



(11) **EP 1 830 602 B1**

(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION**

(45) Date of publication and mention
of the grant of the patent:
31.07.2019 Bulletin 2019/31

(51) Int Cl.:
H04R 25/00 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **06405088.3**

(22) Date of filing: **01.03.2006**

(54) **A method of obtaining settings of a hearing instrument, and a hearing instrument**

Methode zur Erwerbung von Einstellungsparameter eines Hörgerätes, und ein Hörgerät

Une méthode d'obtenir des arrangements d'un instrument d'audition, et un instrument d'audition

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR
HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC NL PL PT RO SE SI
SK TR**

(43) Date of publication of application:
05.09.2007 Bulletin 2007/36

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Description

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention is in the field of signal processing in hearing instruments. It more particularly relates to a method for obtaining a real ear acoustic coupling quantity representative of the acoustic coupling of a hearing instrument to the user's ear, to a method for setting a fitting parameter in a digital hearing instrument, and to a hearing instrument.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] For a correct fitting of hearing instruments, the acoustic coupling of the hearing instrument at the ear plays an important role. The acoustic coupling includes the transmission of the electrical signal from the power amplifier through receiver, hook and tubing (in the case of a behind-the-ear hearing instrument), ear mold and ear canal to the eardrum. In practice, this transmission path is not directly specified. Rather, conventionally, for modeling the effective gain provided by a hearing instrument placed in an ear canal, measurements in a so-called "2cc coupler" are used. However, this model system merely provides an influence of an average ear canal on the effective gain provided by a hearing instrument. The accuracy of such a model system is limited. The difference between the signal level in the real ear and the level in the 2cc coupler is often called "Real Ear to Coupler Difference" RECD. For the RECD, generally the fitting software supplies a value, which depends on the hearing instrument style (whether the hearing instrument is a behind-the-ear (BTE), in-the-ear (ITE), in-the-ear-canal (ITC), completely-in-the-canal (CIC) etc. hearing instrument). Thus, the influences of the electro acoustic hearing instrument characteristics (receiver, hook damping) as well as the individual tubing are not thought of. In addition, also user specific individual differences are not considered. Such individual differences may be up to 10-15 dB, due to the different residual ear canal volume and ear drum impedance. For low frequencies, the RECD may be corrected by the so-called vent loss to account for the effect of a vent in the earpiece of the hearing instrument.

[0003] The only way for properly correcting the individual RECD known so far is the application of measurements, which use directly the corresponding hearing instrument for the measurement and rely on the introduction of a probe into the user's ear. However, such measurements, which are sometimes called "RECD direct" measurements, are laborious and require a special probe. Also, the introducing of a probe into the ear may cause artifacts. In summary, the following problems arise

- No consideration of individual anatomical parameters that affect the RECD, such as residual ear canal volume, distance to the ear drum, ear drum impedance, transmission characteristics of the middle ear.
- Unknown leakage of the ear mold.
- Incorrect compensation of the vent loss, since the effective vent size is unknown.
- No consideration of the individual tubing.
- individual RECD differences up to 10-15 dB.
- RECD direct measurements are very time consuming.
- RECD direct measurements use a microphone probe which produces additional leakage.
- Measurements of the Microphone Location Effect (MLE) and the Open Ear Gain (OEG, also called Real Ear Unaided Gain REUG) are very sensitive to room acoustics.

[0004] European patent application publication EP 1 594 344 and international patent application publication WO 00/28784 hearing instruments with an inner microphone (a microphone in direct contact with the volume in the ear canal) and different methods of using data obtained by the inner microphone. EP 1 624 719 discloses a method to determine a feedback threshold in a hearing device.

[0005] Document WO 99/12388 discloses a method and a system for determining the combined open loop transfer function of a hearing aid and feedback path.

[0006] It is an object of the present invention to provide a method of obtaining a real ear acoustic coupling quantity for adjusting fitting parameters of a hearing instrument which does not rely on the introduction of a separate (from the hearing instrument) microphone probe into the user's ear and which accounts for individual RECD differences.

[0007] An "acoustic coupling quantity" is any quantity that relates to the relation between an output of the hearing instrument and the sound impinging on the user's eardrum. Acoustic coupling quantities include the RECD, the CORFIG (Coupler Response for Flat Insertion Gain), the REOG (Real Ear Open Gain), combinations of these, combinations of these with anatomical transfer quantities, and others. An anatomical transfer quantity is any quantity that relates to how a given sound wave input is affected by the diffraction and reflection properties of the head, pinna, and torso, before the sound reaches the eardrum. Anatomical transfer functions (also called head related transfer functions, HRTFs) are examples of anatomical transfer quantities and include MLE (basically the dependence of the sound level on the exact position close to the ear), and the OEG.

[0008] The aforementioned object is achieved by the method for obtaining a real ear acoustic coupling quantity as defined in independent claim 1. The invention also concerns a method for setting a fitting parameter, and a hearing instrument.

[0009] According to an aspect of the invention, a real ear acoustic coupling quantity representative of the acoustic coupling of a hearing instrument to the user's ear - for example the Real-Ear-to-Coupler-Difference (RECD), the Microphone Location Effect (MLE), the Coupler Response for Flat Insertion Gain (CORFIG), and/or the Real Ear Open Gain (REOG) - is obtained from a transfer function representative of an acoustic transfer from the receiver to the outer microphone such as a signal feedback threshold gain. The obtained (predicted) quantity may be used for setting a fitting parameter of the hearing instrument, for example a gain correction.

[0010] If the hearing instrument comprises more than one outer microphone and/or more than one receiver, the named transfer function is a transfer function from either or a combination of the receivers to either or a combination of the outer microphones. The invention is based on the surprising insight that there is a relation between the individual real ear acoustic coupling and anatomical transfer quantities - indicative of the "forward" transfer of sound to the ear, towards the ear drum, such as the RECD - and transfer functions representative of an acoustic transfer from the receiver to the outer microphone ("backward" transfer) such as the feedback threshold. Such "backward" transfer functions are, under certain circumstances, comparably easy to determine, and can be measured using the built-in standard components of a hearing instrument.

[0011] In the following, a reasoning accounting for the relation between the transfer function representative of an acoustic transfer from the receiver to the outer microphone and the acoustic coupling or anatomical transfer quantity is provided referring to the example of the feedback threshold and the RECD only. However, it has been shown experimentally that the relations also hold for other transfer functions/quantities. **Figure 1** shows the fundamental relations between (logarithmic) gain values in the hearing instrument referring to the example of a BTE hearing instrument, where the at least one receiver is placed in the behind-the-ear component and is connected to the earpiece via hook and tubing. A feedback path via the vent is assumed. In Fig. 1, 2ccG denotes the 2cc Gain (the acoustic gain realized in the 2cc coupler), "SENSIN" the input sensitivity, which is mainly governed by the properties of the at least one microphone of the hearing instrument, "SENSOUT" the output sensitivity, which primarily depends on the properties of the at least one receiver, "GDSP" the gain produced by the digital signal processing stage, "MLE" the microphone location effect, "r/h" the influence of the coupling of the at least one receiver to the hook and the influence of the hook, "t/m" the influence of tubing and earmold, "canal" the gain in the ear canal, i.e. from the earmold to the eardrum, "vent path" is the gain of the signal transmitted back from the ear canal through the vent to the microphone (which is the predominant cause of feedback), and "REAG" is the real ear aided gain. Level A (highlighted by a dashed arrow) represents a first situation where the hearing instrument is connected to a 2cc coupler, and the acoustic gain 2ccG being the difference between the logarithmic Sound pressure level (SPL) in the 2cc coupler and the SPL in the free field is measured. Level B refers to a second situation where a test signal is supplied to the at least one receiver, this situation defining the RECD. Level C addresses the third situation, where the hearing instrument is inserted into the user's ear.

[0012] In state-of-the-art fitting processes, the REAG, which is the fundamental quantity reproducing the relation between the SPL at the place of the at least one microphone and the SPL at the eardrum (aided ear drum SPL), is usually determined by:

$$\text{REAG} = \text{MLE} - \text{SENSIN} + \text{GDSP} + \text{SENSOUT} + \text{RECD} \quad (1)$$

[0013] This relationship follows directly from Fig. 1. As in the equations further below, the frequency dependence of the involved quantities is not explicitly pointed out in equation (1). In practice, the MLE is usually neglected, the quantity - SENSIN+GDSP+SENSOUT is the 2cc gain that can be measured in the 2cc coupler, and the RECD is, in accordance with state-of-the-art fitting processes, crudely estimated from the hearing instrument type.

[0014] In the patent application publication EP 1 309 255 and the European patent application EP 05/019858.9, a method of measuring the feedback threshold as a function of the frequency has been disclosed. In these documents, it is shown that the gain in the forward direction is equal to the damping of the feedback path, i.e. the sum of all gains in

the feedback loop is equal to zero. Thus, one gets the following relationship for the gains in Fig.1:

$$-\text{SENSIN} + \text{GDSP} + r/h + t/m + \text{vent path} = 0 \quad (2)$$

[0015] The DSP gain is normally converted into the 2cc gain:

$$2\text{ccGain} = \text{GDSP} + \text{SENSOUT} - \text{SENSIN} \quad (3)$$

[0016] The individual RECD is defined as

$$\text{RECD} = r/h + t/m + \text{canal} - \text{SENSOUT} \quad (4)$$

[0017] Equations (2) and (3) substituted into equation (4) yield:

$$\text{RECD} = \text{canal} - \text{vent path} - 2\text{ccGain} \quad (5)$$

[0018] This relationship can be seen directly in Fig. 1. Whereas equation (5) is only valid in the situation of the measurement of the feedback threshold in accordance with EP 1 309 255/ EP 05/019858.9 and is, primarily due to the sound pressure level dependence of 2ccGain, not valid for all sound intensities, RECD is an approximately linear quantity which only depends on the frequency. Therefore, the RECD value obtained through equation (5) at the feedback threshold is significant for all sound intensities. It is further independent of the way the feedback threshold is obtained. Thus, the method disclosed in EP 1 309 255/EP 05/019858.9 is not a prerequisite for the approach in accordance with the invention.

[0019] Since SENSIN and SENSOUT are known and GDSP is the measured feedback limit, the quantity $2\text{ccGain} = \text{GDSP} + \text{SENSOUT} - \text{SENSIN}$ is also known. For low frequencies, the damping by the ear canal can be neglected, so that the ear canal gain is approximately 0 dB. For BTE hearing instruments, the vent path attenuation can be approximated by

$$\text{ventpath} \approx 20 \log \left(\frac{d^2}{8rl} \right), \quad (6)$$

where d is the vent diameter, l the length of the vent, and r the distance between the vent and the microphone. (For ITE hearing instruments, where the microphone(s) may be close to the vent, values obtained by equation (6) have to be corrected.) Thus, for low frequencies one gets a simple linear relationship between the RECD and the feedback threshold. For higher frequencies, however, the relationship becomes complex: the ear canal transfer function depends on the distance to the ear drum ($\lambda/4$ resonance), the vent path is determined by the vent length and possible concha effects, and the feedback threshold cannot be measured by the method described in EP 1 309 255 for high and very low frequencies due to the limited power of the hearing instrument. However, a relation between the feedback threshold and the RECD exists also in more complex situations than in the low frequency approximation range. The experimental findings reproduced in the correlation diagram of **Figure 2** show this relation. Fig. 2 shows the measured correlation, for a variety of behind-the-ear hearing instruments worn by different persons, between the feedback threshold and the RECD, both as a function of the frequency. In Fig. 2 stronger correlations are represented by dark shadings, whereas light shadings represent weak correlations. In the figure, the correlation between the feedback threshold and the low frequency RECD is predominantly positive, whereas for higher frequencies above 1.5-2 kHz, there is a strong negative correlation between the RECD and the feedback threshold.

[0020] Extended experiments (not shown) have revealed, that even if measurements are made for different hearing instrument types (BTE, ITE, CIC etc.) and averaged, there is still a significant correlation that can be used for RECD prediction. Moreover, experiments have also shown that not only the RECD but also other real ear acoustic coupling and anatomical transfer quantities such as the Open Ear Gain (OEG), the Microphone Location Effect (MLE), and the combined quantity Coupler Response for Flat Insertion Gain (CORFIG) are correlated to the feedback threshold. Furthermore, such a correlation does not only exist for the feedback threshold but also for the acoustic transfer at sound

levels below the threshold. Such transfer function can for example be measured if a pre-determined signal, such as a MLS-signal acts on the receiver, and the response of the at least one outer microphone is measured.

[0021] The insight that there is a relationship between the feedback limit (and other transfer functions) and the RECD (and other real ear acoustic coupling and anatomical transfer quantities) may thus be used independent of the above equations. Instead of relying on the above mentioned simple linear relationship, preferably a generalized model is used, for example a multiple input/multiple output model, which is used to predict the acoustic coupling quantity (for example directly represented by a fitting/gain parameter) for different frequency bands. Also, whereas the above discussed low frequency approximation depends on the assumption that the feedback path is dominated by the vent's contribution, the generalization does not. In other words, it is not excluded that a generalized model can possibly also account for feedback contributions by other channels, such as 'mechanical' feedback (due to vibrations of casing, human tissue, etc.) and others.

[0022] The invention allows to directly estimate the individual's RECD based on a measurement, which is often performed anyway when a hearing instrument is fitted. Whereas the measurement itself addresses only one parameter, the estimate incorporates effects such as vent loss, leakage, remaining ear canal volume, eardrum impedance, and tubing. Thus, systematic fitting errors are avoided, and an individual hearing instrument frequency characteristics is obtained. It is not necessary to perform laborious measurements such as the mentioned "RECD direct" measurement. Since the ordinary input microphone (or input microphones) may be used for a measurement of the feedback threshold, no extra hardware is required. If the method according to the invention further is combined with the feedback threshold measurement method of EP 1 309 255/EP 05/019858.9, the measurement for obtaining initial hearing instrument settings is also very quick.

[0023] In this text, RECD, other real ear acoustic coupling quantities and feedback threshold are assumed to be dependent only on the frequency for a given hearing instrument and a given user in a given surrounding. They can be represented by a corresponding curve, i.e. a function of the frequency. In practice, the curves are often represented by a number of discrete values, each representing a frequency band. In the case of more than one outer microphones, the predicted quantity may also be dependent on the direction. Of course, it is not excluded that the predicted quantity may also depend on further variables.

[0024] As indicated, although the above discussion relates to the estimation of the RECD, the invention is not restricted to estimating this quantity. Instead, other values indicative of the real ear acoustic coupling or the anatomical transfer may be determined and used. Examples are the Real Ear Occluded Gain (REOG), the Coupler Response for Flat Insertion Gain CORFIG=OEG-RECD-MLE (the CORFIG representing the - hypothetical - output in the 2cc coupler for the case in which the real ear insertion corresponds to a target gain), and/or the MLE and/or the OEG etc. In practice, the RECD and possibly other quantities may be determined from the named transfer function by a fitting software external to the hearing instrument. This may be done during a fitting process. The fitting software may supply the RECD values to the hearing instrument, which RECD values may replace the default RECD values stored in the hearing instrument. These values may then be used directly as a gain correction. As an alternative, the computation of the RECD (or other quantity) may be done by the digital signal processor of a hearing instrument itself. This may ultimately lead to a "self-fitting" hearing instrument which may adjust itself, so that merely the desired sound level has to be actively chosen by a hearing professional or even a user. It is also not excluded that the real ear acoustic coupling quantity is represented directly by way of fitting parameter values.

[0025] According to another aspect of the invention, therefore, the feedback threshold is used as an input quantity for computing a signal processing unit gain, which gain may lie below the feedback threshold. Thus, in accordance with the invention, fitting parameters of the hearing instrument influencing the instrument's gain in operation below the feedback threshold are set based on values obtained by a feedback threshold measurement. The feedback threshold, therefore, is used to influence the hearing instrument's (or its signal processing unit's) gain characteristic not only by setting a maximum gain below the feedback threshold, but for a large range of different input signal strengths (sound intensities). For example, the gain may be influenced for all sound intensities between the user's hearing threshold level and a maximum sound intensity being a threshold of noise pain or a maximum level of comfortable hearing.

[0026] According to this second aspect, the gain G in the signal processing unit is for example computed to be a function of the feedback threshold and further parameters, which preferably include the frequency (or frequency band) and the signal intensity and may further include the time, history, user defined settings, average signal length, cepstral values, etc. Of course, the gain may further be limited by the feedback threshold as a maximum gain. Thus, the gain G may be defined as:

$$G(f) = \min\{G(f, fb(f), I(f), p_1, \dots, p_n), fb(f)\} \quad (7)$$

where f denotes the frequency (possibly represented by discretized values), fb the feedback threshold gain, I the signal

intensity, and $p_1, \dots, p_n$ optional further parameters. In contrast to state-of-the-art processes, the feedback threshold gain has an influence on $G(f)$ not only by setting a frequency dependent upper limit but also for $G(f)$ values well below the feedback threshold.

[0027] Also other acoustic coupling quantities may be used for influencing a hearing instrument's gain characteristics.

[0028] Among the anatomical transfer quantities, the OEG may be used not to set gain parameters of the hearing instrument, but to calculate a correction to the input signal, which correction accounts for the difference between the free field sound level and the level measured at the place of the outer microphone(s). As an example, a frequency band OEG correction may be applied to the digitized electric input signal before gain values are calculated by the signal processing unit.

[0029] Various further applications of the obtained predicted acoustic coupling or anatomical transfer quantity are possible, for example measuring of impedances, etc.

[0030] The term "hearing instrument" or "hearing device", as understood in this text, denotes on the one hand hearing aid devices that are therapeutic devices improving the hearing ability of individuals, primarily according to diagnostic results. Such hearing aid devices may be Behind-The-Ear (BTE) hearing aid devices or In-The-Ear (ITE) hearing aid devices (including the so called In-The-Canal (ITC) and Completely-In-The-Canal (CIC) hearing aid devices, as well as partially and fully implanted hearing aid devices). On the other hand, the term stands for devices which may improve the hearing of individuals with normal hearing, e.g. in specific acoustic situations as in a very noisy environment or in concert halls, or which may even be used in the context of remote communication or of audio listening, for instance as provided by headphones. Further the hearing instrument may also be an earprotector where the output acoustic signal level may be lower than the input acoustic signal level.

[0031] The hearing devices addressed by the present invention are so-called active hearing devices which comprise at the input side at least one acoustic to electrical converter, such as a microphone, at the output side at least one electrical to acoustic converter, such as a loudspeaker (often also termed "receiver"), and which further comprise a signal processing unit for processing signals according to the output signals of the acoustic to electrical converter and for generating output signals to the electrical input of the electrical to mechanical output converter. In general, the signal processing circuit may be an analog, digital or hybrid analog-digital circuit, and may be implemented with discrete electronic components, integrated circuits, or a combination of both. In the context of this application, signal processing units comprising digital signal processing means are preferred. The hearing devices may optionally comprise further active components including an inner acoustic-to-electric converter which is placed on the proximal side of an earpiece (in contrast to the standard outer microphones which are on the distal side of the earpiece).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0032] In the following, the invention and embodiments thereof will be described with reference to drawings, in the drawings

- Fig. 1 shows a diagram of gain relations on a hearing instrument with feedback path through the vent;
- Fig. 2 depicts a correlation matrix between measured feedback thresholds and RECDs for BTE hearing instruments;
- Fig. 3 shows a diagram of a hearing instrument;
- Fig. 4 shows a basic configuration to predict the RECD from the feedback threshold;
- Fig. 5 shows an implementation of the configuration of Fig. 4 by a linear model;
- Fig. 6 shows, for the example of five frequency bands, a linear transformation model with significant coefficients only, which are obtained by stepwise regression;
- Fig. 7 shows a classification model;
- Fig. 8 depicts a neural network model;
- Fig. 9 shows a generalization of the configuration of Fig. 4;
- Fig. 10 shows an implementation of the configuration of Fig. 9 by the example of a linear model; and
- Fig. 11 schematically depicts the evaluation of a gain correction.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0033] The hearing instrument of **Figure 3** comprises at least one acoustic-to-electric converter (microphone) 1. Often, two or even three acoustic-to-electric converters are available in each hearing instrument. The hearing instrument further comprises a signal processing unit (SPU) 3 operable to apply a time- and/or frequency-dependent gain to the input signal or input signals S_1 resulting in an output signal S_O and at least one electric-to-acoustic converter (receiver) 5. The feedback path 7 is also shown in the figure.

[0034] In accordance with the invention, it is proposed to estimate, from the feedback threshold that has been determined in accordance with any suitable method, a quantity representative of the real ear acoustic coupling, which quantity is preferably sound level independent. An example of such a quantity is the RECD. The models for obtaining a real ear acoustic coupling quantity, which are described in the following, all refer to the example of the RECD. It is to be noted, however, that they also apply for predicting other acoustic coupling quantities or anatomical transfer quantities such as the CORFIG, the OEG, the MLE etc.

[0035] **Figure 4** shows the basic configuration for the estimation of the RECD in a number of frequency bands from the feedback threshold represented in a number of frequency bands. Any model by which an RECD may be calculated from the feedback threshold may be applied.

[0036] **Figure 5** depicts a first example of such a model, namely a linear transformation of the feedback threshold spectrum to yield the RECD spectrum. In the example of representation of the feedback threshold fb and the RECD by logarithmic (for example dB) values in discrete bands, the linear transformation may be represented by an $n \times n$ -Matrix of constant values, where n is the number of bands. In situations, where the frequency bands for the feedback threshold measurements are not identical with the frequency bands for the RECD, the matrix is an $n \times m$ matrix.

[0037] Now, a possible way of obtaining values m_{kl} of the matrix M is described. In a first step, N measurements of both, the feedback threshold and of the RECD are performed (for example, measurements may be performed with N different persons or with different persons in different situations). The RECD may be measured using a known method such as a measurement using a probe microphone placed in the ear. For each measurement the matrix equation $RECD^{(i)} = M * fb^{(i)}$ holds approximately ($i=1 \dots N$). If the number N is larger than the number of columns of the matrix, the system of matrix equations for the N measurements is over-determined. In this case, it is possible to obtain numerical solutions, such as least square solutions for the matrix coefficients m_{kl} . This may be done by known numerical methods. It may for example also be done using commercially available software, such as the MATLAB® software, in which the numerical algorithms are implemented.

[0038] According to a first variant, all data are obtained using the same hearing instrument or hearing instrument type on different persons and/or under different circumstances. The thus-obtained values are instrument specific or instrument-type specific. It is, however, also possible to use measurements obtained with various different hearing instruments. Then, universal values, which may be less accurate for certain situations but still are useful, are obtained.

[0039] For example for 20 frequency bands, the matrix M contains 400 coefficients. It may be expected that not all of them do have a real statistical significance. A further model useable for the RECD prediction is therefore depicted in **Figure 6**. The model is, like the model of Fig. 5, based on transformation matrix. In contrast to the model of Fig. 5, the matrix only comprises coefficients of a certain statistical significance. The coefficients are obtained (row by row) by a stepwise regression process, where for example first a least square solution for the most significant coefficient is found, and subsequently the next significant coefficients are calculated. This procedure is terminated after a few steps, typically after 1-4 steps, depending on the desired level of accuracy. As a rule of thumb, it has been observed, that for low frequencies and for very high frequencies, the most significant coefficients are often off-diagonal (which means that there is a strong correlation between the RECD at these frequencies and the feedback threshold at other frequencies), whereas for a center frequency range around 2000-6000 Hz there is a strong correlation between the RECD and the feedback threshold of the same frequency range, i.e. the most significant coefficients tend to be on or near the matrix diagonal. This may also be derived from Fig. 2.

[0040] Whereas the method of Fig. 6 entails an increased modeling effort, compared to the model of Fig. 5, and is based on a nonlinear stepping process, it brings about a reliable estimation without there being the extreme outliers. Also, once the model is established, the estimation of the RECD entails very little computational cost.

[0041] Yet a further model is shown in **Figure 7**. The model is based on the clustering and classification approach. When establishing the model (analysis), a number N of experimentally obtained RECD curves are clustered, i.e. classes of the real ear acoustic coupling quantity or anatomical transfer quantity are formed. This may for example be done by the well-established procedure of k-means clustering. Clustering yields a limited number of RECD curves (four RECD curves in the example of Fig. 7) being the cluster means of the RECD curve clusters. Then, based on the mapping of measured feedback threshold curves to RECD curves, a classification function is established, which is for example based on the discriminant analysis.

[0042] As shown in Fig. 7, prediction then includes the steps of classifying new, measured feedback threshold data in accordance with the classification function and then assigning it to the RECD curve that is the cluster means of the

cluster the data have been classified to belong to. This method features the substantial advantage that it brings about a well defined and controllable output, namely, the obtained RECD curve is one of a limited number - four in Fig. 7 - of known RECD curves. The disadvantage is that the output is not a continuous function of the feedback threshold, and the model is non-linear. Also, the modeling effort is substantial.

[0043] For classification, also additional parameters as mentioned below with reference to Fig. 9 may be used.

[0044] Yet another model is depicted in **Figure 8**. In accordance with this model, a general neural net is proposed for the linkage of input data with output values. In the basic configuration of Fig. 4, the input values will be feedback threshold values in different frequency bands, whereas the output values are RECD values in different frequency bands. Also the neural network model is established based on measurements of both, RECD and corresponding feedback threshold curves. Methods of training so-called feedforward neural networks are known in the art and will not be described here. The neural network may be implemented using appropriate hardware. Alternatively, it may be provided by means of a suitable software.

[0045] This model features the advantage of being capable of modeling also complex nonlinear relations. The disadvantage is that the modeling does not provide a unique solution, that it is non-linear and that the modeling effort may also be substantial.

[0046] The description of all aforementioned models is based on the assumption that the feedback threshold as a function of the frequency is the only input variable. As mentioned, it is possible to have both, a hearing instrument and/or situation specific model or an unspecific model to be applied to different hearing instruments and/or situations. It is, however, also possible to have a general model accounting for the differences in other available variables. An according configuration is shown in **Figure 9**. In such a general model, next to the feedback threshold, also other quantities may be used as predictor variables. Such other quantities may for example be taken from at least one of the following categories:

- Feedback transfer function. With the procedure described in EP 1 309 255, the feedback threshold cannot be measured for highest and lowest frequencies because the hearing instrument cannot produce the desired output level. Alternatively, the transfer function of the feedback path could, at least for the mentioned highest and/or lowest frequencies, be measured at a lower level, for example with MLS noise.
- Anthropometric data: These include measured or estimated geometry data of the ear (including the concha), the ear canal, and the head. They may be simple categorical values such as ("small ear", "medium ear", "large ear") or may be more sophisticated, quantitative values.
- Other geometrical data. Such data include vent and/or microphone geometries from hearing instrument fitting software, earpiece modeling software or other sources, the vent diameter, the vent length, the distance vent-to-microphone, vent designation as ordinal or categorical variable (small/medium/large/IROS), etc., as well as an estimation of the residual ear canal volume, for example from dimensions of the ear shell (RSM), visual inspection, etc.
- Tympanometric data, including values of the classical tympanogram, ear canal volume (ECV), peak compliance.
- Type information or style information. Type information is the information about which hearing instrument type or model is used. Style information is a more general information on whether the hearing instrument is a BTE, ITE, ITC, CIC, full shell, half shell etc. hearing instrument.
- General transfer functions from additional sensors (ear canal ("inner") microphone, as mentioned in European Patent Application 05 405 460.6 accelerometer, force sensor, etc)
- Further categorical and/or numerical predictor variables may be used.

[0047] The generalization of this kind may be applied to all models previously described referring to Figs. 5 through 8. An example relating to the linear transformation is shown in **Figure 10**. The transfer matrix T comprises a feedback threshold transfer constituent M as well as an additional predictor constituent M_v . In the embodiment of Fig. 10, the additional predictor variables account for a frequency dependent correction curve to be (logarithmically) added to the RECD obtained by the transfer matrix constituent M. However, deviating from the embodiment of Fig. 10, it would also be possible to model the prediction in a way in which the RECD prediction based on feedback threshold and the prediction based on other predictor variables are interdependent. This may for example be done by extension of the model of Fig. 7 or the model of Fig. 8 to more variables. Also combinations are possible, for example the classifying of transfer matrices as in Figs. 5 and 6 according to values of predictor variables (except the feedback threshold).

[0048] The skilled person will know various other ways of predicting an output quantity from an input quantity it is

related with.

[0049] The RECD curves (or other quantities) obtained may be used as fitting parameters or for setting fitting parameters in a hearing instrument. The curve is evaluated by or is supplied to the signal processing stage and preferably has an influence on the effective gain values. For example, if the curve reveals that the real ear acoustic signal in a particular frequency region is suppressed stronger than average, the gain calculated by the signal processing unit based on the input signal and pre-stored information is corrected by a corresponding increase in said frequency region. A simplified example of an evaluation of a gain correction $C(f)$ is very schematically shown in **Figure 11**. The RECD as a function of the frequency - represented by a curve 13 - From the curve 13, a gain correction $C(f)$ is evaluated. The RECD applied as gain correction may be stored in the signal processing unit and be applied to the gains evaluated thereby during operation of the hearing instrument. Since the RECD is linear and essentially time and acoustic signal independent, so is the gain correction. Therefore, applying the once evaluated gain correction C to the input signal a plurality of times always results in an appropriately corrected gain. The dots 15 in the right panel of Fig. 11 illustrate a discretised version of the gain correction for the case the gain is evaluated discretely in a number of frequency bands. Applying the gain correction may then just be an addition of the correction values C_f (or a subtraction of the stored RECD values) to the calculated gain values. Storing a number of discrete RECD or gain correction values C_f is also a preferred way of storing the RECD in the signal processing unit.

[0050] As mentioned, all above models, while they are described referring to the RECD, apply for the prediction of any real ear acoustic coupling quantity or anatomical transfer quantity correlated with the feedback threshold, especially for the CORFIG, the OEG, the MLE and the quantity $AC=SENSOUT+RECD$. For establishing one of the above models (or an other model), as a first step instead of N times measuring RECD curves and feedback threshold curves, a number of curves of the mentioned quantities and of the feedback threshold is measured. The further steps including prediction are completely analogous to the above described proceeding.

[0051] It is possible to make the setting of the fitting parameters - such as gain correction values C_f - dependent on one acoustic coupling quantity or anatomical transfer quantity or on a suitable combination of such quantities.

Claims

1. A method for obtaining an acoustic coupling quantity of a hearing instrument to a user's ear being a Real-Ear-to-Coupler Difference (RECD), a Microphone Location Effect (MLE), and/or a Coupler Response for Flat Insertion Gain (CORFIG), the method comprising the step of providing a hearing instrument placed in or at a user's ear, the hearing instrument comprising at least one outer microphone (1) operable to obtain an input signal from an acoustic signal incident on the user's ear, and at least one receiver (5) operable to produce an output acoustic signal for impinging on the user's eardrum, **characterized in that** the method comprises the further steps of obtaining a transfer function representative of an acoustic transfer from the receiver to the outer microphone and of performing a computation of said acoustic coupling quantity, wherein in said computation the transfer function is used as an input quantity.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein said transfer function is a feedback threshold gain.
3. A method as claimed in claim 2, comprising the step of, prior to performing said computation, determining a signal feedback threshold gain by exposing the hearing instrument, which is inserted into an ear of a user, to an input signal while a compressive gain model is applied in a forward path, and of assessing a signal feedback threshold gain after a steady state has been reached in the hearing instrument.
4. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said transfer function is a feedback transfer function.
5. A method as claimed in any one of the previous claims, wherein the transfer function is dependent on the signal frequency, and wherein said acoustic coupling quantity is also dependent on the signal frequency.
6. A method as claimed in any one of the previous claims, wherein an audible part of the acoustic spectrum is divided in frequency bands, wherein the transfer function is represented by a transfer function value in each frequency band.
7. A method as claimed in any one of the previous claims, wherein an audible part of the acoustic spectrum is divided in frequency bands, and wherein in each frequency band a frequency band value of said acoustic coupling quantity is calculated.
8. A method as claimed in claims 6 and 7, wherein for the computation a multiple input/multiple output model is used, wherein at least some of the multiple inputs are frequency band transfer function values and wherein at least some

of the multiple outputs are the frequency band values of said acoustic coupling quantity.

- 5 9. A method as claimed in any one of the previous claims, wherein in said computation in addition to said transfer function an additional quantity is used as an input quantity, and wherein said additional quantity is at least one of an additional transfer function representative of an acoustic transfer from the receiver to the outer microphone, of anthropometric data, of geometrical data, of tympanometric data, and of type or style information.
- 10 10. A method as claimed in any one of the previous claims, wherein the computation includes calculating a linear combination of frequency dependent signal feedback threshold gain values for each one of a plurality of frequency dependent values representative of said acoustic coupling quantity.
- 15 11. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1-8, wherein the computation includes assigning the signal feedback threshold gain to a class of signal feedback threshold gains, and choosing an acoustic coupling quantity value representative of an acoustic coupling quantity class assigned to said class of signal feedback threshold gains, to be the computed acoustic coupling quantity.
- 20 12. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1-8, wherein the acoustic coupling quantity is computed using a neural network.
- 25 13. A method for setting at least one fitting parameter of a digital hearing instrument, the method including obtaining a acoustic coupling quantity according to any one of the previous claims and further comprising the step of setting the fitting parameter or fitting parameters dependent on said obtained acoustic coupling quantity.
- 30 14. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein said at least one fitting parameter is an adjustment of a gain characteristic of the hearing instrument.
- 35 15. A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein for each of a plurality of frequency bands a fitting parameter is set, said fitting parameter being a frequency band gain correction value (C_f) for correcting a gain which, by a signal processing unit, is applied on an input signal of the signal processing unit.
- 40 16. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the frequency band gain correction value (C_f) is a logarithmic value to be added to a gain computed by a signal processing unit (3).
- 45 17. A method as claimed in any one of claims 13 to 16 dependent on claim 2 or 3, wherein the hearing instrument comprises a signal processing unit operable to apply a signal gain on an input signal to yield an output signal, wherein said signal gain depends on the signal feedback threshold gain also for signal gain values below the feedback threshold gain value.
- 50 18. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said at least one fitting parameter has an influence on a gain which, by a signal processing unit, is applied on an input signal of the signal processing unit, wherein said gain depends on an input signal strength, and wherein said fitting parameter has an influence on the gain for all input signal strengths between a hearing threshold level and a maximum level.
- 55 19. A hearing instrument comprising at least one outer microphone (1), a signal processing unit (3) with a data memory, and at least one receiver (5), the signal processing unit being operable to transform an input signal provided by said at least one outer microphone into an output signal supplied to said at least one receiver, the transformation of the input signal into the output signal defining a signal gain applied by the signal processing unit, **characterised in that** the signal processing unit is operable to compute, using the method as claimed in any one of the previous claims, said gain including gain values below a signal feedback threshold gain by a computation in which the transfer function representative of an acoustic transfer from the receiver to the outer microphone is used as an input quantity.

Patentansprüche

- 55 1. Verfahren zum Erhalten einer akustischen Kopplungsgröße eines Hörgeräts an das Ohr eines Benutzers, die eine Real-Ear-to-Coupler-Differenz (RECD), ein Mikrofonlokalisierungseffekt (MLE) und/oder eine Coupler Response for Fiat Insertion Gain (CORFIG) ist, wobei das Verfahren den Schritt des Bereitstellens eines Hörgeräts umfasst, das in oder an dem Ohr eines Benutzers platziert ist, wobei das Hörgerät mindestens ein äußeres Mikrofon (1)

umfasst, das betreibbar ist, um ein Eingangssignal aus einem akustischen Signal zu erhalten, das auf das Ohr des Benutzers trifft, und mindestens einen Empfänger (5), der betreibbar ist, um ein akustisches Ausgangssignal zum Auftreffen auf das Trommelfell des Benutzers zu erzeugen, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Verfahren die weiteren Schritte umfasst, eine Übertragungsfunktion zu erhalten, die repräsentativ für eine akustische Übertragung vom Empfänger zum äußeren Mikrofon ist, und eine Berechnung der akustischen Kopplungsgröße durchzuführen, wobei bei der Berechnung die Übertragungsfunktion als Eingangsgröße verwendet wird.

2. Verfahren nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Übertragungsfunktion eine Rückkopplungsschwellenverstärkung ist.
3. Verfahren nach Anspruch 2, umfassend den Schritt des Bestimmens einer Signalrückkopplungsschwellenverstärkung vor dem Durchführen der Berechnung, indem das Hörgerät, das in ein Ohr eines Benutzers eingesetzt wird, einem Eingangssignal ausgesetzt wird, während ein Druckverstärkungsmodell in einem Vorwärtszweig angelegt wird, und des Bewertens einer Signalrückkopplungsschwellenverstärkung, nachdem ein stationärer Zustand in dem Hörgerät erreicht wurde.
4. Verfahren nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Übertragungsfunktion eine Rückkopplungsübertragungsfunktion ist.
5. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Übertragungsfunktion von der Signalfrequenz abhängig ist und wobei die akustische Kopplungsgröße auch von der Signalfrequenz abhängig ist.
6. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei ein hörbarer Teil des akustischen Spektrums in Frequenzbänder unterteilt ist, wobei die Übertragungsfunktion durch einen Übertragungsfunktionswert in jedem Frequenzband repräsentiert wird.
7. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei ein hörbarer Teil des akustischen Spektrums in Frequenzbänder unterteilt ist und wobei in jedem Frequenzband ein Frequenzbandwert der akustischen Kopplungsgröße berechnet wird.
8. Verfahren nach den Ansprüchen 6 und 7, wobei für die Berechnung ein Modell mit mehreren Ein-/Ausgängen verwendet wird, wobei mindestens einige der mehreren Eingänge Frequenzbandübertragungs-Funktionswerte sind und wobei mindestens einige der mehreren Ausgänge die Frequenzbandwerte der akustischen Kopplungsgröße sind.
9. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei bei der Berechnung zusätzlich zu der Übertragungsfunktion eine zusätzliche Größe als Eingangsgröße verwendet wird, und wobei die zusätzliche Größe mindestens eine von einer zusätzlichen Übertragungsfunktion ist, die repräsentativ für eine akustische Übertragung vom Empfänger zum Außenmikrofon ist, und/oder anthropometrische Daten, und/oder geometrische Daten, und/oder Tympanometerdaten, und/oder Typ- oder Stilinformationen sind.
10. Verfahren nach einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Berechnung das Berechnen einer linearen Kombination von frequenzabhängigen Signalrückkopplungsschwellenverstärkungswerten für jeden einzelnen aus mehreren frequenzabhängigen Werten beinhaltet, die repräsentativ für die akustische Kopplungsgröße sind.
11. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1-8, wobei die Berechnung das Zuordnen der Signalrückkopplungsschwellenverstärkung zu einer Klasse von Signalrückkopplungsschwellenverstärkungen und das Auswählen eines akustischen Kopplungsgrößenwerts, der repräsentativ für eine Klasse einer akustischen Kopplungsgröße ist, die der Klasse von Signalrückkopplungsschwellenverstärkungen zugeordnet ist, als die berechnete akustische Kopplungsgröße beinhaltet.
12. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1-8, wobei die akustische Kopplungsgröße unter Verwendung eines neuronalen Netzwerks berechnet wird.
13. Verfahren zum Einstellen mindestens eines Anpassungsparameters eines digitalen Hörgeräts, wobei das Verfahren das Erhalten einer akustischen Kopplungsgröße gemäß einem der vorherigen Ansprüche beinhaltet und ferner den Schritt des Einstellens des Anpassungsparameters oder der Anpassungsparameter in Abhängigkeit von der erhaltenen akustischen Kopplungsgröße umfasst.
14. Verfahren nach Anspruch 13, wobei der mindestens eine Anpassungsparameter eine Anpassung einer Verstär-

kungscharakteristik des Hörgeräts ist.

15. Verfahren nach Anspruch 14, wobei für jedes von mehreren Frequenzbändern ein Anpassungsparameter eingestellt wird, wobei der Anpassungsparameter ein Frequenzbandverstärkungs-Korrekturwert (C_f) zum Korrigieren einer Verstärkung ist, die von einer Signalverarbeitungseinheit auf ein Eingangssignal der Signalverarbeitungseinheit angewendet wird.
16. Verfahren nach Anspruch 15, wobei der Frequenzbandverstärkungs-Korrekturwert (C_f) ein logarithmischer Wert ist, der zu einer von einer Signalverarbeitungseinheit (3) berechneten Verstärkung hinzuzufügen ist.
17. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 13 bis 16 in Abhängigkeit von Anspruch 2 oder 3, wobei das Hörgerät eine Signalverarbeitungseinheit umfasst, die betreibbar ist, um eine Signalverstärkung an ein Eingangssignal anzulegen, um ein Ausgangssignal zu erhalten, wobei die Signalverstärkung von der Signalkückkopplungsschwellenverstärkung auch für Signalverstärkungswerte unterhalb des Rückkopplungsschwellenverstärkungswertes abhängt.
18. Verfahren nach Anspruch 17, wobei der mindestens eine Anpassungsparameter einen Einfluss auf eine Verstärkung hat, die durch eine Signalverarbeitungseinheit auf ein Eingangssignal der Signalverarbeitungseinheit angewendet wird, wobei die Verstärkung von einer Eingangssignalstärke abhängt, und wobei der Anpassungsparameter einen Einfluss auf die Verstärkung für alle Eingangssignalstärken zwischen einem Hörschwellenpegel und einem Maximalpegel hat.
19. Hörgerät mit mindestens einem äußeren Mikrofon (1), einer Signalverarbeitungseinheit (3) mit einem Datenspeicher und mindestens einem Empfänger (5), wobei die Signalverarbeitungseinheit betreibbar ist, um ein von dem mindestens einen äußeren Mikrofon bereitgestelltes Eingangssignal in ein dem mindestens einen Empfänger zugeführtes Ausgangssignal umzuwandeln, wobei die Umwandlung des Eingangssignals in das Ausgangssignal eine von der Signalverarbeitungseinheit angelegte Signalverstärkung definiert, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Signalverarbeitungseinheit betreibbar ist, um unter Verwendung des Verfahrens, wie es in einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche beansprucht wird, die Verstärkung Verstärkungswerte unterhalb einer Signalkückkopplungsschwellenverstärkung durch eine Berechnung zu berechnen, bei der die Übertragungsfunktion, die repräsentativ für eine akustische Übertragung vom Empfänger zum äußeren Mikrofon ist, als Eingangsgröße verwendet wird.

Revendications

1. Procédé d'obtention d'une grandeur de couplage acoustique d'un instrument auditif destiné à l'oreille d'un utilisateur, cette valeur étant une différence réelle entre l'oreille et le coupleur (RECD - "Real Ear-Coupler Difference"), un effet de l'emplacement du microphone (MLE - "Microphone Location Effect") et/ou une réponse du coupleur à un gain d'insertion plat (CORFIG - "Couple Response for Flat Insertion Gain"), le procédé comprenant l'étape qui consiste à prévoir un instrument auditif placé dans ou sur une oreille de l'utilisateur, l'instrument auditif comprenant au moins un microphone extérieur (1) qui peut être utilisé pour obtenir un signal d'entrée à partir d'un signal acoustique incident sur l'oreille de l'utilisateur et au moins un récepteur (5) qui peut être utilisé pour produire un signal acoustique de sortie incident sur le tympan de l'oreille de l'utilisateur,
caractérisé en ce que
le procédé comprend les étapes supplémentaires qui consistent à obtenir une fonction de transfert qui représente le transfert acoustique entre le récepteur et le microphone extérieur et à exécuter un calcul de ladite grandeur de couplage acoustique, la fonction de transfert étant utilisée comme grandeur d'entrée dudit calcul.
2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite fonction de transfert est un gain de seuil de rétroaction.
3. Procédé selon la revendication 2, comprenant avant l'exécution dudit calcul les étapes qui consistent à déterminer un gain de seuil de rétroaction du signal en appliquant un signal d'entrée sur l'instrument auditif inséré dans une oreille de l'utilisateur pendant qu'un modèle de gain de compression est appliqué dans un parcours avant et à déterminer un gain de seuil de rétroaction du signal après qu'une situation de régime stable s'est établie dans l'instrument auditif.
4. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ladite fonction de transfert est une fonction de transfert de rétroaction.
5. Procédé selon l'une des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la fonction de transfert dépend de la fréquence

du signal et dans lequel ladite grandeur de couplage acoustique dépend également de la fréquence du signal.

- 5 6. Procédé selon l'une des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la fraction audible du spectre acoustique est divisée en bandes de fréquences, la fonction de transfert étant représentée dans chaque bande de fréquences par une valeur de la fonction de transfert.
- 10 7. Procédé selon l'une des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la fraction audible du spectre acoustique est divisée en bandes de fréquences, une valeur de ladite grandeur de couplage acoustique étant calculée dans chaque bande de fréquences.
- 15 8. Procédé selon les revendications 7 et 8, dans lequel le calcul utilise un modèle à plusieurs entrées et plusieurs sorties, au moins certaines des différentes entrées étant des valeurs de la fonction de transfert dans la bande de fréquences et au moins certaines des différentes sorties étant des valeurs de ladite grandeur de couplage acoustique dans la bande de fréquences.
- 20 9. Procédé selon l'une des revendications précédentes, dans lequel une grandeur supplémentaire est utilisée en plus de ladite fonction de transfert comme grandeur d'entrée dans ledit calcul, ladite grandeur supplémentaire étant une fonction de transfert supplémentaire représentant un transfert acoustique entre le récepteur et le microphone extérieur, une donnée anthropométrique, une donnée géométrique, une donnée tympanométrique et/ou une information de type ou de style.
- 25 10. Procédé selon l'une des revendications précédentes, dans lequel le calcul inclut le calcul d'une combinaison linéaire de fréquences en fonction de valeurs de gain de seuil de rétroaction du signal pour chacune des différentes valeurs, dépendant de la fréquence, représentatives de ladite grandeur de couplage acoustique.
- 30 11. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 8, dans lequel le calcul inclut l'application du gain de seuil de rétroaction du signal à une classe de gains de seuil de rétroaction du signal et la sélection de la valeur de la grandeur de couplage acoustique représentative d'une classe de valeurs de la grandeur de couplage acoustique attribuée à ladite classe de gains de seuil de rétroaction du signal comme étant la grandeur de couplage acoustique calculée.
- 35 12. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 8, dans lequel la grandeur de couplage acoustique est calculée en recourant à un réseau neuronal.
- 40 13. Procédé de fixation d'au moins un paramètre d'ajustement d'un instrument auditif numérique, le procédé comprenant l'obtention d'une grandeur de couplage acoustique selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes et comprenant en outre l'étape qui consiste à fixer le paramètre d'ajustement ou des paramètres d'ajustement en fonction de ladite grandeur de couplage acoustique qui a été obtenue.
- 45 14. Procédé selon la revendication 13, dans lequel au moins un paramètre d'ajustement est l'ajustement d'un gain caractéristique de l'instrument auditif.
15. Procédé selon la revendication 13, dans lequel un paramètre d'ajustement est fixé pour plusieurs bandes de fréquences, ledit paramètre d'ajustement étant une valeur de correction (C_f) du gain dans la bande de fréquences, pour corriger un gain appliqué par une unité de traitement de signaux sur un signal d'entrée de l'unité de traitement de signaux.
- 50 16. Procédé selon la revendication 15, dans lequel la valeur de correction (C_f) du gain dans la bande de fréquences est une valeur logarithmique à ajouter à un gain calculé par une unité (3) de traitement de signaux.
- 55 17. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 13 à 16 dans la mesure où elles sont subordonnées au revendications 2 ou 3, dans lequel l'instrument auditif comprend une unité de traitement de signaux qui peut être utilisée pour appliquer un gain sur un signal d'entrée en vue de produire un signal de sortie, ledit gain du signal dépendant de la valeur du gain de seuil de rétroaction du signal lorsque les valeurs de gain du signal sont inférieures à la valeur du gain de seuil de rétroaction.
18. Procédé selon la revendications 17, dans lequel au moins un paramètre d'ajustement agit sur un gain appliqué par l'unité de traitement de signaux sur un signal d'entrée de l'unité de traitement de signaux, ledit gain dépendant de la force du signal d'entrée et ledit paramètre d'ajustement agissant sur le gain pour toutes les forces du signal

d'entrée situées entre un niveau de seuil d'audibilité et un niveau maximum.

19. Instrument auditif comprenant au moins un microphone extérieur (1), une unité de traitement de signaux (3) dotée d'une mémoire de données, au moins un récepteur (5), l'unité de traitement de signaux pouvant être utilisée pour transformer un signal d'entrée délivré par ledit ou lesdits microphones extérieurs en un signal de sortie délivré audit ou auxdits récepteurs, la transformation du signal d'entrée en le signal de sortie définissant un gain de signal appliqué par l'unité de traitement de signaux,

caractérisé en ce que

l'unité de traitement de signaux peut être utilisée pour calculer ledit gain en recourant au procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, ledit gain incluant des valeurs inférieures à un gain de seuil de rétroaction du signal, par un calcul dans lequel la fonction de transfert représentative du transfert acoustique entre le récepteur et le microphone extérieur est utilisée comme grandeur d'entrée.

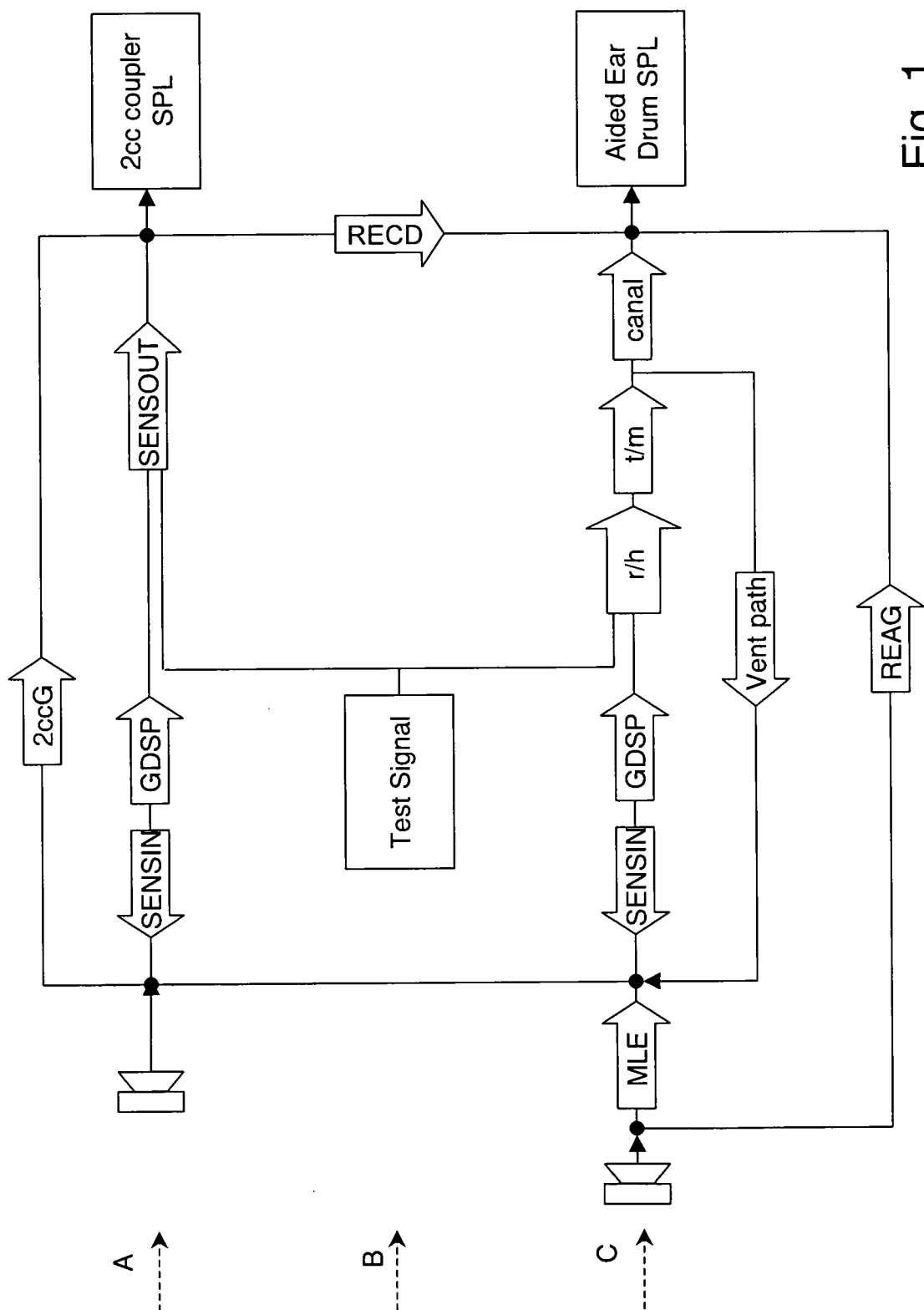


Fig. 1

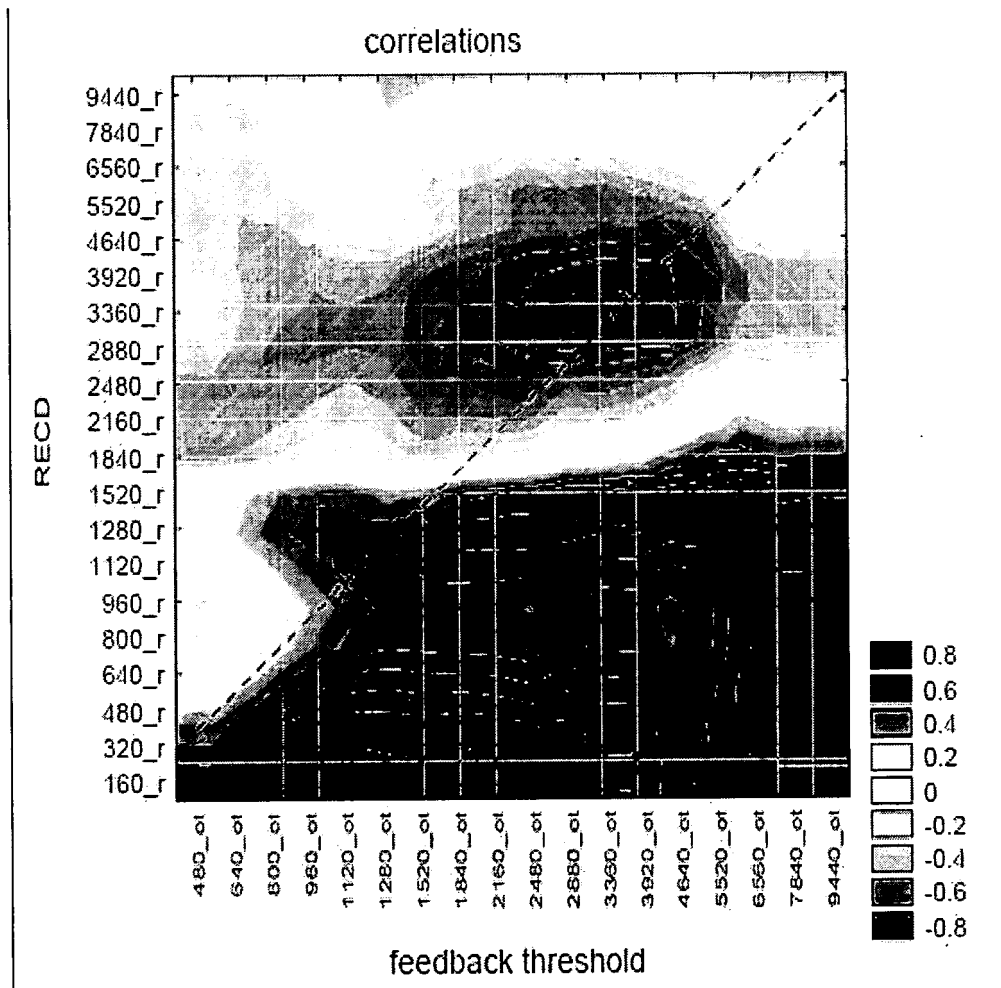


Fig. 2

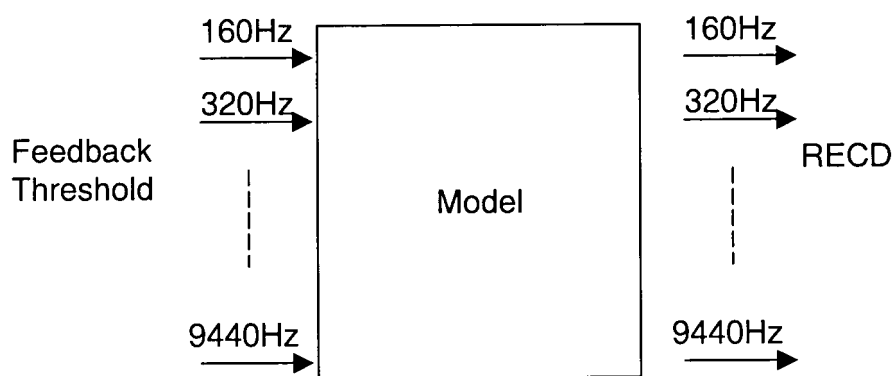
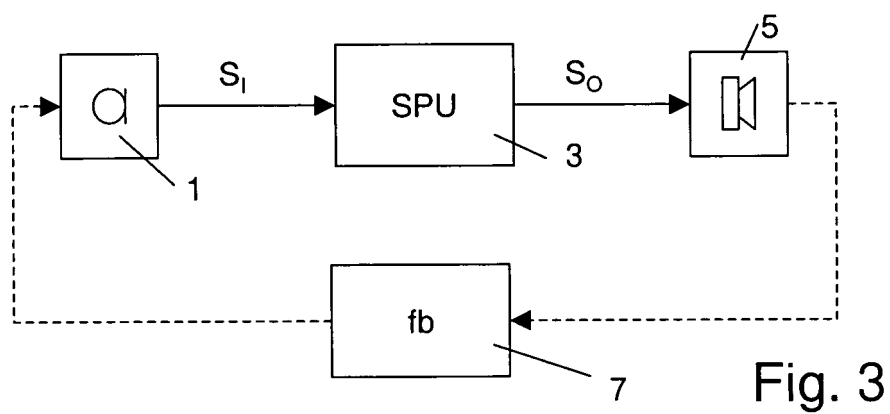
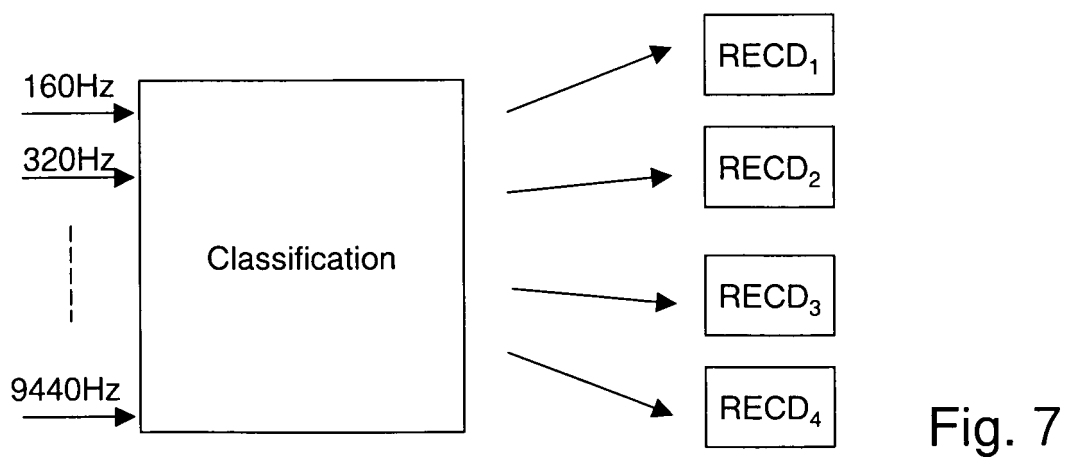


Fig. 4

$$\begin{pmatrix} \text{RECD} \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} M \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \text{fb} \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{Fig. 5}$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} \text{RECD} \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & m_{13} & 0 & 0 \\ m_{21} & m_{22} & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & m_{35} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & m_{44} & 0 \\ m_{51} & 0 & 0 & m_{54} & 0 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \text{fb} \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{Fig. 6}$$



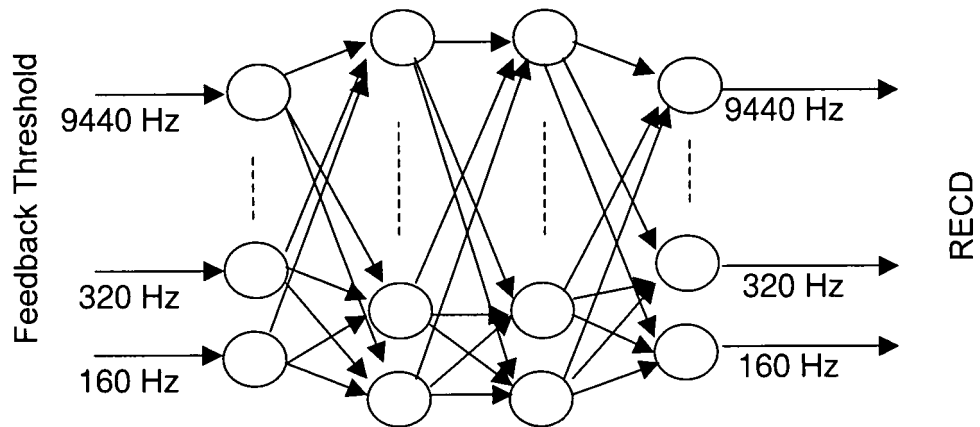


Fig. 8

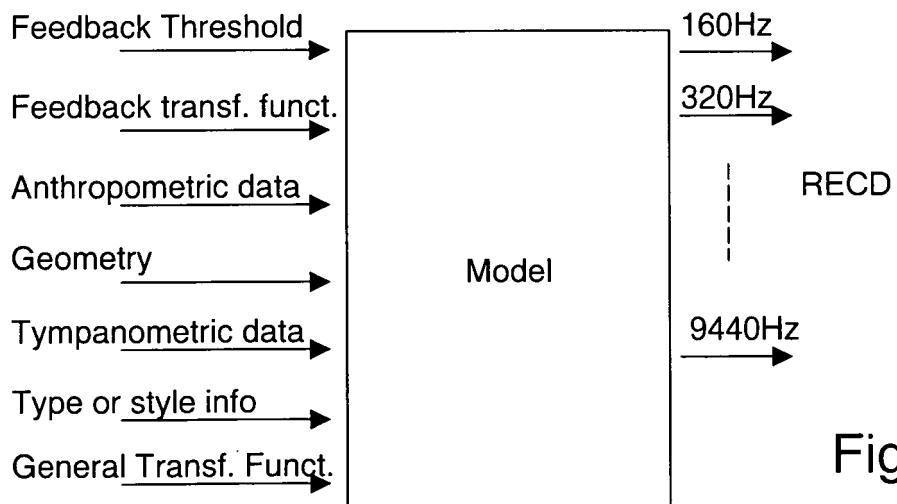


Fig. 9

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{RECD} \end{bmatrix} = \underbrace{\begin{bmatrix} \quad \quad \quad \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \quad \quad \quad \end{bmatrix}}_T \begin{bmatrix} \text{fb} \\ v \end{bmatrix} \quad \text{Fig. 10}$$

T

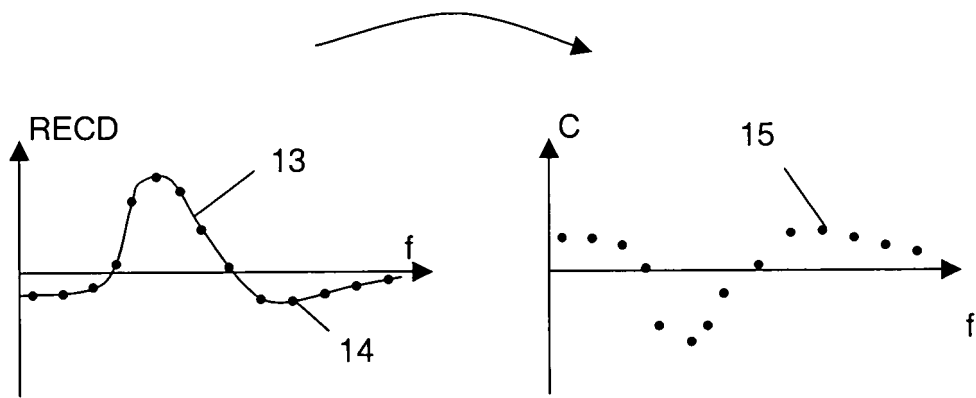


Fig. 11

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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