

Description**Field of Invention**

5 [0001] The present invention relates to the art of electronically mediated verbal communication, in particular, by means of hands-free sets that might be installed in vehicular cabins. The invention is particularly directed to the enhancement of speech signals that contain noise in a limited frequency-range by means of partial speech signal reconstruction.

Background of the invention

10 [0002] Two-way speech communication of two parties mutually transmitting and receiving audio signals, in particular, speech signals, often suffers from deterioration of the quality of the speech signals caused by background noise. Hands-free telephones provide a comfortable and safe communication and they are of particular use in motor vehicles. However, perturbations in noisy environments can severely affect the quality and intelligibility of voice conversation, e.g., by means of mobile phones or hands-free telephone sets that are installed in vehicle cabins, and can, in the worst case, lead to a complete breakdown of the communication.

15 [0003] In the case of the communication systems installed in vehicles (speech dialog systems), e.g., facilitating in-vehicle communication by means of microphones and loudspeakers, localized sources of interferences as, e.g., the air conditioning or a partly opened window, may cause noise contributions in speech signals obtained by one or more fixed
20 microphones that are positioned close to the source of interference or are obtained by a microphone array that is directed to the source of interference. Consequently, some noise reduction must be employed in order to improve the intelligibility of the electronically mediated speech signals.

[0004] In the art, noise reduction methods employing Wiener filters (e.g. E. Hänsler and G. Schmidt: "Acoustic Echo and Noise Control - A Practical Approach", John Wiley, & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey, USA, 2004) or spectral subtraction
25 (e.g. S. F. Boll: "Suppression of Acoustic Noise in Speech Using Spectral Subtraction", IEEE Trans. Acoust. Speech Signal Process., Vol. 27, No. 2, pages 113 - 120, 1979) are well known. For instance, speech signals are divided into sub-bands by some sub-band filtering means and a noise reduction algorithm is applied to each of the frequency sub-bands. The noise reduction algorithm results in a damping in frequency sub-bands containing significant noise depending on the estimated current signal-to-noise ratio of each sub-band.

30 [0005] However, the intelligibility of speech signals is normally not improved sufficiently when perturbations are relatively strong resulting in a relatively low signal-to-noise ratio. Noise suppression by means of Wiener filters, e.g., usually makes use of some weighting of the speech signal in the sub-band domain still preserving any background noise. Thus, it has been proposed to partly reconstruct (synthesize) a speech signal containing noise in a particular frequency range. Such a reconstruction is based on an estimate of an excitation signal (or pitch pulse) and a spectral envelope (see, e.g.,
35 P. Vary and R. Martin: "Digital Speech Transmission" NJ, USA, 2006). However, in particular, in noisy parts of the speech signal that is to be enhanced the spectral envelope cannot be reliably estimated.

[0006] Consequently, current methods for noise suppression in the art of electronic verbal communication do not operate sufficiently reliable to guarantee the intelligibility and/or desired quality of speech signals transmitted by one communication party and received by another communication party. Thus, there is a need for an improved method and
40 system for noise reduction in electronic speech communication, in particular, in the context of hands-free sets.

Description of the Invention

45 [0007] The above-mentioned problem is solved by the method for speech signal processing according to claim 1, comprising the steps of
detecting a speaker's utterance by at least one first microphone positioned at a first distance from a source of interference (noise) and in a first direction to the source of interference to obtain a first microphone signal;
detecting the speaker's utterance by at least one second microphone positioned at a second distance from the source of interference that is larger than the first distance and/or in a second direction to the source of interference in which
50 less sound is transmitted by the source of interference than in the first direction to obtain a second microphone signal;
determining a signal-to-noise ratio of the first microphone signal; and
synthesizing at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below a predetermined level based on the second microphone signal.

55 [0008] The first microphone signal contains noise caused by the source of interference (e.g., a fan or air jets of an air conditioning installed in a vehicular cabin of an automobile). According to the inventive method this first microphone signal is enhanced by means of a second microphone signal that contains less noise (or almost no noise) caused by the same source of interference, since the microphone(s) used to obtain the second microphone signal is (are) positioned further away from the source of interference or in a direction in which the source of interference transmits no or only

little sound (noise). Thus, signal parts of the first microphone signal that are heavily affected by noise caused by the source of interference can be synthesized based on information gained from the second microphone signal that also contains a speech signal corresponding to the speaker's utterance.

[0009] In the present application synthesizing signal parts means reconstructing (modeling) signal parts by partial speech synthesis, i.e. re-synthesis of signal parts of the first microphone signal exhibiting a low signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) to obtain corresponding signal parts including the synthesized (modeled) wanted signal but no (or almost no) noise. The actual SNR can be determined as known in the art. In particular, the short-time power spectrum of the noise can be estimated in relation to the short-time power spectrum of the microphone signal in order to obtain an estimate for the SNR.

[0010] According to the method provided herein and different from the art a microphone signal can be enhanced by means of information achieved by another microphone signal that is obtained by a different microphone positioned apart from the microphone used to obtain the microphone signal that is to be enhanced and that includes less or no perturbations. Thereby, a reliable and satisfying quality of the processed (first) microphone signal can be achieved even in noisy environments and in the case of highly time-dependent perturbations.

[0011] In principle, the second microphone signal can be obtained by any microphone positioned close enough to the speaker to detect the speaker's utterance. In particular, the second microphone may be a microphone installed in a vehicular cabin in the case that the method is applied to a speech dialog system or hands-free set etc. installed in a vehicular cabin. Moreover, the second microphone may be comprised in a mobile device, e.g., a mobile phone, a Personal Digital Assistant, or a Portable Navigation Device. A user (speaker) is thereby enabled to direct and/or place the second microphone in the mobile device such that it detects less noise caused by a particular localized source of interference, e.g., air jets of an air conditioning installed in the vehicular cabin of an automobile.

[0012] A particularly effective way to use information of the second (unperturbed or almost unperturbed) microphone signal in order to enhance the quality of the first microphone signal is to extract (estimate) the spectral envelope from the second microphone signal. The at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level can be synthesized by means of the spectral envelope extracted from the second microphone signal and an excitation signal extracted from the first microphone signal, the second microphone signal or retrieved from a database. The excitation signal ideally represents the signal that would be detected immediately at the vocal chords, i.e., without modifications by the whole vocal tract, sound radiation characteristics from the mouth etc. Excitation signals in form of pitch pulse prototypes may be retrieved from a database generated during previous training sessions.

[0013] The (almost) unperturbed spectral envelopment can be extracted from the second microphone signal by methods well-known in the art (see, e.g., P. Vary and R. Martin: "Digital Speech Transmission", NJ, USA, 2006). For instance, the method of Linear Predictive Coding (LPC) can be used. According to this method the n-th sample of a time signal $x(n)$ can be estimated from M preceding samples as

$$x(n) = \sum_{k=1}^M a_k(n) \cdot x(n-k) + e(n)$$

with the coefficients $a_k(n)$ that are to be optimized in a way to minimize the predictive error signal $e(n)$. The optimization can be done recursively by, e.g., the Least Mean Square algorithm.

[0014] The shaping of an excitation spectrum by means of a spectral envelope (i.e. a curve that connects points representing the amplitudes of frequency components in a tonal complex) represents an efficient method of speech synthesis. Employment of the (almost) unperturbed spectral envelopment extracted from the second microphone signal allows for a reliable reconstruction of the signal parts of the first microphone signal that are heavily affected by noise caused by the source of interference.

[0015] According to another aspect a spectral envelope can also be extracted from the first microphone signal and at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level can be synthesized by means of this spectral envelope that is extracted from the first microphone signal, if the determined signal-to-noise ratio lies within a predetermined range below the predetermined level or exceeds the corresponding signal-to-noise determined for the second microphone signal or lies within a predetermined range below the corresponding signal-to-noise determined for the second microphone signal.

[0016] This implies that according to this example whenever the estimate for the spectral envelope based on the first microphone signal is considered reliable the spectral envelope used for the partial speech synthesis can be selected to be the one that is extracted from the first microphone signal that due to the position of the first microphone relative to the second microphone is expected to contain a more powerful contribution of the wanted signal (speech signal repre-

senting the speaker's utterance) than the second microphone signal (see also detailed description below).

[0017] In particular, according to one embodiment the at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level is synthesized by means of the spectral envelope extracted from the second microphone signal only, if the determined wind noise in the second microphone signal is below a predetermined wind noise level, in particular, if no wind noise is present at all in the second microphone signal.

[0018] Signal parts of the first microphone signal that exhibit a sufficiently high SNR (SNR above the above-mentioned predetermined level) have not to be (re-)synthesized and may advantageously be filtered by a noise reduction filtering means to obtain noise reduced signal parts. The noise reduction may be achieved by any method known in the art, e.g., by means of Wiener characteristics. The noise reduced signal parts and the synthesized ones can subsequently be combined to achieve an enhanced digital speech signal representing the speaker's utterance.

[0019] In general, the signal processing for speech signal enhancement can be performed in the frequency domain (employing the appropriate Discrete Fourier Transformations and the corresponding Inverse Discrete Fourier Transformations) or in the sub-band domain. In the later case, the above-described examples for the inventive method further comprise dividing the first microphone signal into first microphone sub-band signals and the second microphone signal into second microphone sub-band signals and the signal-to-noise ratio is determined for each of the first microphone sub-band signals and first microphone sub-band signals are synthesized which exhibit a signal-to-noise ratio below the predetermined level. The processed sub-band signals are subsequently passed through a synthesis filter bank in order to obtain a full-band signal. Note that the expression "synthesis" in the context of the filter bank refers to the synthesis of sub-band signals to a full-band signal rather than speech (re-)synthesis.

[0020] The present invention also provides a computer program product comprising at least one computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps of the above-described example of the herein disclosed method when run on a computer.

[0021] The problem underlying the present invention is also solved by a signal processing means according to claim 12 that comprises

a first input configured to receive a first microphone signal from a first microphone representing a speaker's utterance and containing noise;

a second input configured to receive a second microphone signal from a second microphone representing the speaker's utterance;

a means configured to determine a signal-to-noise ratio of the first microphone signal; and

a reconstruction means configured to synthesize at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below a predetermined level based on the second microphone signal.

[0022] The reconstruction means may comprise a means that is configured to extract a spectral envelope from the second microphone signal and that is configured to synthesize the at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level by means of the extracted spectral envelope.

[0023] Furthermore, the signal processing means may further comprise a database storing samples of excitation signals. In this case the reconstruction means is configured to synthesize the at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level by means of one of the stored samples of excitation signals.

[0024] The signal processing means according to one of the above examples may also comprise a noise filtering means (e.g., employing a Wiener filter) configured to reduce noise at least in parts of the first microphone signal that exhibit a signal-to-noise ratio above the predetermined level to obtain noise reduced signal parts.

[0025] The reconstruction means according to one aspect further comprises a mixing means that is configured to combine the at least one synthesized part of the first microphone signal and the noise reduced signal parts obtained by the noise filtering means. The mixing means outputs an enhanced digital speech signal providing a better intelligibility than the first noise reduced microphone signal.

[0026] According to one embodiment the signal processing means further comprises

a first analysis filter bank configured to divide the first microphone signal into first microphone sub-band signals;

a second analysis filter bank configured to divide the second microphone signal into second microphone sub-band signals; and

a synthesis filter bank configured to synthesize sub-band signals to obtain a full-band signal.

[0027] The relevant signal processing is thus performed in the sub-band domain and the signal-to-noise ratio is determined for each of the first microphone sub-band signals and the first microphone sub-band signals are synthesized (reconstructed) which exhibit an signal-to-noise ratio below the predetermined level.

[0028] The present invention further provides a speech communication system, comprising at least one first microphone configured to generate the first microphone signal, at least one second microphone configured to generate the second microphone signal and the signal processing means according to one of the above examples. The speech communication system can, e.g., be installed in a vehicular cabin of an automobile.

[0029] Employment of the inventive signal processing means is particularly advantageous in the noisy environment

of a vehicular cabin. In this case, the at least one first microphone is installed in a vehicle and the at least one second microphone is installed in the vehicle or comprised in a mobile device, in particular, a mobile phone, a Personal Digital Assistant, or a Portable Navigation Device, for instance.

[0030] In addition, the present invention provides a hands-free set, in particular, installed in a vehicular cabin of an automobile, a mobile device, in particular, a mobile phone, a Personal Digital Assistant, or a Portable Navigation Device, and a speech dialog system installed in a vehicle, in particular, an automobile, all comprising the signal processing means according to one of the above examples.

[0031] Additional features and advantages of the present invention will be described with reference to the drawings. In the description, reference is made to the accompanying figures that are meant to illustrate preferred embodiments of the invention. It is understood that such embodiments do not represent the full scope of the invention.

Figure 1 illustrates a vehicular cabin in which different microphones are installed that detect the utterance of a speaker in order to allow for speech enhancement by partial speech synthesis in accordance with an example of the present invention.

Figure 2 illustrates basic units of an example of the signal processing means for speech enhancement as herein disclosed comprising wind noise detection units, a noise reduction filtering means as well as a speech synthesis means.

[0032] An exemplary application of the present invention will now be described with reference to Figure 1. Figure 1 shows a vehicular cabin 1 of an automobile. In the vehicular cabin 1, a hands-free communication system is installed that comprises microphones at least one 2 of which is installed in the front, i. e. close to a driver 4, and at least one 3 of which is installed in the back, i. e. close to a back seat passenger 5. The microphones 2 and 3 might be parts of an in-vehicle speech dialog system that allows for electronically mediated verbal communication between the driver 4 and the back passenger 5. Moreover, the microphones 2 and 3 may be used for hands-free telephony with a remote party outside the vehicular cabin 1 of the automobile. The microphone 2 may, in particular, be installed in an operating panel installed in the ceiling of the vehicular cabin 1.

[0033] Consider a situation in that an utterance of the driver 4 is detected by the front microphone 2 and is to be transmitted either to a loudspeaker (not shown) installed close to the back seat passenger 5 in the vehicular cabin 1 or to a remote communication party. The front microphone 2 not only detects the driver's utterance but also noise generated by an air conditioning installed in the vehicular cabin 1. In particular, air jets (nozzles) 6 positioned in the upper part of the dashboard generate wind streams and associated wind noise. Since the air jets 6 are positioned in proximity to the front microphone 2, the microphone signal $x_1(n)$ obtained by the front microphone 2 is heavily affected by wind noise in the lower frequency range. Therefore, the speech signal received by a receiving communication party (e.g., the back seat passenger) would be deteriorated, if no signal processing of the microphone signal $x_1(n)$ for speech enhancement were carried out.

[0034] According to the shown example, the driver's utterance is also detected by the rear microphone 3. It is true that this microphone 3 is mainly intended and configured to detect utterances by the back seat passenger 5 but, nevertheless, it also outputs a microphone signal $x_2(n)$ representing the driver's utterance (in particular, in speech pauses of the back seat passenger). Moreover, in another example the microphone 3 might be installed with the intention to enhance the microphone signal of microphone 2.

[0035] The rear microphone 3 will, in particular, detect no or only to a small amount wind noise that is caused by the air jets 6 of the air conditioning installed in the vehicular cabin 1. Therefore, the low-frequency range of the microphone signal $x_2(n)$ obtained by the rear microphone 3 is (almost) not affected by the wind perturbations. Thus, information contained in this low-frequency range (that is not available in the microphone signal $x_1(n)$ due to the noise perturbations) can be extracted and used for speech enhancement in the signal processing unit 7.

[0036] The signal processing unit 7 is supplied with both the microphone signal $x_1(n)$ obtained by the front microphone 2 and the microphone signal $x_2(n)$ obtained by the rear microphone 3. For the frequency range(s) in which no significant wind noise is present the microphone signal $x_1(n)$ obtained by the front microphone 2 is filtered for noise reduction by a noise filtering means comprised in the signal processing unit 7 as it is known in the art, e.g., a Wiener filter. Conventional noise reduction is, however, not helpful in the frequency range containing the wind noise. In this frequency range the microphone signal $x_1(n)$ is synthesized. For this partial speech synthesis the according spectral envelope is extracted from the microphone signal $x_2(n)$ obtained by the rear microphone 3 that is not affected by the wind perturbations. For the partial speech synthesis an excitation signal (pitch pulse) must also be estimated. To be more specific, if processing is carried out in the frequency sub-band domain, a speech signal portion is synthesized by the signal processing unit 7 in the form of

$$\hat{S}_r(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n) = \hat{E}(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n) \hat{A}(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$$

5 where Ω_μ and n denote the sub-band and the discrete time index of the signal frame as known in the art and $\hat{S}_r(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$, $\hat{E}(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ and $\hat{A}(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ denote the synthesized speech sub-band signal, the estimated spectral envelope and the excitation signal spectrum, respectively.

10 **[0037]** The signal processing unit 7 may also discriminate between voiced and unvoiced signals and cause synthesis of unvoiced signals by noise generators. When a voiced signal is detected, the pitch frequency is determined and the corresponding pitch pulses are set in intervals of the pitch period. It is noted that the excitation signal spectrum might also be retrieved from a database that comprises excitation signal samples (pitch pulse prototypes), in particular, speaker dependent excitation signal samples that are trained beforehand.

15 **[0038]** The signal processing unit 7 combines signal parts (sub-band signals) that are noise reduced with synthesized signal parts according to the current signal-to-noise ratio, i.e. signal parts of the microphone signal $x_1(n)$ that are heavily distorted by the wind noise generated by the air jets 6 are reconstructed on the basis of the spectral envelope extracted from the microphone signal $x_2(n)$ obtained by the rear microphone 3. The combined enhanced speech signal $y(n)$ is subsequently input in a speech dialog system 8 installed in the vehicular cabin 1 or in a telephone 8 for transmission to a remote communication party, for instance.

20 **[0039]** Figure 2 illustrates in some detail a signal processing means configured for speech enhancement when wind perturbations are present. According to the shown example a first microphone signal $x_1(n)$ that contains wind noise is input in the signal processing means and shall be enhanced by means of second microphone signal $\tilde{x}_2(n)$ supplied by a mobile device, e.g., a mobile phone, via a Bluetooth link.

25 **[0040]** It is assumed that the mobile device is positioned such that the microphone comprised in this mobile device detects no wind noise present in the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$. The sampling rate of the second microphone signal $\tilde{x}_2(n)$ is adapted to the one of the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$ by some sampling rate adaptation unit 10. The second microphone signal after the adaptation of the sampling rate is denoted by $x_2(n)$.

30 **[0041]** Since the microphone used to obtain the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$ (in the present example, a microphone installed in a vehicular cabin) and the microphone of the mobile device are separated from each other, the corresponding microphone signals representing an utterance of a speaker exhibit different signal travel times with respect to the speaker. One can determine these different travel times $D(n)$ by a correlation means 11 performing a cross correlation analysis

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$$D(n) = \underset{k}{\operatorname{argmax}} \left\{ \sum_{m=0}^{M-1} x_1(n-m-k) x_2(n-m) \right\}$$

40 where the number of input values used for the cross correlation analysis M can be chosen, e.g., as $M = 512$, and the variable k satisfies $0 \leq k < 70$. The cross correlation analysis is repeated periodically and the respective results are averaged ($\bar{D}(n)$) to correct for outliers. In addition, it might be preferred to detect speech activity and to perform the averaging only when speech is detected.

45 **[0042]** The smoothed (averaged) travel time difference $\bar{D}(n)$ may vary and, thus, in the present example a fixed travel time D_1 is introduced in the signal path of the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$ that represents an upper limit of the smoothed travel time difference $\bar{D}(n)$ and a travel time $D_2 = D_1 - \bar{D}$ is introduced accordingly in the signal path for $x_2(n)$ by the delay units 12.

50 **[0043]** The delayed signals are divided into sub-band signals $X_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ and $X_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$, respectively, by analysis filter banks 13. The filter banks may comprise Hann or Hamming windows, for instance, as known in the art. The sub-band signals $X_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ are processed by units 14 and 15 to obtain estimates of the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ and the excitation spectrum $\hat{A}_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$. Unit 16 is supplied with the sub-band signals $X_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ of the (delayed) second microphone signal $x_2(n)$ and extracts the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$.

55 **[0044]** In the present example it is assumed that the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$ is affected by wind noise in a low-frequency range, e.g., below 500 Hz. Wind detecting units 17 are comprised in the signal processing means shown in Figure 2 that analyze the sub-band signals and provide signals $W_{D,1}(n)$ and $W_{D,2}(n)$ indicating the presence or absence of significant wind noise to a control unit 18. It is an essential feature of this example of the present invention to synthesize signal parts of the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$ that are heavily affected by wind noise.

[0045] The synthesis can be performed based on the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ or the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$.

n). Preferably, the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ is used, if significant wind noise is detected only in the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$. Thus, in reaction to the signals $W_{D,1}(n)$ and $W_{D,2}(n)$ provided by the wind detecting units 17 the control unit 18 controls whether the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ or the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ or a combination of $\hat{E}_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ and $\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ is used by the synthesis unit 19 for the partial speech reconstruction.

[0046] Before the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ is used for synthesis of noisy parts of the first microphone signal $x_1(n)$ usually a power density adaptation has to be carried out, since the microphones used to obtain the first and the second microphone signals are separated from each other and, in general, exhibit different sensitivities.

[0047] Since wind noise perturbations are present in a low-frequency range only the spectral adaptation unit 20 may adapt the spectral envelope $\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ according to $\hat{E}_{2,mod}(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n) = \hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ with

$$V(n) = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{\mu=\mu_0}^{\mu_1} |\hat{E}_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)|^2}{\sum_{\mu=\mu_0}^{\mu_1} |\hat{E}_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)|^2}},$$

where the summation is carried out for a relatively high-frequency range only, ranging from a lower frequency sub-band μ_0 to a higher one μ_1 , e.g., from $\mu_0 = 1000$ Hz to $\mu_1 = 2000$ Hz. It should be noted that the above adaptation might be modified depending on the actual SNR, e.g., by replacing $V(n)$ by $V(n) \cdot z(\text{SNR})$, with $z(\text{SNR}) = 1$, if the SNR exceeds a predetermined value and else $z = 0$ or similar linear or nonlinear functions.

[0048] After the power adaptation the spectral envelope obtained from the second microphone signal $x_2(n)$ can be used by the synthesis unit 19 for shaping the excitation spectrum obtained by the unit 15:

$$\hat{S}_r(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n) = \hat{E}_{2,mod}(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n) \hat{A}_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n).$$

[0049] According to the present example only parts of the noisy microphone signal $x_1(n)$ are reconstructed. The other parts exhibiting a sufficiently high SNR are merely filtered for noise reduction. Thus, the signal processing means shown in Figure 2 comprises a noise filtering means 21 that receives the sub-band signals $X_2(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ to obtain noise reduced sub-band signals $\hat{S}_g(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$. These noise reduced sub-band signals $\hat{S}_g(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ as well as the synthesized signals $\hat{S}_r(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ obtained by the synthesis unit 19 are input into a mixing unit 22. In this unit the noise reduced and synthesized signal parts are combined depending on the respective SNR determined for the individual sub-bands. Some SNR level is pre-selected and sub-band signals $X_1(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ that exhibit an SNR exceeding this predetermined level are replaced by the synthesized signals $\hat{S}_r(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$.

[0050] In frequency ranges in which no significant wind noise is present noise reduced sub-band signals obtained by the noise filtering means 21 are used for obtaining the enhanced full-band output signal $y(n)$. In order to achieve the full-band signal $y(n)$ the sub-band signals selected from $\hat{S}_g(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ and $\hat{S}_r(e^{j\Omega_\mu}, n)$ depending on the SNR are subject to filtering by a synthesis filter bank comprised in the mixing unit 22 and employing the same window function as the analysis filter banks 13.

[0051] In the example shown in Figure 2 different units/means can be identified that are not necessarily to be interpreted as logically and/or physically separated units but rather the shown units might be integrated to some suitable degree.

[0052] All previously discussed embodiments are not intended as limitations but serve as examples illustrating features and advantages of the invention. It is to be understood that some or all of the above described features can also be combined in different ways.

Claims

1. Method for speech signal processing, comprising
 - detecting a speaker's utterance by at least one first microphone positioned at a first distance from a source of interference and in a first direction to the source of interference to obtain a first microphone signal;
 - detecting the speaker's utterance by at least one second microphone positioned at a second distance from the

source of interference that is larger than the first distance and/or in a second direction to the source of interference in which less sound is transmitted by the source of interference than in the first direction to obtain a second microphone signal;

determining a signal-to-noise ratio of the first microphone signal; and

synthesizing at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below a predetermined level based on the second microphone signal.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising extracting a spectral envelope from the second microphone signal; and wherein the at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level is synthesized by means of the spectral envelope extracted from the second microphone signal and an excitation signal extracted from the first microphone signal, the second microphone signal or retrieved from a database.
3. The method according to claim 1 or 2, further comprising extracting a spectral envelope from the first microphone signal and synthesizing at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level by means of the spectral envelope extracted from the first microphone signal, if the determined signal-to-noise ratio lies within a predetermined range below the predetermined level or exceeds the corresponding signal-to-noise determined for the second microphone signal or lies within a predetermined range below the corresponding signal-to-noise determined for the second microphone signal.
4. The method according to one of the preceding claims, further comprising filtering for noise reduction at least parts of the first microphone signal that exhibit a signal-to-noise ratio above the predetermined level to obtain noise reduced signal parts.
5. The method according to claim 4, further comprising combining the at least one synthesized part of the first microphone signal and the noise reduced signal parts.
6. The method according to one of the preceding claims, further comprising dividing the first microphone signal into first microphone sub-band signals and the second microphone signal into second microphone sub-band signals and wherein the signal-to-noise ratio is determined for each of the first microphone sub-band signals and wherein first microphone sub-band signals are synthesized which exhibit an signal-to-noise ratio below the predetermined level.
7. The method according to one of the preceding claims, wherein the second microphone signal is obtained from a microphone comprised in a mobile device, in particular, a mobile phone, a Personal Digital Assistant, or a Portable Navigation Device.
8. The method according to claim 7, further comprising converting the sampling rate of the second microphone signal to obtain an adapted second microphone signal and correcting the adapted second microphone signal for time delay with respect to the first microphone signal, in particular, by periodically repeated cross-correlation analysis.
9. The method according to one of the preceding claims, wherein the source of interference comprises one or more air jets of an air conditioning installed in a vehicular cabin and the first microphone signal contains wind noise caused by the one or more air jets.
10. The method according to claim 9 in combination with claim 3, wherein the at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level is synthesized by means of the spectral envelope extracted from the second microphone signal only, if the determined wind noise in the second microphone signal is below a predetermined wind noise level, in particular, if no wind noise is present in the second microphone signal.
11. Computer program product comprising at least one computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps of the method of one of the preceding claims when run on a computer.
12. Signal processing means, comprising a first input configured to receive a first microphone signal representing a speaker's utterance and containing noise; a second input configured to receive a second microphone signal representing the speaker's utterance;

a means configured to determine a signal-to-noise ratio of the first microphone signal; and
a reconstruction means configured to synthesize at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below a predetermined level based on the second microphone signal.

- 5 **13.** The signal processing means according to claim 12, wherein the reconstruction means comprises a means configured to extract a spectral envelope from the second microphone signal and is configured to synthesize the at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level by means of the extracted spectral envelope.
- 10 **14.** The signal processing means according to claim 13, further comprising a database storing samples of excitation signals and wherein the reconstruction means is configured to synthesize the at least one part of the first microphone signal for which the determined signal-to-noise ratio is below the predetermined level by means of one of the stored samples of excitation signals.
- 15 **15.** The signal processing means according to one of the claims 12 to 14, further comprising a noise filtering means configured to reduce noise at least in parts of the first microphone signal that exhibit a signal-to-noise ratio above the predetermined level to obtain noise reduced signal parts.
- 20 **16.** The signal processing means according to claim 15, wherein the reconstruction means further comprises a mixing means configured to combine the at least one synthesized part of the first microphone signal and the noise reduced signal parts.
- 25 **17.** The signal processing means according to one of the claims 12 to 16, further comprising
a first analysis filter bank configured to divide the first microphone signal into first microphone sub-band signals;
a second analysis filter bank configured to divide the second microphone signal into second microphone sub-band signals; and
a synthesis filter bank configured to synthesize sub-band signals to obtain a full-band signal.
- 30 **18.** Speech communication system, comprising
at least one first microphone configured to generate the first microphone signal;
at least one second microphone configured to generate the second microphone signal;
the signal processing means according to one of the claims 12 to 17.
- 35 **19.** The speech communication system according to claim 18, wherein the at least one first microphone is installed in a vehicle and the at least one second microphone is installed in the vehicle or comprised in a mobile device, in particular, a mobile phone, a Personal Digital Assistant, or a Portable Navigation Device.
- 40 **20.** Hands-free set, in particular, installed in a vehicular cabin of an automobile, comprising the signal processing means according to one of the claims 12 to 17.
- 45 **21.** Mobile device, in particular, a mobile phone, a Personal Digital Assistant, or a Portable Navigation Device, comprising the signal processing means according to one of the claims 12 to 17.
- 50 **22.** Speech dialog system installed in a vehicle, in particular, an automobile, comprising the signal processing means according to one of the claims 12 to 17.
- 55

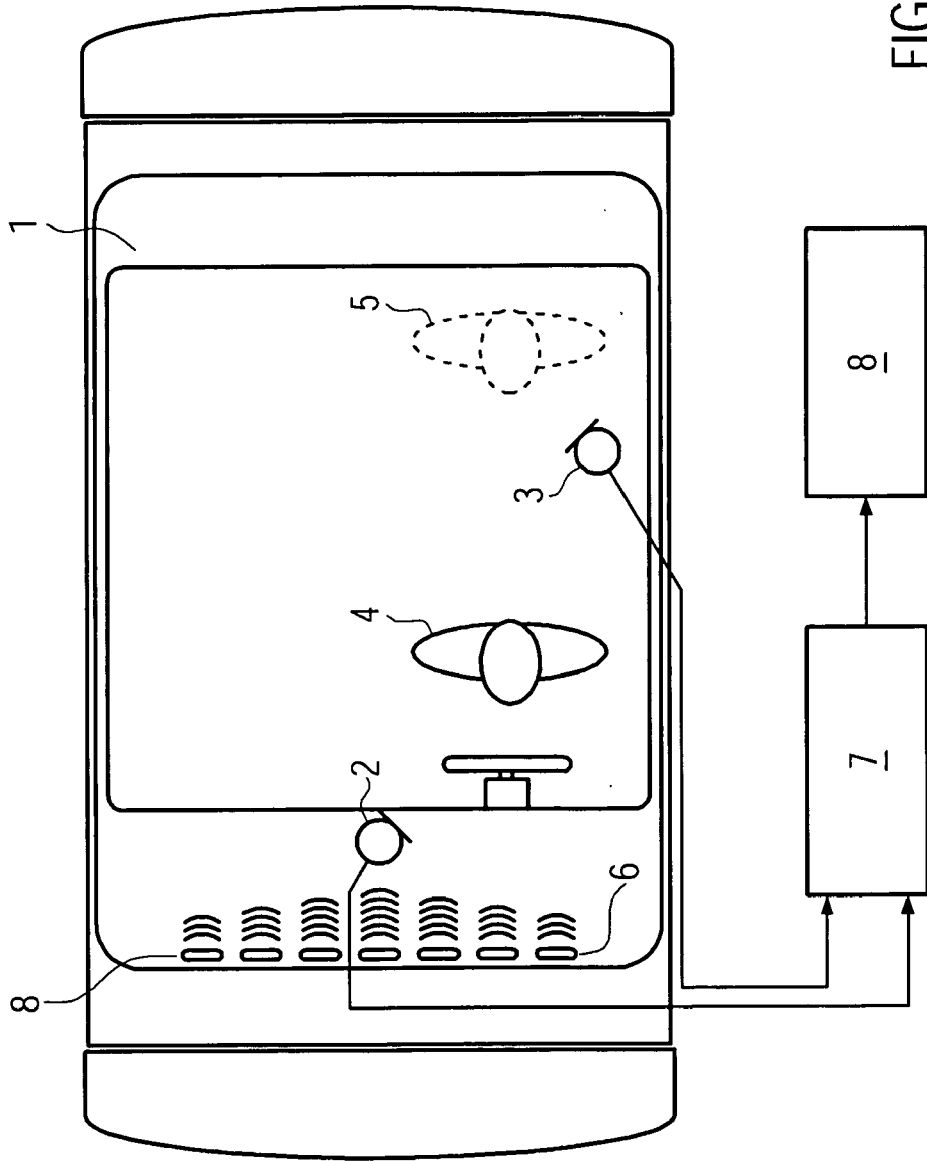


FIG. 1

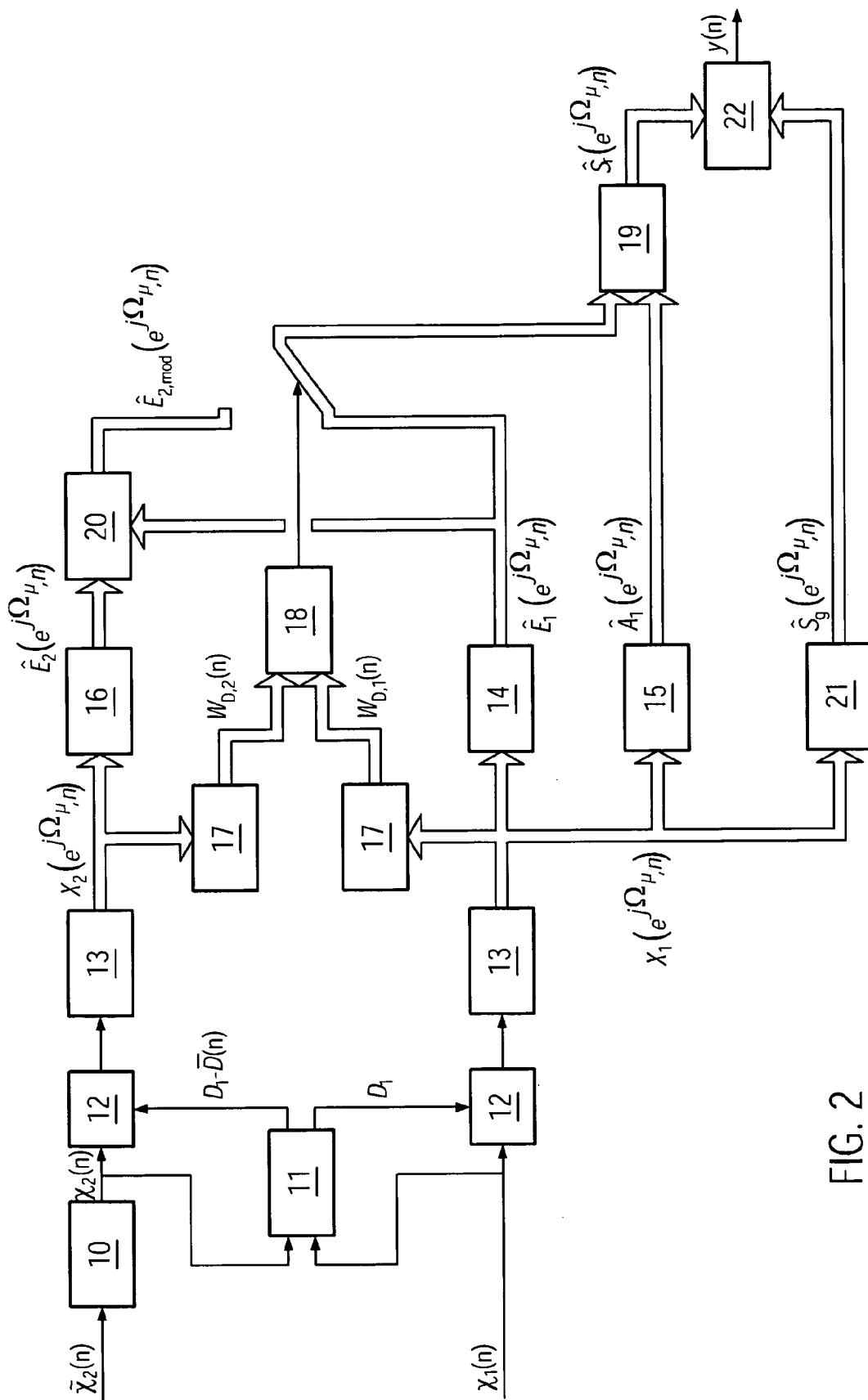


FIG. 2

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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