ADAPTIVE RATE CONTROL ALGORITHM FOR LOW COMPLEXITY AAC ENCODING

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention generally relates to devices and processes for encoding audio signal, and more particularly to an AAC-LC encoder and method that is applicable in the field of audio compression for transmission or storage purposes, particularly those involving low power devices.

Background of the Invention

[0002] Efficient audio coding systems are those that could optimally eliminate irrelevant and redundant parts of an audio stream. The first is achieved by reducing psychoacoustical irrelevancy through psychoacoustics analysis. The term "perceptual audio coder" was coined to refer to those compression schemes that exploit the properties of human auditory perception. Further reduction is obtained from redundancy reduction.

[0003] The psychoacoustics analysis generates masking thresholds on the basis of a psychoacoustic model of human hearing and aural perception. The psychoacoustic modeling takes into account the frequency-dependent thresholds of human hearing, and a psychoacoustic phenomenon referred to as masking, whereby a strong frequency component close to one or more weaker frequency components tends to mask the weaker components, rendering them inaudible to a human listener. This makes it possible to omit the weaker frequency components when encoding audio signal, and thereby achieve a higher degree of compression, without adversely affecting the perceived quality of the encoded audio data stream. The masking data comprises a signal-to-mask ratio value for each frequency sub-band from the filter bank. These signal-to-mask ratio values represent the amount of signal masked by the human ear in each frequency sub-band, and are therefore also referred to as masking thresholds.

[0004] FIG 1 shows a schematic functional block diagram of a typical perceptual encoder. The perceptual encoder **1** comprises a filter bank **2** for time to frequency transformation, a psychoacoustics model (PAM) **3**, a quantization unit **4**, and an entropy

unit **5**. The filter bank, PAM, and quantization unit are the essential parts of a typical perceptual encoder. The quantization unit uses the masking thresholds from the PAM to decide how best to use the available number of data bits to represent the input audio data stream.

[0005] MPEG4 Advanced Audio Coding (AAC) is the current state-of-the-art perceptual audio coder enabling transparent CD quality results at bit rate as low as 64 kbps. See, e.g., ISO/IEC 14496-3, Information Technology—Coding of audio-visual objects, Part 3: Audio (1999). FIG 2 shows a detailed functional block diagram of an AAC perceptual coder. The AAC perceptual coder **10** comprises an AAC gain control tool module **11**, a psychoacoustic model **12**, a window length decision module **13**, a filter bank module **14**, a spectral processing module **15**, a quantization and coding module **16**, and a bitstream formatter module **17**. Noticeably, an extra spectral processing for AAC is performed by the spectral processing module **15** before the quantization. This spectral processing block is used to reduce redundant components, comprising mostly of prediction tools.

[0006] AAC uses Modified Discrete Cosine Transform (MDCT) with 50% overlap in its filterbank module. After overlap-add process, due to the time domain aliasing cancellation, it is expected to get a perfect reconstruction of the original signal. However, this is not the case because error is introduced during the quantization process. The idea of a perceptual coder is to hide this quantization error such that our hearing will not notice it. Those spectral components that we would not be able to hear are also eliminated from the coded stream. This irrelevancy reduction exploits the masking properties of human ear. The calculation of masking threshold is among the computationally intensive task of the encoder.

[0007] As shown in FIG 3, the AAC quantization module **16** operates in two-nested loops. The inner loop comprises the operations of adjust global gain **32**, calculate bit used **33**, and determination of whether the bit rate constraint is fulfilled **34**. Briefly, the inner loop quantizes the input vector and increases the quantizer step size until the output vector can be coded with the available number of bits. After completion of the inner loop, the out loop checks the distortion of each scale factor band **35** and, if the allowed distortion is exceeded **36**, amplifies the scale factor band **31** and calls the inner loop again. AAC uses a non-uniform quantizer.

[0008] A high quality perceptual coder has an exhaustive psychoacoustics model (PAM) to calculate the masking threshold, which is an indication of the allowed distortion. As shown in FIG 4, the PAM calculates the masking threshold by the following steps: FFT of time domain input **41**, calculating energy in 1/3 bark domain **42**, convolution with spreading function **43**, tonality index calculation **44**, masking threshold adjustment **45**, comparison with threshold in quiet **46**, and adaptation to scale factor band domain **47**. Due to limited time or computational resource, very often this threshold has to be violated because simply the bits available are not enough to satisfy the masking threshold demand. This poses extra computational weight in the bit allocation module as it iterates through the nested loops trying to fit both distortion and bit rate requirements until the exit condition is reached.

[0009] Another feature of AAC is the ability to switch between two different window sizes depending on whether the signal is stationary or transient. This feature combats the pre-echo artifact, which all perceptual encoders are prone to.

[0010] It is to be noted that FIG 2 shows the complete diagram of MPEG4-AAC with 3 profiles defined in the standard including: Main profile (with all the tools enabled demanding substantial processing power); Low Complexity (LC) profile (with lesser compression ratio to save processing and RAM usage); and Scalable Sampling Rate Profile (with ability to adapt to various bandwidths). As processing power savings is our main concern, this invention only deals with the LC profile.

[0011] It is also to be noted that AAC-LC employs only the Temporal Noise Shaping (TNS) sub-module and stereo coding sub-module without the rest of the prediction tools in the spectral processing module **15** as shown in FIG 2. Working in tandem with block switching, TNS is also used to reduce the pre-echo artifact by controlling the temporal shape of the quantization noise. However, in LC profile, the order of TNS is limited. The stereo coding is used to control the imaging of coding noise by coding the left and right coefficients as sum and difference.

[0012] The AAC standard only ensures that a valid AAC stream is correctly decodable by all AAC decoders. The encoder can accommodate variations in implementation, suited to different resources available and applications areas. AAC-LC is the profile tiled to have lesser computational burden compared to the other profiles. However, the overall efficiency still depends on the detail implementations of the encoder

itself. Certain prior attempts to optimize AAC-LC encoder are summarized in Kurniawati et al., New Implementation Techniques of an Efficient MPEG Advanced Audio Coder, IEEE Transactions on Consumer Electronics, (2004), Vol. 50, pp. 655-665. However, further improvements on the MPEG4-AAC are still desirable to transmit and store audio data with high quality in a low bit rate device running on a low power supply.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0013] Preferred embodiments according to the present invention will now be described with reference to the Figures, in which like reference numerals denote like elements.

[0014] FIG 1 shows a schematic functional block diagram of a typical perceptual encoder.

[0015] FIG 2 shows a detailed functional block diagram of MPEG4-AAC perceptual coder.

[0016] FIG 3 shows traditional encoder structure focusing on PAM and bit allocation module.

[0017] FIG 4 shows traditional estimation of masking threshold.

[0018] FIG 5 shows a configuration of the PAM and quantization unit of AAC-LC encoder in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0019] FIG 6 shows a functional flowchart of the simplified PAM **50** of FIG 5 for masking threshold estimation in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0020] FIG 7 shows correlation between Q values and number of bits used in long window.

[0021] FIG 8 shows correlation between Q values and number of bits used in long window.

[0022] FIG 9 shows correlation between Q values and number of bits used in short window.

[0023] FIG 10 shows gradient and Q adjustments.

[0024] FIG 11 shows exemplary electronic devices where the present invention is applicable.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[0025] The present invention may be understood more readily by reference to the following detailed description of certain embodiments of the invention.

[0026] Throughout this application, where publications are referenced, the disclosures of these publications are hereby incorporated by reference, in their entireties, into this application in order to more fully describe the state of art to which this invention pertains.

[0027] One embodiment of the present invention provides a process for encoding an audio data. In this embodiment, the process comprises receiving uncompressed audio data from an input, generating MDCT spectrum for each frame of the uncompressed audio data using a filterbank, estimating masking thresholds for current frame to be encoded based on the MDCT spectrum, wherein the masking thresholds reflect a bit budget for the current frame, performing quantization of the current frame based on the masking thresholds, wherein after the quantization of the current frame, the bit budget for next frame is updated for estimating the masking thresholds of the next frame, and encoding the quantized audio data.

[0028] In another embodiment of the process, the step of generating MDCT spectrum further comprises generating MDCT spectrum using the following equation:

$$X_{i,k} = 2\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} z_{i,n} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{N}\left(n+n_o\right)\left(k+\frac{1}{2}\right)\right), for 0 \le k \le N/2$$

where $X_{i,k}$ is the MDCT coefficient at block index i and spectral index k; z is the windowed input sequence; n the sample index; k the spectral coefficient index; i the block index; and N the window length (2048 for long and 256 for short); and where n_o is computed as (N/2 +1)/2.

[0029] In another embodiment of the process, the step of estimating masking thresholds further comprises: calculating energy in scale factor band domain using the MDCT spectrum; performing simple triangle spreading function; calculating tonality index; performing masking threshold adjustment (weighted by variable Q); and performing comparison with threshold in quiet; thereby outputting the masking threshold for quantization.

[0030] In another further embodiment of the process, the step of performing quantization further comprises performing quantization using a non-uniform quantizer according to the following equation:

$$x_quantized(i) = \text{int}\left[\frac{x^{3/4}}{2^{\frac{3}{16}(gl-scf(i))}} + 0.4054\right]$$

where x_quantized(i) is the quantized spectral values at scale factor band index (i); i is the scale factor band index, x the spectral values within that band to be quantized, gl the global scale factor (the rate controlling parameter), and scf(i) the scale factor value (the distortion controlling parameter).

[0031] In another further embodiment of the process, the step of performing quantization further comprises searching only the scale factor values to control the distortion and not adjusting the global scale factor value, whereby the global scale factor value is taken as the first value of the scale factor (scf(0)).

[0032] In another further embodiment of the process, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises linearly adjusting variable Q using the following formula:

$$NewQ = Q1 + (R1 - desired_R)^{(Q2-Q1)/(R2-R1)}$$

where NewQ is the variable Q "after" the adjustment; Q1 and Q2 are the Q value for one and two previous frame respectively; and R1 and R2 are the number of bits used in previous and two previous frame, and desired_R is the desired number of bits used; and wherein the value (Q2-Q1)/(R1-R2) is adjusted gradient. In another further embodiment of the process, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises continuously updating the adjusted gradient based on audio data characteristics with a hard reset of the value performed in the event of block switching. In another further embodiment of the process, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises bounding and proportionally distributing the value of variable Q across three frames according to the energy content in the respective frames. In another further embodiment of the process, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises weighting the adjustment of the masking threshold to reflect better on the number of bits available for encoding by using the value of Q together with tonality index.

[0033] Another embodiment of the present invention provides an audio encoder for compressing uncompressed audio data. In this embodiment, the audio encoder comprises a psychoacoustics model (PAM) for estimating masking thresholds for current frame to be encoded based on a MDCT spectrum, wherein the masking thresholds reflect a bit budget for the current frame; and a quantization module for performing quantization of the current frame based on the masking thresholds, wherein after the quantization of the current frame, the bit budget for next frame is updated for estimating the masking thresholds of the next frame; whereby the PAM and quantization module are so electronically configured that the PAM estimates the masking thresholds by taking into account the bit status updated by the quantization module. In another embodiment of the audio encoder, it further comprises a means for receiving uncompressed audio data from an input; and a filter bank electronically connected to the receiving means for generating the MDCT spectrum for each frame of the uncompressed audio data; wherein the filterbank is electronically connected to the PAM so that the MDCT spectrum is outputted to the PAM. In another embodiment of the audio encoder, it further comprises an encoding module for encoding the quantized audio data. In another further embodiment of the audio encoder, the encoding module is an entropy encoding one.

[0034] In another embodiment of the audio encoder, the filter bank generates the MDCT spectrum using the following equation:

$$X_{i,k} = 2\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} z_{i,n} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{N}\left(n+n_o\right)\left(k+\frac{1}{2}\right)\right), for 0 \le k \le N/2$$

where $X_{i,k}$ is the MDCT coefficient at block index i and spectral index k; z is the windowed input sequence; n the sample index; k the spectral coefficient index; i the block index; and N the window length (2048 for long and 256 for short); and where n_o is computed as (N/2 +1)/2.

[0035] In another embodiment of the audio encoder, the psychoacoustics model (PAM) estimates the masking thresholds by the following operations: calculating energy in scale factor band domain using the MDCT spectrum; performing simple triangle spreading function; calculating tonality index; performing masking threshold adjustment (weighted by variable Q); and performing comparison with threshold in quiet; thereby outputting the masking threshold for quantization.

[0036] In another embodiment of the audio encoder, the step of performing quantization further comprises performing quantization using a non-uniform quantizer according to the following equation:

$$x_quantized(i) = \text{int}\left[\frac{x^{3/4}}{2^{\frac{3}{16}(gl-scf(i))}} + 0.4054\right]$$

where x_quantized(i) is the quantized spectral values at scale factor band index (i); i is the scale factor band index, x the spectral values within that band to be quantized, gl the global scale factor (the rate controlling parameter), and scf(i) the scale factor value (the distortion controlling parameter).

[0037] In another embodiment of the audio encoder, the step of performing quantization further comprises searching only the scale factor values to control distortion and not adjusting the global scale factor value, whereby the global scale factor value is taken as the first value of the scale factor (scf(0)).

[0038] In another embodiment of the audio encoder, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises linearly adjusting variable Q using the following formula:

$$NewQ = Q1 + (R1 - desired_R)^{(Q2-Q1)/(R2-R1)}$$

where NewQ is the variable Q "after" the adjustment; Q1 and Q2 are the Q value for one and two previous frame respectively; and R1 and R2 are the number of bits used in previous and two previous frame, and desired_R is the desired number of bits used; and wherein the value (Q2-Q1)/(R1-R2) is adjusted gradient. In another further embodiment of the audio encoder, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises continuously updating the adjusted gradient based on audio data characteristics with a hard reset of the value performed in the event of block switching. In another further embodiment of the audio encoder, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises bounding and proportionally distributing the value of variable Q across three frames according to the energy content in the respective frames. In another further embodiment of the encoder, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises weighting the adjustment of the masking threshold to reflect better on the number of bits available for encoding by using the value of Q together with tonality index.

[0039] Another embodiment of the present invention provides an electronic device that comprises an electronic circuitry capable of receiving of uncompressed audio data; a computer-readable medium embedded with an audio encoder so that the uncompressed audio data can be compressed for transmission and/or storage purposes; and an electronic circuitry capable of outputting the compressed audio data to a user of the electronic device; wherein the audio encoder comprises: a psychoacoustics model (PAM) for estimating masking thresholds for current frame to be encoded based on a MDCT spectrum, wherein the masking thresholds reflect a bit budget for the current frame; and a quantization module for performing quantization of the current frame based on the masking thresholds, wherein after the quantization of the current frame, the bit budget for next frame is updated for estimating the masking thresholds of the next frame; whereby the PAM and quantization module are so electronically configured that the PAM estimates the masking thresholds by taking into account the bit status updated by the quantization module.

[0040] In another embodiment of the electronic device, the audio encoder further comprises a means for receiving uncompressed audio data from an input; and a filter bank electronically connected to the receiving means for generating the MDCT spectrum for each frame of the uncompressed audio data; wherein the filterbank is electronically connected to the PAM so that the MDCT spectrum is outputted to the PAM. In another embodiment of the electronic device, the audio encoder further comprises an encoding module for encoding the quantized audio data. In another embodiment of the electronic device, the encoding module is an entropy encoding one.

[0041] In another embodiment of the electronic device, the filter bank generates the MDCT spectrum using the following equation:

$$X_{i,k} = 2\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} z_{i,n} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{N}\left(n+n_o\right)\left(k+\frac{1}{2}\right)\right), \; for\, 0 \le k \le N/2$$

where $X_{i,k}$ is the MDCT coefficient at block index i and spectral index k; z is the windowed input sequence; n the sample index; k the spectral coefficient index; i the block index; and N the window length (2048 for long and 256 for short); and where n_o is computed as (N/2 +1)/2.

[0042] In another embodiment of the electronic device, the psychoacoustics model (PAM) estimates the masking thresholds by the following operations: calculating energy in scale factor band domain using the MDCT spectrum; performing simple triangle spreading

function; calculating tonality index; performing masking threshold adjustment (weighted by variable Q); and performing comparison with threshold in quiet; thereby outputting the masking threshold for quantization.

[0043] In another embodiment of the electronic device, the step of performing quantization further comprises performing quantization using a non-uniform quantizer according to the following equation:

$$x_quantized(i) = \text{int}\left[\frac{x^{3/4}}{2^{\frac{3}{16}(gl-scf(i))}} + 0.4054\right]$$

where x_quantized(i) is the quantized spectral values at scale factor band index (i); i is the scale factor band index, x the spectral values within that band to be quantized, gl the global scale factor (the rate controlling parameter), and scf(i) the scale factor value (the distortion controlling parameter).

[0044] In another embodiment of the electronic device, the step of performing quantization further comprises searching only the scale factor values to control distortion and not adjusting the global scale factor value, whereby the global scale factor value is taken as the first value of the scale factor (scf(0)).

[0045] In another embodiment of the electronic device, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises linearly adjusting variable Q using the following formula:

$$NewQ = Q1 + (R1 - desired_R)^{(Q2-Q1)/(R2-R1)}$$

where NewQ is the variable Q "after" the adjustment; Q1 and Q2 are the Q value for one and two previous frame respectively; and R1 and R2 are the number of bits used in previous and two previous frame, and desired_R is the desired number of bits used; and wherein the value (Q2-Q1)/(R1-R2) is adjusted gradient. In another further embodiment of the electronic device, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises continuously updating the adjusted gradient based on audio data characteristics with a hard reset of the value performed in the event of block switching. In another further embodiment of the electronic device, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises bounding and proportionally distributing the value of variable Q across three frames according to the energy content in the respective frames. In another further

embodiment of the electronic device, the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises weighting the adjustment of the masking threshold to reflect better on the number of bits available for encoding by using the value of Q together with tonality index.

[0046] In another embodiment of the electronic device, the electronic device includes audio player/recorder, PDA, pocket organizer, camera with audio recording capacity, computers, and mobile phones.

[0047] The present invention provides an audio encoder and audio encoding method for a low power implementation of AAC-LC encoder by exploiting the interworking of psychoacoustics model (PAM) and the quantization unit. Referring to FIG 5, there is provided a configuration of the PAM and quantization unit of AAC-LC encoder in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. As discussed above, a traditional encoder calculates the masking threshold requirement and feeds it as input to the quantization module; the idea of having a precise estimation of the masking threshold is computationally intensive and making the work of bit allocation module more tasking. The present invention aims at coming out with the masking threshold that reflects the bit budget in the current frame, which allows the encoder to skip the rate control loop. In the present invention, the bit allocation module has a role in determining the masking threshold for the next frame such that it ensures that the bit used does not exceed the budget. As the signal characteristics changes over time, adaptation is constantly required for this scheme to work. Furthermore, the present invention is of reasonably simple structure to minimize the implementation in software and hardware.

[0048] Now referring to FIG 5, the quantization process of the present invention comprises a simplified PAM module **52** discussed hereinafter receiving the output of MDCT **51** as input to calculate the masking threshold; a bit allocation process comprising a single loop with adjust scale factor and global gain **53**, calculation distortion **54**, and determination of whether the distortion is below masking threshold **55**; calculating bit used **56**; adjust Q adjust gradient **57**; and for high quality profile, set bounds for Q based on energy distribution in future frames **58**. One of the main differences with the traditional approach as shown in FIG 3 lies in the bit allocation module, where the present invention only uses the distortion control loop instead of the original two-nested loops. Scale factor values are chosen such that they satisfy the masking threshold requirement. The rate control function is absorbed by variable Q, which is adjusted according to the actual

number of bits used. This value will be used to fine-tune the masking threshold calculation for the next frame.

[0049] Using a variable Q representing the state of the available bits, the encoder attempts to shape the masking threshold to fit the bit budget such that the rate control loop can be omitted. The psychoacoustics model outputs a masking threshold that already incorporates noise, which is projected from the bit rate limitation. The adjustment of Q depends on a gradient relating Q with the actual number of bits used. This gradient is adjusted every frame to reflect the change in signal characteristics. Two separate gradients are maintained for long block and short block and a reset is performed in the event of block switching.

[0050] FIG 6 shows a functional flowchart of the simplified PAM **50** of FIG 5 for masking threshold estimation in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The operation of the masking threshold estimation comprises: calculating energy in scale factor band domain **61** using the MDCT spectrum; performing simple triangle spreading function **62**; calculating tonality index **63**; performing masking threshold adjustment (weighted by Q) **64**; and performing comparison with threshold in quiet **65**, outputting the masking threshold to the quantization module.

[0051] Now there is provided a more detailed description of the operation of the AAC-LC encoder in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. It is to be noted that the present invention is an improvement of the existing AAC-LC encoder so that many common features will not be discussed in detail in order not to obscure the present invention. The operation of the AAC-LC encoder of the present invention comprises: generating MDCT spectrum in the filterbank, estimating masking threshold in the PAM, and performing quantization and coding. The differences between the operation of the AAC-LC encoder of the present invention and the one of the standard AAC-LC encoder will be highlighted.

[0052] For generating MDCT spectrum, the MDCT used in the Filterbank module of AAC-LC encoder is formulated as follows:

$$X_{i,k} = 2\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} z_{i,n} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{N}\left(n+n_o\right)\left(k+\frac{1}{2}\right)\right), \; for\, 0 \le k \le N/2 \quad (1)$$

where $X_{i,k}$ is the MDCT coefficient at block index i and spectral index k; z is the windowed input sequence; n the sample index; k the spectral coefficient index; i the block index; and

N the window length (2048 for long and 256 for short); and where n_o is computed as (N/2 +1)/2.

[0053] For estimating the masking threshold, the detailed operation of the simplified PAM of the present invention has been described in connection with FIG 6. The features of the simplified PAM include the followings. First, for efficiency reason, the simplified PAM uses MDCT spectrum for the analysis. Second, the calculation of energy level is performed directly in scale factor band domain. Third, a simple triangle spreading function is used wit h+25dB per bark and –10dB per bark slope. Fourth, the tonality index is computed using Spectral Flatness Measure. Finally, weighted Q as the rate controlling variable is used to adjust the masking threshold. Traditionally, this step reflects the different masking capability of tone and noise. Since noise is a better masker, the masking threshold will be adjusted higher if the tonality value is low, and lower if the tonality value is high. In the present invention, besides tonality, Q is also incorporated to fine tune the masking threshold to fit the available bits.

[0054] For bit allocation-quantization, AAC uses a non-uniform quantizer:

$$x_quantized(i) = \text{int}\left[\frac{x^{3/4}}{2^{\frac{3}{16}(gl-scf(i))}} + 0.4054\right] \qquad (2)$$

where x_quantized(i) is the quantized spectral values at scale factor band index (i); i is the scale factor band index, x the spectral values within that band to be quantized, gl the global scale factor (the rate controlling parameter), and scf(i) the scale factor value (the distortion controlling parameter).

[0055] In the present invention, only the scale factor values are searched to control the distortion. The global scale factor value is never adjusted and is taken as the first value of the scale factor (scf(0)).

[0056] For Q and gradient adjustment, FIG 10 illustrates these adjustments. Q is linearly adjusted using the following formula:

$$NewQ = Q1 + (R1 - desired_R)^{(Q2-Q1)/(R2-R1)} \qquad (3)$$

where NewQ is the variable Q "after" the adjustment; Q1 and Q2 are the Q value for one and two previous frame respectively; and R1 and R2 are the number of bits used in

previous and two previous frame, and desired_R is the desired number of bits used; and wherein the value (Q2-Q1)/(R1-R2) is adjusted gradient.

[0057] When Q is high, the masking threshold is adjusted such that it is more precise, resulting in an increase in the number of bits used. On the other hand, when the bit budget is low, Q will be reduced such that in the next frame, the masking threshold does not demand excessive number of bits.

[0058] The correlation of Q and bit rate depends on the nature of the signal. FIGs 7, 8, and 9 illustrate the correlation between these two variables. Different change of Q means different change of bit used for different part of the signal. Therefore, the gradient relating these two variables have to be constantly adjusted. The most prominent example would be the difference between the gradient in long block (FIG 7 and FIG 8) and short block (FIG 9). The invention performs a hard reset of this gradient during the block-switching event.

[0059] In high quality profile, apart from bit rate, the invention also uses the energy distribution across three frames to determine Q adjustment. This is to ensure a lower value of Q is not set for a frame with higher energy content. With this scheme, greater flexibility is achieved and a more optimized bit distribution across frame is obtained.

[0060] The present invention provides a single loop rate distortion control algorithm based on weighted adjustment of the masking threshold using adaptive variable Q derived from varying gradient computed from actual bits used with the option to distribute bits across frames based on energy.

[0061] The AAC-LC encoder of the present invention can be employed in any suitable electronic devices for audio signal processing. As shown in FIG 11, the AAC-LC encoding engine can transform uncompressed audio data into AAC format audio data for transmission and storage. The electronic devices such as audio player/recorder, PDA, pocket organizer, camera with audio recording capacity, computers, and mobile phones comprises a computer readable medium where the AAC-LC algorithm can be embedded.

[0062] While the present invention has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it will be understood that the embodiments are illustrative and that the invention scope is not so limited. Alternative embodiments of the present invention will become apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art to which the present invention pertains. Such alternate embodiments are considered to be encompassed within the spirit

and scope of the present invention. Accordingly, the scope of the present invention is described by the appended claims and is supported by the foregoing description.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A process for encoding an audio data, comprising:

receiving uncompressed audio data from an input;

generating MDCT spectrum for each frame of the uncompressed audio data using a filterbank;

estimating masking thresholds for current frame to be encoded based on the MDCT spectrum, wherein the masking thresholds reflect a bit budget for the current frame;

performing quantization of the current frame based on the masking thresholds, wherein after the quantization of the current frame, the bit budget for next frame is updated for estimating the masking thresholds of the next frame ; and

encoding the quantized audio data .

2. The process of claim 1, wherein ~~in~~ the step of generating MDCT spectrum further comprises generating MDCT spectrum using the following equation:

$$X_{i,k} = 2\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} z_{i,n} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{N}\left(n+n_o\right)\left(k+\frac{1}{2}\right)\right), for 0 \le k \le N/2$$

where $X_{i,k}$ is the MDCT coefficient at block index i and spectral index k; z is the windowed input sequence; n the sample index; k the spectral coefficient index; i the block index; and N the window length (2048 for long and 256 for short); and where n_o is computed as (N/2 +1)/2.

3. The process of claim 1, wherein the step of estimating masking thresholds further comprises:

calculating energy in scale factor band domain using the MDCT spectrum;

performing simple triangle spreading function;

calculating tonality index;

performing masking threshold adjustment (weighted by variable Q); and

performing comparison with threshold in quiet; thereby outputting the masking threshold for quantization.

4. The process of claim 3, wherein the step of performing quantization further comprises performing quantization using a non-uniform quantizer according to the following equation:

$$x_quantized(i) = \text{int}\left[\frac{x^{3/4}}{2^{\frac{3}{16}(gl-scf(i))}} + 0.4054\right]$$

where x_quantized(i) is the quantized spectral values at scale factor band index (i); i is the scale factor band index, x the spectral values within that band to be quantized, gl the global scale factor (the rate controlling parameter), and scf(i) the scale factor value (the distortion controlling parameter).

5. The process of claim 4, wherein the step of performing quantization further comprises searching only the scale factor values to control distortion and not adjusting the global scale factor value, whereby the global scale factor value is taken as the first value of the scale factor (scf(0)).

6. The process of claim 3, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises linearly adjusting variable Q using the following formula:

$$NewQ = Q1 + (R1 - desired_R)^{(Q2-Q1)/(R2-R1)}$$

where NewQ is the variable Q "after" the adjustment; Q1 and Q2 are the Q value for one and two previous frame respectively; and R1 and R2 are the number of bits used in previous and two previous frame, and desired_R is the desired number of bits used; and wherein the value (Q2-Q1)/(R1-R2) is adjusted gradient.

7. The process of claim 6, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises continuously updating the adjusted gradient based on audio data characteristics with a hard reset of the value performed in the event of block switching.

8. The process of claim 6, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises bounding and proportionally distributing the value of variable Q across three frames according to the energy content in the respective frames.

9. The process of claim 6, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises weighting the adjustment of the masking threshold to reflect better on the number of bits available for encoding by using the value of Q together with tonality index.

10. An audio encoder for compressing uncompressed audio data, the audio encoder comprising:

a psychoacoustics model (PAM) for estimating masking thresholds for current frame to be encoded based on a MDCT spectrum, wherein the masking thresholds reflect a bit budget for the current frame; and

a quantization module for performing quantization of the current frame based on the masking thresholds, wherein after the quantization of the current frame, the bit budget for next frame is updated for estimating the masking thresholds of the next frame;

thereby the PAM and quantization module are so electronically configured that the PAM estimates the masking thresholds by taking into account the bit status updated by the quantization module.

11. The audio encoder of claim 10, further comprising a means for receiving uncompressed audio data from an input; and a filter bank electronically connected to the receiving means for generating the MDCT spectrum for each frame of the uncompressed audio data; wherein the filterbank is electronically connected to the PAM so that the MDCT spectrum is outputted to the PAM.

12. The audio encoder of claim 10, further comprising an encoding module for encoding the quantized audio data.

13. The audio encoder of claim 12, wherein the encoding module is an entropy encoding one.

14. The audio encoder of claim 11, wherein the filter bank generates the MDCT spectrum using the following equation:

$$X_{i,k} = 2\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} z_{i,n} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{N}(n+n_o)\left(k+\frac{1}{2}\right)\right), for 0 \le k \le N/2$$

where $X_{i,k}$ is the MDCT coefficient at block index i and spectral index k; z is the windowed input sequence; n the sample index; k the spectral coefficient index; i the block index; and N the window length (2048 for long and 256 for short); and where n_o is computed as (N/2 +1)/2.

15. The audio encoder of claim 10, wherein the psychoacoustics model (PAM) estimates the masking thresholds by the following operations:

calculating energy in scale factor band domain using the MDCT spectrum;

performing simple triangle spreading function;

calculating tonality index;

performing masking threshold adjustment (weighted by variable Q); and

performing comparison with threshold in quiet; thereby outputting the masking threshold for quantization.

16. The audio encoder of claim 15, wherein the step of performing quantization further comprises performing quantization using a non-uniform quantizer according to the following equation:

$$x_quantized(i) = \text{int}\left[\frac{x^{3/4}}{2^{\frac{3}{16}(gl-scf(i))}} + 0.4054\right]$$

where x_quantized(i) is the quantized spectral values at scale factor band index (i); i is the scale factor band index, x the spectral values within that band to be quantized, gl the global scale factor (the rate controlling parameter), and scf(i) the scale factor value (the distortion controlling parameter).

17. The audio encoder of claim 16, wherein the step of performing quantization further comprises searching only the scale factor values to control distortion and not adjusting the global scale factor value, whereby the global scale factor value is taken as the first value of the scale factor (scf(0)).

18. The audio encoder of claim 15, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises linearly adjusting variable Q using the following formula:

$$NewQ = Q1 + (R1 - desired_R)\,{(Q2 - Q1)}/{(R2 - R1)}$$

where NewQ is the variable Q "after" the adjustment; Q1 and Q2 are the Q value for one and two previous frame respectively; and R1 and R2 are the number of bits used in previous and two previous frame, and desired_R is the desired number of bits used; and wherein the value (Q2-Q1)/(R1-R2) is adjusted gradient.

19. The audio encoder of claim 18, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises continuously updating the adjusted gradient based on audio data characteristics with a hard reset of the value performed in the event of block switching.

20. The audio encoder of claim 18, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises bounding and proportionally distributing the value of variable Q across three frames according to the energy content in the respective frames.

21. The audio encoder of claim 18, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises weighting the adjustment of the masking threshold to reflect better on the number of bits available for encoding by using the value of Q together with tonality index.

22. An electronic device comprising:

an electronic circuitry capable of receiving of uncompressed audio data;

a computer-readable medium embedded with an audio encoder so that the uncompressed audio data can be compressed for transmission and/or storage purposes; and

an electronic circuitry capable of outputting the compressed audio data to a user of the electronic device;

wherein the audio encoder comprises:

a psychoacoustics model (PAM) for estimating masking thresholds for current frame to be encoded based on a MDCT spectrum, wherein the masking thresholds reflect a bit budget for the current frame; and

a quantization module for performing quantization of the current frame based on the masking thresholds, wherein after the quantization of the current frame, the bit budget for next frame is updated for estimating the masking thresholds of the next frame;

thereby the PAM and quantization module are so electronically configured that the PAM estimates the masking thresholds by taking into account the bit status updated by the quantization module.

23. The electronic device of claim 22, wherein the audio encoder further comprises a means for receiving uncompressed audio data from an input; and a filter bank electronically connected to the receiving means for generating the MDCT spectrum for each frame of the uncompressed audio data; wherein the filterbank is electronically connected to the PAM so that the MDCT spectrum is outputted to the PAM.

24. The electronic device of claim 22, wherein the audio encoder further comprises an encoding module for encoding the quantized audio data.

25. The electronic device of claim 24, wherein the encoding module is an entropy encoding one.

26. The electronic device of claim 23, wherein the filter bank generates the MDCT spectrum using ~~uses~~ the following equation:

$$X_{i,k} = 2\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} z_{i,n} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{N}\left(n+n_o\right)\left(k+\frac{1}{2}\right)\right), for 0 \le k \le N/2$$

where $X_{i,k}$ is the MDCT coefficient at block index i and spectral index k; z is the windowed input sequence; n the sample index; k the spectral coefficient index; i the block index; and

N the window length (2048 for long and 256 for short); and where n_o is computed as (N/2 +1)/2.

27. The electronic device of claim 22, wherein the psychoacoustics model (PAM) estimates the masking thresholds by the following operations:

calculating energy in scale factor band domain using the MDCT spectrum;

performing simple triangle spreading function;

calculating tonality index;

performing masking threshold adjustment (weighted by variable Q); and

performing comparison with threshold in quiet; thereby outputting the masking threshold for quantization.

28. The electronic device of claim 27, wherein the step of performing quantization further comprises performing quantization using a non-uniform quantizer according to the following equation:

$$x_quantized(i) = \text{int}\left[\frac{x^{3/4}}{2^{\frac{3}{16}(gl-scf(i))}} + 0.4054\right]$$

where x_quantized(i) is the quantized spectral values at scale factor band index (i); i is the scale factor band index, x the spectral values within that band to be quantized, gl the global scale factor (the rate controlling parameter), and scf(i) the scale factor value (the distortion controlling parameter).

29. The electronic device of claim 28, wherein the step of performing quantization further comprises searching only the scale factor values to control distortion and not adjusting the global scale factor value, whereby the global scale factor value is taken as the first value of the scale factor (scf(0)).

30. The electronic device of claim 27, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises linearly adjusting variable Q using the following formula:

$$NewQ = Q1 + (R1 - desired_R)^{(Q2-Q1)/(R2-R1)}$$

where NewQ is the variable Q "after" the adjustment; Q1 and Q2 are the Q value for one and two previous frame respectively; and R1 and R2 are the number of bits used in previous and two previous frame, and desired_R is the desired number of bits used; and wherein the value (Q2-Q1)/(R1-R2) is adjusted gradient.

31. The electronic device of claim 30, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises continuously updating the adjusted gradient based on audio data characteristics with a hard reset of the value performed in the event of block switching.

32. The electronic device of claim 30, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises bounding and proportionally distributing the value of variable Q across three frames according to the energy content in the respective frames.

33. The electronic device of claim 30, wherein the step of performing masking threshold adjustment further comprises weighting the adjustment of the masking threshold to reflect better on the number of bits available for encoding by using the value of Q together with tonality index.

34. The electronic device of claim 22, wherein the electronic device includes audio player/recorder, PDA, pocket organizer, camera with audio recording capacity, computers, and mobile phones.