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Speech and multimedia Transmission Quality (STQ) - Speech quality performance in the presence of background noise - Part 1: Background noise simulation technique and background noise database

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Speech quality performance
in the presence of background noise;
Part 1: Background noise simulation technique
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Contents

Intellectual Property Rights	5
Foreword.....	5
Modal verbs terminology.....	5
Introduction	5
1 Scope	7
2 References	7
2.1 Normative references	7
2.2 Informative references.....	8
3 Definition of terms, symbols and abbreviations.....	9
3.1 Terms.....	9
3.2 Symbols.....	9
3.3 Abbreviations	9
4 Overview of existing methods for realistic sound reproduction.....	9
4.1 Introduction	9
4.2 Surround Sound Techniques.....	10
4.3 IOSONO®	11
4.4 Eidophonie	11
4.5 Four-loudspeaker arrangement for playback of binaurally recorded signals.....	12
4.6 NTT Background-Noise Database	13
4.7 General conclusions	13
5 Recording arrangement	14
5.1 Binaural recordings	14
5.2 Equalization procedure.....	14
6 Loudspeaker Setup for Background Noise Simulation	16
6.1 Test Room Requirements	16
6.2 Loudspeaker Positioning	17
6.3 Equalization and Calibration	18
6.3.1 Overview	18
6.3.2 Separate equalization for each of the four loudspeakers	18
6.3.3 Separate level adjustment for each loudspeaker	20
6.3.4 Equalization for the two left-hand and the two right-hand loudspeakers.....	20
6.3.5 Equalization and level adjustment for the subwoofer	21
6.3.6 Delay compensation.....	21
6.3.7 Overall equalization for all loudspeakers.....	22
6.3.8 Troubleshooting failed equalizations	23
6.3.9 Automated equalization and calibration procedure.....	23
6.4 Accuracy of the reproduction arrangement	23
6.4.0 Introduction.....	23
6.4.1 Comparison between original sound field and simulated sound field.....	23
6.4.2 Displacement of the test arrangement in the simulated sound field.....	25
6.4.3 Transmission of background noise: Comparison of terminal performance in the original sound field and the simulated sound field	27
6.5 Simulation of additional acoustic conditions.....	30
7 Background Noise Simulation in cars	31
7.1 General setup.....	31
7.2 Recording arrangement	32
7.2.0 Introduction.....	32
7.2.1 Recording setup with the terminal's microphone	32
7.2.2 Recording setup with a pair of cardioid microphones.....	33
7.3 Equalization and calibration with the terminal's microphone.....	33
7.3.1 Overview	33
7.3.2 Separate equalization for each of the four loudspeakers.....	34

7.3.3	Separate level adjustment for each loudspeaker	36
7.3.4	Equalization for the two front and the two rear loudspeakers.....	36
7.3.5	Equalization and level adjustment for the subwoofer	37
7.3.6	Delay adjustment	37
7.3.7	Overall equalization	38
7.3.8	Troubleshooting failed equalizations	38
7.4	Equalization and Calibration with a pair of cardioid microphones	38
7.4.1	Overview	38
7.4.2	Pair-wise equalization for the left-hand loudspeakers	39
7.4.3	Separate level adjustment for the left-hand loudspeakers	41
7.4.4	Pair-wise equalization and separate level adjustment for the right-hand loudspeakers	41
7.4.5	Equalization and level adjustment for the subwoofer	41
7.4.6	Delay compensation.....	41
7.4.7	Overall equalization	42
7.4.8	Troubleshooting failed equalizations	42
7.5	Accuracy of the reproduction arrangement	43
7.5.1	Comparison between original sound field and simulated sound field.....	43
7.5.2	Transmission of background noise: Comparison of terminal performance in the original sound field and the simulated sound field	44
7.6	Automated equalization and calibration procedure	46
8	Background Noise Database	46
8.0	Introduction	46
8.1	Binaural signals	47
8.2	Binaural signals identical to the background noise recordings provided in ETSI TS 103 224.....	49
8.3	Stereophonic signals.....	50
Annex A (informative): Comparison of Tests in Sending Direction and D-Values Conducted in Different Rooms.....		51
A.0	Introduction	51
A.1	Test Setup.....	51
A.2	Results of the Tests	52
A.2.0	Introduction	52
A.2.1	Sending Frequency Response Characteristics and SLR	52
A.2.2	D-Value with Pink Noise	52
A.2.3	D-Value with Cafeteria Noise	53
A.3	Conclusions	53
Annex B (informative): Graphs of test results in Annex A.....		54
History		62

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Foreword

This ETSI Standard (ES) has been produced by ETSI Technical Committee Speech and multimedia Transmission Quality (STQ).

The present document is part 1 of a multi-part deliverable covering Speech and multimedia Transmission Quality (STQ); Speech quality performance in the presence of background noise, as identified below:

ETSI ES 202 396-1: "Background noise simulation technique and background noise database";

ETSI EG 202 396-2: "Background noise transmission - Network simulation - Subjective test database and results";

ETSI EG 202 396-3: "Background noise transmission - Objective test methods".

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Introduction

Background noise is present in most of the conversations today. Background noise may impact the speech communication performance to terminal and network equipment significantly. Therefore testing and optimization of such equipment is necessary using realistic background noises. Furthermore reproducible conditions for the tests are required which can be guaranteed only under lab type condition.

The present document addresses this issue by describing a methodology for recording and playback of background noises under well-defined and calibratable conditions in a lab-type environment. Furthermore a database with real background noises is included.

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1 Scope

The quality of background noise transmission is an important factor, which significantly contributes to the perceived overall quality of speech. Both existing and, even more notably, the new generation of terminals, networks and system configurations, including broadband services, can be greatly improved when designed properly, with consideration and presence of background noise. The present document:

- describes a noise simulation environment using realistic background noise scenarios for laboratory use;
- contains a database including the relevant background noise samples for subjective and objective evaluation.

The present document provides information about the recording techniques needed for background noise recordings and discusses the advantages and drawbacks of existing methods. Additionally, the present document describes the requirements for laboratory conditions. The loudspeaker setup and the loudspeaker calibration and equalization procedure are described. The simulation environment specified can be used for the evaluation and optimization of terminals and of complex configurations including terminals, networks and other configurations. The main application areas should be: office, home and car environment.

The setup and database as described in the present document are applicable for:

- Objective performance evaluation of terminals in different (simulated) background noise environments.
- Speech processing evaluation by using the pre-processed speech signal in the presence of background noise, recorded by a terminal.
- Subjective evaluation of terminals by performing conversational tests, specific double talk tests or talking and listening tests in the presence of background noise.
- Subjective evaluation in third party listening tests by recording the speech samples of terminals in the presence of background noise.

2 References

2.1 Normative references

References are either specific (identified by date of publication and/or edition number or version number) or non-specific. For specific references, only the cited version applies. For non-specific references, the latest version of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

Referenced documents which are not found to be publicly available in the expected location might be found at <https://docbox.etsi.org/Reference>.

NOTE: While any hyperlinks included in this clause were valid at the time of publication, ETSI cannot guarantee their long term validity.

The following referenced documents are necessary for the application of the present document.

- [1] [Recommendation ITU-T P.57](#): "Artificial ears".
- [2] [Recommendation ITU-T P.58](#): "Head and torso simulator for telephony".
- [3] [ETSI TS 103 224](#): "Speech and multimedia Transmission Quality (STQ); A sound field reproduction method for terminal testing including a background noise database".

2.2 Informative references

References are either specific (identified by date of publication and/or edition number or version number) or non-specific. For specific references, only the cited version applies. For non-specific references, the latest version of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

NOTE: While any hyperlinks included in this clause were valid at the time of publication, ETSI cannot guarantee their long term validity.

The following referenced documents are not necessary for the application of the present document but they assist the user with regard to a particular subject area.

- [i.1] Surround Sound Past, Present, and Future: "A history of multichannel audio from mag stripe to Dolby Digital", Joseph Hull - Dolby Laboratories Inc.
 - [i.2] AES preprint 3332 (1992): "[Improved Possibilities of Binaural Recording and Playback Techniques](#)", K. Genuit, H.W. Gierlich; U. Künzli.
 - [i.3] AES preprint 3732 (1993): "[A System for the Reproduction Technique for Playback of Binaural Recordings](#)", N. Xiang, K. Genuit, H.W. Gierlich.
 - [i.4] NTTAT Database: "[Ambient Noise Database CD-ROM](#)".
 - [i.5] ISO 11904-1: "Acoustics - Determination of sound immission from sound sources placed close to the ear - Part 1: Technique using a microphone in a real ear (MIRE technique)".
 - [i.6] J. Blauert: "The psychophysics of human sound localization", Spatial Hearing.
 - [i.7] Void.
 - [i.8] Void.
 - [i.9] Recommendation ITU-T P.340: "Transmission characteristics and speech quality parameters of hands-free terminals".
 - [i.10] Recommendation ITU-T P.64: "Determination of sensitivity/frequency characteristics of local telephone systems".
 - [i.11] Recommendation ITU-T G.722: "7 kHz audio-coding within 64 kbit/s".
 - [i.12] Genuit, K.: "A Description of the Human Outer Ear Transfer Function by Elements of Communication Theory (No. B6-8)".
- NOTE: Proceedings of the 12th International Congress on Acoustics. Toronto published on behalf of the Technical Program Committee by the Executive Committee of the 12th International Congress on Acoustics.
- [i.13] IEC 60050-722: "International Electrotechnical Vocabulary - Chapter 722: Telephony".
 - [i.14] "Wellenfeldsynthese - Eine neue Dimension der 3D-Audiowiedergabe"; Fernseh- und Kino-Technik, Nr. 11/2002, pp. 735-738.
 - [i.15] N.Lee: "IOSONO" Computers in Entertainment, volume 2, issue 3 (2004).
 - [i.16] P. Scherer: "Ein neues Verfahren der raumbezogenen Stereophonie mit verbesserter Übertragung der Rauminformation"; Rundfunktechnische Mitteilungen, 1977, pp. 196-204.
 - [i.17] Void.
 - [i.18] ETSI TS 151 010-1: "Digital cellular telecommunications system (Phase 2+) (GSM); Mobile Station (MS) conformance specification; Part 1: Conformance specification (3GPP TS 51.010-1)".
 - [i.19] Void.

- [i.20] ETSI TR 126 921: "Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS); LTE; 5G; Investigations on ambient noise reproduction systems for acoustic testing of terminals (3GPP TR 26.921)".

3 Definition of terms, symbols and abbreviations

3.1 Terms

For the purposes of the present document, the following terms apply:

cross-talk: appearance of undesired energy in a channel, owing to the presence of a signal in another channel, caused by, for example, induction, conduction or non-linearity

NOTE: See IEC 60050-722 [i.13].

3.2 Symbols

Void.

3.3 Abbreviations

For the purposes of the present document, the following abbreviations apply:

CD	Compact Disc
DF	Diffuse Field
EQ	Equalization
FF	Free Field
FFT	Fast Fourier Transform
FIR	Finite Impulse Response
HATS	Head And Torso Simulator
ID	Independent of Direction
IIR	Infinite Impulse Response
MIRE	Microphone In Real Ear
MRP	Mouth Reference Point
NTT	Nippon Telegraph and Telephone corporation
SLR	Send Loudness Rating
VHF	Very High Frequency

4 Overview of existing methods for realistic sound reproduction

4.1 Introduction

In general the existing methods for close to original sound recording and reproduction aimed for different applications:

- Techniques intending to reproduce the actual sound field.
- Techniques providing hearing adequate (ear related) signals in the human ear canal.
- Techniques generating artificial acoustical environments.

Within this clause the different methods are briefly described and their applicability for close to original sound-filed reproduction is discussed. A variety of methods have been studied, in the following a summary of the most important ones relevant to the present document is given. The different methods were analysed on the basis of the following requirements:

- The background noise recording technique should be:
 - easy to use;
 - easy to calibrate;
 - capable of wideband recording;
 - available at reasonable costs;
 - mostly compatible to existing standards and procedures used in telecommunications testing;
 - applicable to different environments (at least office, home and car).
- The background noise simulation arrangement should:
 - be easy to setup;
 - not require any specific acoustical treatment for the simulation requirement;
 - provide a mostly realistic background noise simulation for all typical background noises faced with in telecommunication applications;
 - be easy to calibrate;
 - be mostly insensitive against the positioning of (test)-objects in the simulated sound field;
 - be applicable to all typical terminals used in telecommunication;
 - be available at reasonable costs.

4.2 Surround Sound Techniques

The basics of surround techniques are found in cinema applications. The virtual image provided by stereophonic presentation of sounds seemed not to be sufficient for the large screen display in cinema. In the 1950s 4-channel and 6-channel sound tracks recorded on magnetic stripes associated to the films were developed, 4-channel and 6-channel loudspeaker systems were installed in cinemas to reproduce the multichannel sounds. The newer techniques were mostly developed and marketed by Dolby® [i.1]: Dolby Surround, Dolby Surround Pro Logic, Dolby Digital and Dolby Digital Surround are examples for the techniques introduced more recently. The most common configuration is the "5.1-configuration" used in cinema but in home applications as well. The reproduction system consists of left and right channel, a centre speaker, two surround channels (left and right, arranged in the back of the listener) and a low frequency channel for low frequency effects.

The aim of all surround system is to create an artificial acoustical image in the recording studio rather than recording a real acoustical scenario and providing true to original playback possibilities.

On the recording side, special surround encoders are used allowing the 5-channel signal to be encoded from a special mixing console to the 5.1 digital data stream. The playback system consists of a special decoder allowing to separate the 5 channels again and distribute them on the 5.1 loudspeaker playback system. The systems are mono and stereo compatible and can handle the older 4-channel surround techniques by a specific decoder.

Applications:

Typical applications for surround systems are cinemas and home theatres. The source material is produced by professional recording studios using multi-channel mixing consoles and specific 5.1 decoding techniques. In mostly all cases virtual environments are created which support the visual image by an appropriate acoustical image.

Conclusion:

Surround techniques are designed for creating acoustical images rather than for close to original recording and reproduction. Although the spatial impression provided by surround techniques is sometimes remarkable the acoustical image created is always artificial. Due to the lack of easy to use recording techniques allowing a spatial recording of a sound field surround sound techniques are not suitable for creation of a background noise database with realistic background noises and calibrated background noise simulation in a lab.

4.3 IOSONO®

The IOSONO® sound system (see [i.14], [i.15] and [i.16]) is based on the Wave-Field Synthesis. It employs Huygens principle of wave theory. Applied to acoustics this principle means that it is possible to reproduce any form of wave front with an array of loudspeakers, so that virtual sound sources can be placed anywhere within a listening area. For practical use it is necessary to position loudspeakers all-round the playback room. In order to generate realistic sound fields the input signal for each loudspeaker has to be calculated separately. For this purpose each single sound source (e.g. voices) has to be recorded individually. If the recordings are done in a room, the characteristics (like reverberation) of the recording room also have to be recorded separately. All resulting sound tracks are then mixed and manipulated during the post-editing process and the reproduction.

The natural and realistic spatial sound reproduction is then achieved in a wide area of the play back room. Common 5.1 stereo systems achieve a "realistic" sound reproduction only in a small area of the reproduction room.

Applications:

Typical applications are sound systems for home use, cinemas and other entertainment events. The IOSONO® sound system is also able to play back recordings made in common stereo or 5.1 stereo techniques.

Conclusion:

The drawbacks of this method are the components needed: a sophisticated recording system, a powerful computing unit for real-time mixing the large number of recorded sound tracks and the number of loudspeakers that have to be installed in the listening room. In a common size cinema for example about 200 loudspeakers are needed.

The advantage is that with the IOSONO® sound system a very realistic sound reproduction is possible, but it requires an enormous effort, which is too high for daily use in laboratories.

4.4 Eidophonie

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This method was developed for realistic sound reproduction using the VHF transmission technique. The main principle is to separate the base signal from the part of the signal, which contains the information about the direction of sound incidence.

For recording a 1st order gradient microphone with a cardioid directivity is used. During the recordings its directivity rotates with 38 kHz in the recording plane. This "turning microphone" provides an amplitude-modulated signal at its electrical output. The resulting side bands are out of the transmitted frequency range. But these side bands contain the information of the direction of sound incidence. Using the VHF transmission techniques this phase information can be transmitted within the 2nd audio-frequency channel.

The sound reproduction is made by a spatial demodulation: a switch is positioned before each loudspeaker and each switches synchronously with the turning directivity. So a low pass filtered short-term section of the signal containing the information of the direction of sound incidence is played back on each loudspeaker. The loudspeakers are positioned all around the playback room.

Applications:

Eidophonie was developed to provide a realistic sound environment using a signal received from a VHF broadcast station. With this technique the common stereo sound reproduction should be improved. Nevertheless Eidophonie is also compatible to common mono and stereo recordings.

Conclusion:

Benefits of this system are that three loudspeakers are sufficient to produce a realistic sound field. Using more loudspeakers (e.g. 16) the spatial sound reproduction gets more and more independent from the listening position. Moreover the independency of the transmitted sound from the acoustics of the reproduction room increases with the number of loudspeakers used. But there are significant limitations of the method: The microphone directivity is frequency dependent and not ideal. Therefore the interference between the different channels is created. A second problem is the loudspeaker directivity, which does not fit the microphone directivity. This problem could be reduced if the number of channels would be increased. This however is not possible due to the limited directivity of the microphone arrangement used.

Localization of sound sources is hardly possible due to the interference effects of the microphone signals and the loudspeakers. At close to original reproduction depends on the number and distribution of sound sources present. For most of the sound source combinations this goal cannot be achieved.

In general the coding technique needed to record the sound field by a "turning microphone", is complicated and not available commercially. A further drawback of this method is the complicated decoding technique needed on the reproduction side, which is also not commercially available.

4.5 Four-loudspeaker arrangement for playback of binaurally recorded signals

This reproduction procedure was originally investigated to reproduce binaurally signals recorded using artificial head technology. It improves the impressions of direction and distance. Four loudspeakers are typically positioned in a square formation around a central point (listening point) equidistantly, e.g. 2 m. The binaural recordings are reproduced as follows: the two left-hand loudspeakers receive the same free-field equalized artificial head signal of the left-hand channel only. The right-hand side is arranged similarly. For equalization, the transfer function from the two left-hand loudspeakers is measured at the artificial head's left ear channel. With this result, several IIR and FIR filters are designed, with which the input signal of the left-hand loudspeakers during the play back is filtered in such a way that the transfer function then measured at the artificial head's left-hand channel is spectrally flat. The equalization for the right-hand loudspeakers is done similarly.

The equalization procedure does not take into account the correction of cross-talk. This means, the left-hand channel of the artificial head is only equalized for the left-hand loudspeakers, but during the reproduction this left-hand channel will also receive a signal from the right-hand loudspeakers. But despite this simplification, the equalization procedure provides a realistic binaural listening impression.

Investigations [i.2] and [i.3] carried out in different rooms have shown that directional hearing and distance localization by sound reproduction with this four-loudspeaker arrangement are comparable to those with sound reproduction by headphones.

For equalization there are several strategies. The equalization can either be done for each loudspeaker individually or by pairs left - right or by pairs front - rear.

Applications:

A practical application is the sound reproduction for binaural recordings in a typical office-type room, e.g. for listening tests but objective tests as well. The investigations shown in [i.2] and [i.3] indicate that the subjective impression provided by the arrangement corresponds to the headphone reproduction of binaural recordings with respect to the perception of the sound colour, the distance perception and (with some limitations) with respect to the sound source localization. The data provided indicate that the setup could be used for the objective measurements of e.g. telecommunication terminals.

This four-loudspeaker arrangement is also used in advanced driving simulators - which typically provide a visual simulation of the driving situation in addition to the acoustical playback system.