of the measurement discrepancies observed in practice can be explained with a simple connector model. The paper shows that the sensitivity of measuring parameters for that model [1]. This paper examines the implications of that model on the measurements of the reflection coefficient $\Gamma$ of highly reflecting devices ($|\Gamma|=1$). In particular, this paper investigates the repeatability of measurements of $\Gamma$ with changes in the RF connector joint parameters. The changes in $\Gamma$ due to changes in resistance, or reactivity at the connector's center conductor joint, are described. It is shown that the changes in $\Gamma$ can be up to four times greater for highly reflecting devices than for the nonreflecting case ($|\Gamma|=0$). The changes in $\Gamma$ are frequency dependent and are greatest at or near the maximum current (arg($\Gamma$) = 180°) or the current null (arg($\Gamma$) = 0°) frequencies. The basic principles described in this paper should be beneficial to connector designers who need to observe small changes in connectors and in the design of calibration standards, where connector imperfections are a major part of the measurement uncertainty.

II. THEORY

Consider the circuit shown in Fig. 1, composed of a connector with joint scattering parameters $S_{ij}$, a coaxial transmission line of length $l$, and a termination $\Gamma_t$. This connector joint model and methods for determining $S_{ij}$ are described in a paper by Daywitt [1]. The reflection coefficient $\Gamma$ looking into this combination is given by

$$\Gamma = S_{11} + \frac{S_{12} S_{21} \Gamma_t}{1 - S_{22} \Gamma_t} \tag{1}$$

where $\Gamma_t$ is the reflection coefficient looking into the transmission line. The scattering parameters for the connector joint are given in [1] as

$$S_{11} = S_{22} = \frac{r}{2} - \frac{x}{2} - y$$
$$S_{12} = S_{21} = 1 - \frac{r}{2} - \frac{x}{2} + y \tag{2}$$

where $r$ is the normalized joint resistance:

$$r = R / Z_0 \tag{4}$$

$x$ is the normalized joint reactance:

$$x = j \frac{2 \pi f L}{Z_0} \tag{5}$$

and $y$ is the normalized joint admittance:

$$y = j \frac{2 \pi f C Z_0}{Z_0} \tag{6}$$

The joint's length is assumed to be small relative to a wavelength. Substituting (2) and (3) into (1) and eliminating second-order terms in $r, x,$ and $y$ results in

$$\Gamma = \Gamma_t + (1 - \Gamma_t)^2 \frac{r^2}{2} + (1 - \Gamma_t)^2 \frac{x^2}{2} - (1 + \Gamma_t)^2 y \tag{7}$$

Therefore, the change in $\Gamma$ due to changes in $r, x,$ or $y$ is given by

$$\frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial r} = \frac{(1 - \Gamma_t)^2}{2} \tag{8}$$

$$\frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial x} = \frac{(1 - \Gamma_t)^2}{2} \frac{x}{Z_0} \tag{9}$$

and their lack of repeatability. Recent studies at the National Bureau of Standards have been successful in developing an improved connector model and in developing a technique for measuring parameters for that model [1]. This paper examines the implications of that model on the measurements of the reflection coefficient $\Gamma$ of highly reflecting devices ($|\Gamma|=1$). In particular, this paper investigates the repeatability of measurements of $\Gamma$ with changes in the RF connector joint parameters. The changes in $\Gamma$ due to changes in resistance, or reactivity at the connector's center conductor joint, are described. It is shown that the changes in $\Gamma$ can be up to four times greater for highly reflecting devices than for the nonreflecting case ($|\Gamma|=0$). The changes in $\Gamma$ are frequency dependent and are greatest at or near the maximum current (arg($\Gamma$) = 180°) or the current null (arg($\Gamma$) = 0°) frequencies. The basic principles described in this paper should be beneficial to connector designers who need to observe small changes in connectors and in the design of calibration standards, where connector imperfections are a major part of the measurement uncertainty.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It has been recognized for some time that coaxial connectors limit the accuracy of many of the measurements at microwave frequencies. It is difficult to make measurements with today's modern network analyzer and not be acutely aware of connectors

Manuscript received July 24, 1986; revised November 29, 1986.

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IEEE Log Number 8613288.

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and
\[ \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial y} = -(1 + \Gamma)^2 \] (10)
respectively.

First, assume that \( \Gamma \) is an idealized highly reflecting termination with a reflection coefficient of
\[ \Gamma = e^{-j\phi}. \] (11)
At the frequencies where \( k\ell = m\pi, \frac{3}{2}\pi, \frac{5}{2}\pi, \) etc. (current maxima),
\[ \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial r} = \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial x} = 2 \] (12)
while
\[ \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial y} = 0. \] (13)

However, at the current minima, where \( k\ell = 2\pi, 4\pi, \) etc.,
\[ \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial r} = \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial x} = 0 \] (14)
while
\[ \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial y} = -4. \] (15)

Next, consider the case where \( \Gamma \) is an idealized nonreflecting termination with \( \Gamma = 0 \). Now one sees that
\[ \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial r} = \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial x} = \frac{1}{2} \] (16)
and
\[ \frac{\partial \Gamma}{\partial y} = -1. \] (17)

Thus, the sensitivity of \( \Gamma \) to changes in \( r, x, \) and \( y \) can be up to four times greater for the highly reflecting case (at the current maxima or minima) than for the nonreflecting case. This observation can be particularly useful if one is trying to measure or characterize the repeatability of connectors. It can also be useful in some standards measurements where connector repeatability, or lack thereof, is a prime consideration.

Equation (7) can be further simplified for the highly reflecting case [1]. Assume that
\[ \Gamma = e^{-2(a+ j\ell) \ell}, \] (18)
where \( \gamma = a + j\beta \) is the propagation constant of the transmission line shown in Fig. 1, and
\[ \Gamma_l = e^{-j\phi} \] (19)
is the reflection coefficient of the highly reflecting termination. The reflection coefficient \( \Gamma \), neglecting second-order terms in \( \gamma \),

\[ \text{Fig. 1. Circuit model of connector joint, transmission line, and termination.} \]

\[ \text{Fig. 2 Measurements of } |\Gamma_1 - \Gamma_2| \text{ versus frequency for two connections of a 10-cm air transmission line terminated in an open circuit.} \]

\[ \text{Fig. 3 Measurements of } \arg(\Gamma_1) \text{ versus frequency for a 10-cm air transmission line terminated in an open circuit.} \]

III. MEASUREMENTS

Many of the connector repeatability measurements that are observed in actual practice can be explained with the simple model described. For example, consider the following measurements of \( \Gamma \) looking into a 10-cm air-dielectric transmission line which is terminated in an open circuit. The air line is beadless except at the open end, which is supported by a boron-nitride bead. The joint under test is a commercially available, 14-mm precision connector pair. Only one of the center conductors has a "flower" spring center contact. The center conductor on the air line is "flowerless," which is typical of beadless air lines. Fig. 2 shows measurements of \( |\Gamma_1 - \Gamma_2| \) where the device is disconnected and reconnected (random orientation) between the two measurements of \( \Gamma \). If Fig. 2 is compared with Fig. 3, one sees that significantly more change occurs at the high-current (\( \arg(\Gamma) = 180^\circ \)) frequencies than at the low-current (\( \arg(\Gamma) = 0^\circ \)) frequencies. This is also seen in Figs. 4 and 5, which show \( |\Gamma_1 - \Gamma_2| \) and \( \arg(\Gamma_1) - \arg(\Gamma_2) \), respectively. Note that the changes in \( \Gamma \), due to the disconnecting and reconnecting of the device, primarily occur at the current maxima.
From (20), it can be shown that
\[
|\Gamma_1| - |\Gamma_2| = (r_2 - r_1)(1 - \cos(2\beta l - \phi))
\]  
(22)
where \(r_1\) and \(r_2\) are the normalized joint resistances from the first and second connect of the device. At the current maxima,
\[
(r_2 - r_1) = \frac{|\Gamma_1| - |\Gamma_2|}{2}.
\]  
(23)
Similarly, from (21),
\[
\arg(\Gamma_1) - \arg(\Gamma_2) = (|x_2| - |x_1|)\left(1 - \cos(2\beta l - \phi)\right)
\]
\[
+ 2(|x_2| - |x_1|)\left(1 + \cos(2\beta l - \phi)\right)
\]  
(24)
which means that at the current maxima,
\[
(|x_2| - |x_1|) = \frac{\arg(\Gamma_2) - \arg(\Gamma_1)}{2}.
\]  
(25)
Using Fig. 4 and (23), the change in normalized joint resistance between the two connects is estimated to be
\[
(r_2 - r_1) = 0.00003 f_{\text{GHz}}^{1.25}.
\]  
(26)
The phase change shown in Fig. 5 is probably due to a change in the inductance since the changes occur at the current maxima \((2\beta l - \phi) = \pi, 3\pi,\ etc\). The change in normalized reactance between the two connects is estimated, using Fig. 5 and (25), to be
\[
(|x_2| - |x_1|) = 0.000075 f_{\text{GHz}}.
\]  
(27)
The changes shown in Figs. 4 and 5 are typical of what is normally observed for that device. Figs. 6 and 7 show examples of changes that were observed during other connects and reconnects of the device. As can be seen, the changes in \(\Gamma\) primarily occur at the current maxima, with the measurements of \(\Gamma\) fairly repeatable at the current minima.

These measurements are also typical of what is observed on similar devices with 14-mm connectors. For example, Fig. 8 shows measurements of \(|\Gamma_1| - |\Gamma_2|\) for a 4-cm air line terminated in a short circuit (4-cm offset short). Both center conductors in this 14-mm joint contain “flower” spring contacts. There are no dielectric supports in this particular device. The current minima for this device occur at 1.9 and 5.6 GHz, while the current maxima occur at 3.8 and 7.5 GHz. Note that the change is...
The current maxima, which means the changes are in the resistance and inductive components of the connector joint.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author is indebted to W. C. Daywitt for his numerous contributions in the development of this paper. The author would also like to acknowledge the efforts of R. L. Ehret and J. R. Yehle in collecting and preparing the data for this paper. Finally, the author would like to thank C. A. Hoer for his continued support in this effort.

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A Simple Technique for Investigating Defects in Coaxial Connectors

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Abstract—This paper describes a technique that uses swept-frequency automatic network analyzer (ANA) data for investigating electrical defects in coaxial connectors. The technique will be useful to connector and ANA manufacturers and to engineers interested in determining connector characteristics for error analyses. A simplified theory is presented and the technique is illustrated by applying it to perturbations caused by the center conductor gap in a 7-mm connector pair.

Key terms: ANA, coaxial connector, error analysis, stepped-frequency measurements.

I. INTRODUCTION

Most analyses underlying microwave measurement procedures assume ideal connectors at the various measurement ports, although it has been recognized for some time that errors due to this idealization would have to be accounted for sooner or later. With computerization and greater sensitivity and stability, modern systems are now at that point. For example, if a swept-frequency reflection measurement of an open circuit not used in the automatic network analyzer (ANA) calibration is performed, then the measured reflection coefficient magnitude often varies in a strongly oscillatory manner below and above unity magnitude, while the obvious result should be a magnitude that remains below unity and slowly diminishes monotonically with frequency. This type of result has been noted by a number of ANA users.

Studies [1] have shown that the oscillatory phenomenon just described is due to connector loss at the joint in the connector pair where the center conductors from the two connectors comprising the pair meet, and also that the oscillations can be used to determine the magnitude of that loss even in the presence of considerable ANA error.

Recent investigations indicate that reactive defects at the same joint in the connector pair cause phase variations similar to the magnitude oscillations, and that the envelope of these variations can be used to determine the magnitude of the reactance responsible for the variations.

Manuscript received July 28, 1986; revised November 29, 1986.
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IEEE Log Number 8613289.