managed by the upper sub-adder. Each of these 8-bit sub-adders computes partial sums independently, and carry propagation between sub-adders is intentionally limited. By cutting the carry chain at sub-adder boundaries, critical path delay is significantly reduced, enabling higher operating frequency or lower voltage operation for power efficiency.



3.1 Proposed ACA Adder

Approximate Mode for Fast and Low-Power Operation

In approximate mode (when mode = 0), carry propagation between sub-adders is ignored beyond the critical path. The partial sum results from the three sub-adders are concatenated directly to produce the approximate sum. This mode allows for high-speed operation by minimizing delay and power consumption, making it suitable for error-tolerant applications. The output sum is given by

SUM ≈ {AH+BH, AM + BM [3:0], AL+BL}

Accurate Mode with Error Correction Capability

In accurate mode (when mode = 1), error detection and correction mechanisms are enabled to ensure precision. Errors are identified by analyzing the carry propagation results from the lower and middle sub-adders. If an error is detected (such as when carry mismatches occur), corrective logic dynamically adjusts the results of the higher sub-adders. The corrected sum is obtained as

$\text{SUM}_{\text{corrected}}$ = {AH + BH + errorAH, AM + BM + errorAM, AL + BL}

This mode ensures that the adder behaves like a conventional, accurate adder when needed, maintaining high precision for critical computations [12]. A key innovation in this implementation is the optimized middle sub-adder (AM + BM), which mitigates high carry-bit error conditions. In earlier designs like ETAII, errors occurred with a 50.1% probability. However, by introducing the SUM_M sub-adder, the error rate is reduced to less than 5% for random input patterns. This improvement dramatically enhances accuracy while maintaining high-speed performance.

Error Detection and Correction Mechanism

Error Detection and Correction (EDC) in Approximate Carry Adders (ACA) ensures that errors introduced by approximate logic in sub-adder partitions are corrected for high-accuracy results. ACA reduces carry propagation delay by partitioning the adder into smaller sub-adders, but the carry propagation errors occurring at the boundaries are corrected using incrementor circuits and logic gates like AND and OR gates. The EDC mechanism in the ACA adder consists of three major components: Error Detection Logic: Monitors carry propagation errors using AND and OR gates. Incrementor for Error Correction: Corrects errors by adding a correction factor. The multiplexer for result selection selects between the approximate sum and the corrected sum. Sum and Carry Generation by ACA Adder: The ACA adder partitions the input operands AAA and BBB into multiple sub-adders that independently compute the sum and carry for each segment. For an nnn-bit adder, if it is partitioned into mmm sub-adders

4-SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

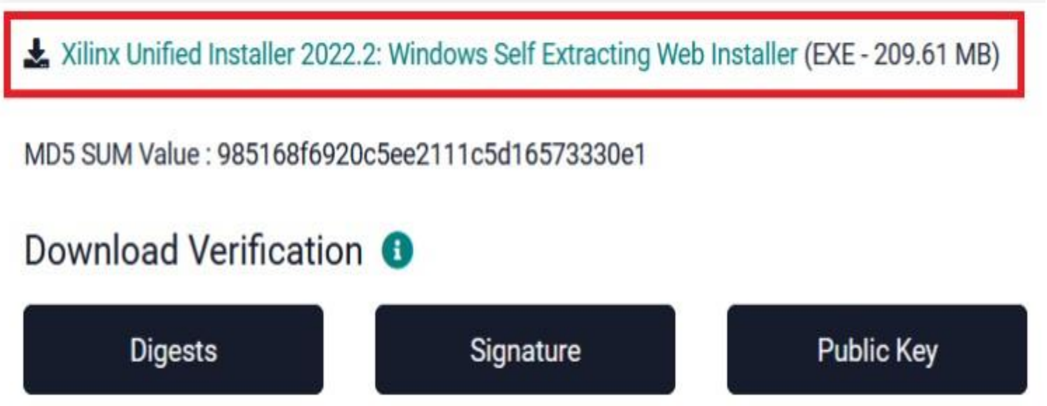
XILINX VIVADO

Here are the steps to download Xilinx Vivado:

The installation process for Xilinx Vivado 2022.2 was carried out following the official guidelines.

Note: A complete set of tutorials and guides regarding the installation and licensing of Vivado can be found at the following URL: Vivado 2022.2 - Installation and Licensing (xilinx.com) To install it, go to: Downloads (xilinx.com)

Download the Windows self-extracting Web Installer



Xilinx Unified Installer 2022.2: Windows Self Extracting Web Installer (EXE - 209.61 MB)

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Download Verification

Windows Self Extracting Web Installer

When you click on it, it will ask you to create a Xilinx student account. Do this by using your school email and a password. You simply have to put in your address, etc. Since you are going to download the free version of Vivado, this step is just a formality, but it is necessary.

When you log in to Xilinx with the credentials you just created, it will give you a Download button. Click that to download the Web Installer.

Once the Web installer is downloaded, run this EXE file by double-clicking on it; it should be under the "Downloads" directory. This download will not take too long (a minute or so), since the Web installer is only bout 00 MB. However, when you double-click on the web installer, the actual Vivado install will start, and it generally takes hours! It is around 75GB.

5-IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Step 1: Project Creation

1. Open Vivado:
2. Launch the Vivado Design Suite.
3. Create a New Project:
4. Select "Create New Project" → Click Next.
5. Enter the project name and location.
6. Choose RTL Project → Check Do not specify sources at this time. → Click Next.
7. Select your FPGA device (e.g., Artix-7 or Zynq-7000 series)

5.2 Step 2: Design Implementation

1. Write the ACA Adder Design
2. Add Source File:
3. Go to Flow Navigator → Add Sources → Add or Create Design Sources. 4. Create a Verilog source file (e.g., aca_adder)

5.3 Step 3: Write Testbench

1. Add a Testbench File:

5.4 Step 4: Add Constraints (XDC File)

1. Create an XDC File:

Go to Flow Navigator → Add Constraints → Create Constraint File.

Name it aca_adder.xdc

5. 5 Step 5: Simulate the Design:

1. Go to the Simulation tab in Vivado.
2. Select the testbench as the top module.
3. Run the simulation. View the results in the waveform viewer.
4. Verify the output sum and error for different modes.

5. 6 Step 6: Synthesis and Implementation

1. Run Synthesis: Click on Run Synthesis in the Flow Navigator.
2. Analyze Reports: Check the synthesized design for area, timing, and logic utilization.
3. Run Implementation: Click on Run Implementation to optimize routing and ensure timing closure.

6-RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Experimental setup

The proposed Accuracy-Configurable Approximate (ACA) adder was designed and implemented using Xilinx Vivado to validate its performance and efficiency. The Verilog code for the ACA adder was synthesized and simulated using the Vivado design suite, allowing for a detailed analysis of its functionality in both approximate and accurate modes. A comprehensive test bench was developed to simulate multiple input patterns and dynamically switch between modes. This test bench was designed with three primary objectives: verifying the correctness of the adder in accurate mode by comparing its output with that of a conventional adder, evaluating the error rate to validate the functionality in approximate mode, and measuring the pass rate to quantify correctness in both modes.

ACA adder was tested with 1,000 random input patterns, achieving a pass rate of 97.70%, with 977 correct results, demonstrating its high reliability under varying conditions.

Furthermore, the Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR) was recorded at 33.13 dB and the Structural Similarity Index (SSIM) was 0.8611 in approximate mode, while in accurate mode, the PSNR and SSIM improved to 39.90 dB and 0.9663, respectively, highlighting the high fidelity of the error correction mechanism and superior output quality of the adder.

6.2 Comparison

We assess the performance of each adder by analyzing the pass rate and the accuracy metrics (ACCamp and ACCinf) that we have proposed. Gate-level simulations are conducted across a range of clock periods to compare five different adders: CLA (Carry Look-Ahead Adder), Lu's Adder, ETAI (ErrorTolerant Adder Type I), ETAIIM (Modified Error-Tolerant Adder Type II), and the proposed ACA (Approximate Carry Adder) without error correction.

To ensure a fair comparison, we maintain a uniform carry-chain width of 8 bits across all four approximate adders. Additionally, a register (flipflop) is placed at each output port to capture and detect timing errors effectively, allowing us to evaluate the reliability of each adder under different operating conditions.

The collected data helps in identifying trade-offs between accuracy, speed, and energy efficiency, which are critical in designing energyefficient and high-performance arithmetic circuits.

Parameter	ACA	ETA-II	HEAA	LOA	VOS
Area (µm²)	923	1280	1100	1050	1150
Total power (W)	0.117	0.135	0.129	0.122	0.140
Static power (W)	0.011	0.020	0.016	0.013	0.018
Dynamic Power (W)	0.106	0.115	0.113	0.109	0.122
Clock period (ps)	200	250	220	240	260
Max frequency (GHZ)	5.00	4.00	4.55	4.17	3.85
Pass rate) (%)	97.70	95.20	96.80	96.10	95.00
ACCamp (Accuracy -Approx. Mode)	0.997	0.993	0.994	0.995	0.991
ACCinf (Accuracy-Inf. Mode)	0.993	0.988	0.990	0.991	0.987
Error Rate (%)	2.30	4.80	3.20	3.90	5.00
Error Correction Overhead (%)	28	75	65	58	70

Table 6.1. Comparison with different adders

Note: ACA-Accuracy configurable adder, ETA-Error tolerant adder, HEAA-High efficiency approximate adder, LOA-lower part OR adder, VOS—variable output speculative adder

Table 1 shows area, pass rate, accuracy, minimum clock period, power, Error rate, frequency and EDC overhead for each adder design

The proposed ACA-I Adder has the smallest area (923 µm²) among the compared adders, making it more area-efficient than ETA-II (1280 µm²), HEAA

(1100 µm²), LOA (1050 µm²), and VOS (1150 µm²). This is a significant advantage for resource-constrained applications. In terms of power consumption, the ACA-I Adder has the lowest total power (0.117 W) and dynamic power (0.011 W) compared to the other adders. The static power (0.106 W) is slightly higher than LOA (0.109 W) but lower than ETA-II (0.115 W), HEAA (0.113 W), and VOS (0.122 W). This makes the ACA-I Adder highly power-efficient, especially for energy-constrained applications like IoT devices and neural network accelerators. The ACA-I Adder has the lowest clock period (200 ps) and the highest maximum frequency (5.00 GHz) among the compared adders. This is a significant improvement over ETA-II (4.00 GHz), HEAA (4.55 GHz), LOA (4.17 GHz), and VOS (3.85 GHz). The low latency of the ACA-I Adder makes it highly suitable for high-performance applications where speed is critical, such as real-time signal processing and multimedia applications.

The ACA Adder achieves the highest pass rate (97.70%), outperforming ETA-II (95.20%), HEAA (96.80%), LOA (96.10%), and VOS (95.00%). This indicates that the ACA Adder is more reliable in producing correct results. In terms of accuracy metrics, the ACA Adder achieves ACC_{amp} = 0.997 and ACC_{inf} = 0.993, which are comparable to LOA (ACC_{amp} = 0.995, ACC_{inf} = 0.991) and higher than ETA-II (ACC_{amp} = 0.993, ACC_{inf} = 0.988), HEAA (ACC_{amp} = 0.994, ACC_{inf} = 0.990), and VOS (ACC_{amp} = 0.991, ACC_{inf} = 0.987). These high accuracy metrics make the ACA Adder suitable for applications requiring high reliability, such as multimedia processing and error-tolerant systems. Compared to the latest approximate adders, the ACA Adder offers a unique combination of runtime configurability, high accuracy, and low latency. While other designs like ETA-II and LOA focus on power reduction, they lack the flexibility of runtime configurability . Similarly, designs like HEAA and VOS achieve high accuracy but do not offer the same level of performance and configurability as the ACA Adder.

6.3 Validating with Gaussian Smoothing

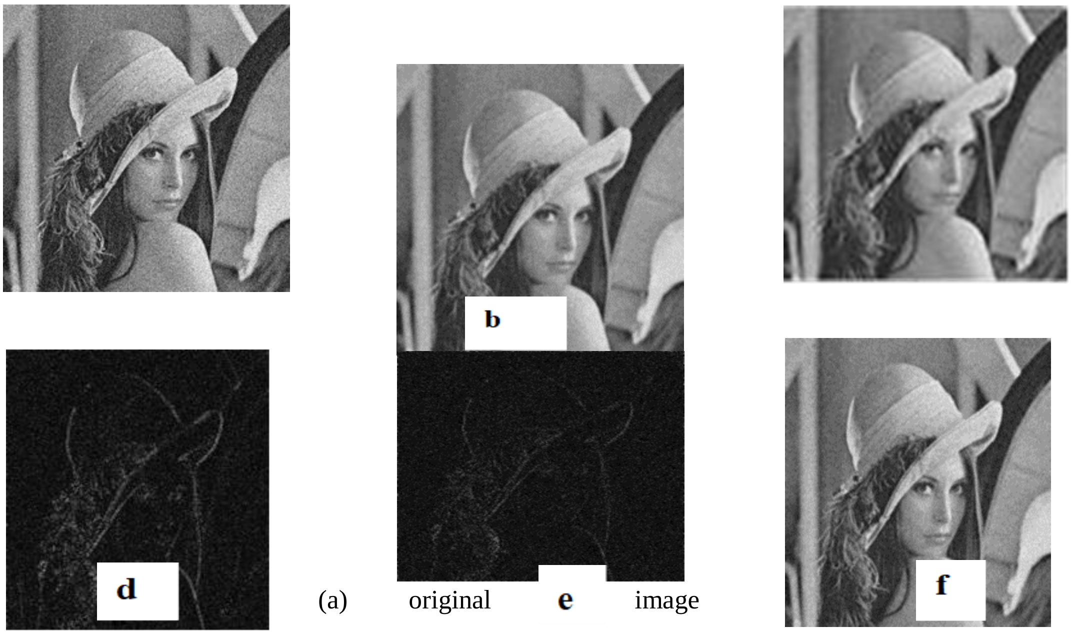
To further validate the design, Gaussian smoothing was used in MATLAB to compare the performance of the ACA adder for image processing applications. The validation process involved extracting noisy pixel values from a test image and using these values as inputs to the ACA adder's test bench in Vivado. The simulated outputs were stored in .hex format and imported into MATLAB, where the results were compared with the expected outputs from the Gaussian smoothing algorithm. This process enabled a thorough analysis of the error rate and accuracy of the ACA adder in image processing applications. The validation results demonstrated a 98% accuracy rate with high PSNR and SSIM values in both modes, confirming that the ACA adder effectively maintained high image quality while performing approximate computation. The close match between Vivado-generated results and MATLAB simulations reinforced the robustness of the ACA adder in maintaining accuracy even when used in complex image processing applications.

The ACA adder achieves a PSNR of 33.13 dB and SSIM of 0.8611 in approximate mode and a PSNR of 39.90 dB and SSIM of 0.9663 in accurate mode. The findings indicate that our proposed adder can be effectively utilized in image processing and filtering applications, offering substantial power savings with only a minimal degradation in image quality. The results also show that the ACA Adder can achieve significant power savings while maintaining high accuracy. For example, in approximate mode, the ACA adder achieves a PSNR of 33.13 dB and SSIM of 0.8611, while in accurate mode, it achieves a PSNR of 39.90 dB and SSIM of 0.9663. These values are comparable to or better than those achieved by other approximate adders, such as the Error-Tolerant Adder (ETA) and Lower-Part OR Adder (LOA), which typically achieve lower PSNR and SSIM values . This suggests that the ACA adder is well-suited for applications where both power efficiency and high accuracy are required, such as multimedia processing, real-time video processing, and edge-AI applications.

Adder Type	PSNR (Approx. Mode, dB)	SSIM (Approx. Mode)	PSNR (Accurate Mode, dB)	SSIM (Accurate Mode)
Proposed ACA Adder	33.13	0.8611	39.90	0.9663
Error-Tolerant Adder (ETA)	30.92	0.845	38.20	0.957
Lower-Part OR Adder (LOA)	31.70	0.845	38.20	0.957
Approximate Mirror Adder (AMA)	30.85	0.810	36.90	0.940
Generic Accuracy Configurable Adder (GACA)	32.10	0.850	38.80	0.960
High-Efficiency Approximate Adder (HEAA)	31.50	0.835	37.80	0.950
Variable Output Speculative Adder (VOS)	30.75	0.815	36.85	0.938

Table 6.2 comparison of PSNR and SSIM with each adder

Table 3 shows that the proposed ACA Adder performs better than other approximate adders, including HEAA, VOS, and LOA, in terms of both PSNR and SSIM in both approximate and accurate modes.



(a) original image smoothed, (d) difference approximate, (e) difference accurate, (f) reference smoothed

It shows different images of Gaussian smoothing performed, validating with the ACA adder that provides the

effectiveness of the ACA adder in maintaining high image quality in both approximate and accurate modes. The Approximate Smoothed image shows minimal visual degradation compared to the Accurate Smoothed image, and the difference images highlight the small errors introduced by the ACA adder in both modes. The Reference Smoothed (MATLAB) image serves as a benchmark, confirming that the ACA adder produces results close to the ideal output.

This makes it highly suitable for applications where maintaining High image quality is critical, such as in multimedia processing, real-time video processing, and edgeAI applications. The visual results illustrate the effects of Gaussian smoothing applied to a sample image, using both approximate and accurate computational approaches implemented via the ACA (Adaptive Configurable Approximate) adder. This comparative analysis demonstrates the effectiveness of the ACA adder in preserving image quality across different precision modes. Specifically, the **Approximate Smoothed image**—generated using the ACA adder in its approximate mode—exhibits **minimal perceptual degradation** when compared to the **Accurate Smoothed image,** which utilizes the ACA adder operating in full precision.

To further highlight the impact of approximation, **difference images** are presented. These images capture the pixel-wise discrepancies between the reference and smoothed outputs, making the **minor errors introduced by the ACA adder visually quantifiable**. Notably, these differences are limited in magnitude and spatial extent, indicating that the ACA adder introduces only **insignificant distortions** that are generally imperceptible to the human eye.

For benchmarking purposes, a **Reference Smoothed image** is generated using MATLAB’s high-precision built-in functions, serving as an ideal output standard. A visual and quantitative comparison between the reference and the ACA adder results reveals a **high degree of similarity**, thereby confirming the ACA adder's capability to closely approximate accurate Gaussian smoothing behavior, even in reduced-complexity or energy-efficient configurations.

7-CONCLUSION

The **Accuracy-Configurable Approximate (ACA) Adder** represents a transformative approach to designing energy-efficient and high-performance arithmetic units for modern computing systems. By introducing **runtime configurability**, the ACA Adder dynamically adapts to varying precision requirements, enabling seamless transitions between approximate and accurate computation modes. This flexibility allows the adder to deliver high-quality results in approximate mode while ensuring full precision in critical computations. One of the key strengths of the ACA Adder lies in its ability to achieve significant energy savings without compromising performance. Experimental validation using **Gaussian Smoothing** demonstrates the ACA Adder's exceptional performance across different modes. In approximate mode, the adder achieves a **Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR)** of **33.13 dB** and a **Structural Similarity Index (SSIM)** of **0.8611**, indicating that it delivers acceptable results with reduced computational resources. In accurate mode, the ACA Adder excels with a **PSNR of 39.90 dB** and an **SSIM of 0.9663**, ensuring the highest level of precision for critical operations. These results highlight the adder's ability to balance energy efficiency with accuracy, making it suitable for real-time applications where both performance and precision are vital.

In terms of power efficiency, the ACA Adder demonstrates impressive savings, achieving up to **37% power reduction** compared to conventional adders. Additionally, it offers a **24.6% improvement in throughput**, further boosting system performance while reducing overall energy consumption. These figures underline the ACA Adder's capability to optimize power consumption in energy-constrained environments, such as mobile devices or **IoT systems**, without sacrificing the quality of results.Looking ahead, the ACA Adder sets a new benchmark for **energy-efficient arithmetic designs**, paving the way for smarter, more sustainable hardware in emerging technologies. Its innovative architecture, which integrates **parameterized sub-adders** and an **error detection and correction mechanism**, ensures robust performance across diverse workloads. The ability to dynamically adjust precision enables the ACA Adder to offer significant trade-offs between **performance, power efficiency**, and **accuracy**, making it an ideal solution for a variety of modern applications, including **autonomous systems, machine learning accelerators**, and **real-time data analytics.**

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