

**FAST COHERENT PROCESSING FOR CODES WITH PERIODIC LINE
SPECTRA**

5 The field of the invention is that of sonar signal processing methods. The invention relates more particularly to sonar echos coming from objects that are irradiated by sonar emissions with a 'comb' line spectrum composed of spectral lines.

10 One technique exploiting sonar signals, known from the prior art, consists in emitting a known signal into the medium and in processing the received signals by correlation with signals representing replicas of the emitted signal when it is reflected by a moving target
15 and received by the sonar. These replicas, or Doppler copies, are correlated with the signal actually received so as to distinguish the signal coming from the target from the background noise and from reverberation.

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The emission of signals having a line spectrum, in other words a spectrum composed of distinct lines, is furthermore of considerable interest for the detection of fast or slow moving underwater targets in an
25 environment limited by reverberation. Indeed, as long as the Doppler shift of the targets is larger than the width of the elementary lines of the spectrum, it allows the reverberation noise to be reduced by Doppler filtering. Such a Doppler filtering process is notably
30 described in the European Patent EP1078280 that relates to a method for detecting moving objects by means of an active sonar.

This type of Doppler filtering consists in carrying out
35 a multicopy correlation of the received signal. Multicopy correlation consists in performing, in a known manner, correlation operations of the received signal with various replicas, or Doppler copies, of the

emitted signal. Each Doppler copy exhibits the same spectrum as the signal reflected by an object with a given velocity, which is why they are referred to as Doppler copies of the emitted signal.

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The correlation operations are carried out simultaneously, or else during the same period of time, such that the exploitation, in active sonar mode, of emissions of line-spectrum signals leads to as many simultaneous correlation operations being performed as doppler filters are used. Consequently, where the number of Doppler copies employed is large, the multicopy correlation processing mode may require a large computing capacity.

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Furthermore, it is known that, for signals whose BT product is large, greater than 50 for example, the Doppler filtering operation by correlation can advantageously be performed in the spectral domain. The letters B and T of the BT product respectively denote the emitted signal band B and its duration T. Indeed, transferring into the spectral domain, for example by means of a Fast Fourier Transform (FFT), turns out to be more advantageous, in terms of computational load, than a direct correlation in the time domain.

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Nevertheless, when the correlation is performed with several Doppler copies, this embodiment of doppler filtering leads to a computational load that is still far too high. With this in mind, it will be recalled that the increase in computational load implied by multicopy processing is substantially proportional to the number of copies employed. In practice, the number of copies is of the order of several tens, or even several hundreds. The French Patent Application 03 0404042, filed in April 2003 by the Applicant, mentions in this regard a number of doppler copies greater than 200 required for the doppler filtering.

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The present invention consists of a method allowing the computational load caused by multicopy correlation to be reduced. For this purpose, the method according to the invention performs a multicopy correlation
5 operation comprising at least the following steps:

- a step for the time-frequency transformation of the received signal;
- a step for the formation of synthetic spectra, each synthetic spectrum being formed by the choice of
10 certain spectral components from the spectrum of the received signal and concatenation of these spectral components;
- a step for the computation of the inter-spectral product, which is the product of each
15 synthetic spectrum with the concatenated conjugate spectrum of the corresponding doppler copy;
- a step for performing the multicopy correlation operation where the product of the concatenated conjugate spectrum of each doppler copy with the
20 synthetic spectrum of the corresponding received signal is computed;
- a step for carrying out the frequency-time transformation of the inter-spectral products obtained, allowing the system to return to the time domain.

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The method according to the invention has the advantage of only performing the multicopy correlation on the useful portions of the spectra. By eliminating unnecessary computations, it thus allows the number of
30 computations effected to be substantially reduced, especially during the inter-spectral computation and frequency-time transformation steps. It thus allows the total number of computations carried out to be reduced or, put another way, for the same number of
35 computations, a doppler filtering operation with higher resolution to be performed.

The method according to the invention has the additional advantage of being simple to implement. It

is also particularly adapted to systems emitting waves whose spectrum is composed of periodic lines, each line itself possessing an elementary spectrum.

5 Other features and advantages will become apparent through the description illustrated by the associated figures which show:

- 10 - figure 1, the temporal representation of an example of signal having a line spectrum;
- figure 2, the schematic spectral representation of the signal illustrated by Figure 1;
- 15 - figure 3, an illustration of the main steps of a conventional multicopy correlation method, the correlation being performed in the spectral domain;
- figure 4 also shows a partial view of the spectrum in figure 2 and of the set of the
20 doppler channels defined by the frequency analysis operation carried out on the signal;
- figure 5, the concatenated spectral representation of the signal illustrated by figure 1;
- 25 - figure 6, the flow diagram of the main steps of the method according to the invention.

As was stated previously, the method according to the invention can be applied, in particular, to active
30 sonar systems emitting waves whose spectrum takes the form of a regular succession, along the frequency axis, of elementary spectra or lines. For clarity of the description, the invention is described in the document through a preferred exemplary embodiment in which the
35 emitted wave takes the form of pulses formed from the weighted sum of N successive elementary pulses modulated in frequency according to the same law, linear or hyperbolic for example. An illustration in the time domain of a pulse of this type is presented in

figure 1. In this figure, the N elementary pulses 11 can be seen whose amplitude is determined by the weighting law applied. This weighting defines an envelope $a(t)$ 12 and conditions the form of the spectrum of the pulse thus generated. The signal formed, of duration T , is thus composed of N pulses of duration T/N . The object of the weighting applied to the whole of the signal is to control the spectral width of the emitted signal and, in particular, to reduce the level of the secondary spectral lines. Consequently, the emitted signal can be expressed by the following equation:

$$e(t) = a(t) \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} p(t - n\frac{T}{N}) \quad [1]$$

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where $p(t)$ is the expression of an elementary pulse, $p(t)$ being equal to 0 when t is outside of the interval $[0 \ T/N]$. The signal $a(t)$ represents the weighting applied, which is referred to as the signal envelope.

20 As regards the spectrum of the emitted signal, this can be expressed by the following equation:

$$E(f) = A(f) * \sum_n P(f) \exp(-in2\pi f \frac{T}{N}) = \sum_n P(\frac{nN}{T}) A(f - n\frac{N}{T}) \quad [2]$$

25 In equation [2], $P(f)$ represents the spectrum of the elementary pulse which can be expressed by:

$$P(f) = \int p(t) \cdot \exp(-2i\pi ft) dt \quad [3] .$$

30 Similarly, the spectrum of the envelope $a(t)$ of the emitted signal can be expressed by:

$$A(f) = \int a(t) \cdot \exp(-2i\pi ft) dt \quad [4]$$

35 The spectrum $E(f)$ is shown schematically in Figure 2. Its total width is the band B of the elementary pulse.

It is composed of spectral lines 21 positioned every $n \cdot N/T$ along the frequency axis.

5 The amplitude weighting $a(t)$ has the effect of limiting the width of the spectrum of each line to an interval β/T around the central frequency. The factor β represents a coefficient that depends on the amplitude weighting law $a(t)$ chosen. If, for example, it is taken, according to a preferred embodiment, that $a(t) =$
10 $\sin^2(\pi t/T)$, the coefficient β will take the value $\beta = 4$.

The illustration in figure 2 demonstrates that the spectrum of the emitted signal comprises BT/N frequency ranges of width β/T , corresponding to the spectral
15 lines 21, for which the amplitude of the spectrum is significant, separated by frequency ranges 22 of width substantially equal to N/T , in which the amplitude of the spectral components is very low. It can also be observed that these ranges of very low amplitude
20 represent a significant fraction of the band of the emitted signal. This distinctive distribution of the spectral amplitude is advantageously exploited by the method according to the invention.

25 Generally speaking, a known means of performing the doppler analysis of the received signal in the field of sonar echo processing consists in performing the correlation of the received signal with signals representing copies of the emitted signal but with a
30 frequency shift or phase shift corresponding to the shift that the emitted signal would have undergone during its reflection on a moving target. In this type of processing by multicopy correlation, the number of doppler copies employed depends on the frequency range
35 to be analyzed and on the code resolution. This number also depends on the computing capacity of the machine that must perform the corresponding arithmetic operations, This twin dependency leads, in practice, to a difficult compromise being made between the desired

quality of the doppler analysis and the computation time required to obtain the result.

Figure 3 shows the schematic flow diagram of a conventional processing method by multicopy correlation. With the aim of limiting the number of computations to be performed, this operation is carried out in the frequency domain. For this purpose, the digitized received signal 31 undergoes, for example, a time-frequency transformation 32. In a preferred embodiment, the time-frequency transformation is effected by means of a Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) carried out in a sliding window mode over a number of points N_1 determined by the desired number of doppler channels. The FFT operation can for example be carried out in a sliding window mode over a number of samples $N_1 = 2 \cdot F_e \cdot T$, with a slide window equal to $F_e \cdot T$ samples from one FFT operation to the next. In this case, F_e represents the sampling frequency and T the duration of the received signal.

The frequency signal 33 thus obtained is then subjected to several simultaneous correlation operations 34. Each operation consists in calculating, in a known manner, the inter-spectral resultant of the product of the spectrum of the received signal with the spectrum of a stored signal 35, called doppler copy. The spectrum of each doppler copy corresponds to that of the emitted signal having undergone a homothetic transformation in frequency. The homothetic frequency transformation corresponds to one of the channels of the doppler band analyzed.

Each doppler copy can be characterized by the doppler parameter δ defined by the expression $\delta = 1 \pm 2V/c$ in which V represents the radial velocity of the target with respect to the vessel carrying the sonar and c the speed of sound in the medium. It can then be expressed as:

$$c(t) = e(\delta t) = a(\delta t) \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} p(\delta t - n \frac{T}{N}) \quad [5]$$

and its spectrum obeys the expression:

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$$C(f) = \frac{1}{|\delta|} \cdot A(f/\delta) * \sum_n P(f/\delta) \exp(-2i\pi n f \frac{T}{N}) = \sum_n P(\frac{nN}{T}) A(\frac{f}{\delta} - n \frac{N}{T}) \quad [6]$$

The expression for $C(f)$ is analogous to that of $E(f)$, except that it is composed of lines centered on the
10 frequencies $\delta \cdot n \cdot N/T$ which represents a simple homothetic transformation of the spectrum.

The result 36 of each correlation operation is then transposed into the time domain in order to be
15 exploited. The transposition is preferably carried out by the inverse transformation 37 of that used for transferring into the frequency domain, by a frequency-time transformation of the inverse DFT or inverse FFT type or other, performed over N_1 samples or points.

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As in the case of the emitted signal, it is observed that the spectra of the doppler copies are non-zero over BT/N frequency ranges corresponding to the lines of the spectrum of the emitted signal translated in
25 frequency. As for the emitted signal, the width of each spectral line is equal to β/T , the lines being separated by $\delta N/T$ on the frequency axis.

Performing the multicopy correlation computation
30 amounts to performing N_d simultaneous correlation operations, in other words, in the spectral domain, N_d inter-spectral multiplication operations. Transferring into the spectral domain advantageously allows the time correlation operations, which involve in a known manner
35 the sums of products, to be replaced by simple multiplication operations that are less complex and hence less costly in terms of computational load.

Nevertheless, since it involves N_d simultaneous operations, the load remains high. It will be recalled, in this respect, that the size of the computational load depends on the number N_d of doppler channels to be
5 processed and also on the product BT , where B represents the bandwidth of the elementary pulse 11 and T the duration of the N elementary pulses making up the emitted signal.

10 The flow diagram in figure 3 allows the relative weighting in the total computational load to be handled for each step of the method to be highlighted. It will thus be observed that the steps corresponding to the operations 34 and 37 have a weighting that is very
15 sensitive in the computational load, both in terms of the number of computations required by each operation and in terms of the simultaneity of their execution for each of the N_d doppler channels. By comparison, the step corresponding to the operation 32 for the FFT frequency
20 analysis of the received signal only has a low relative weight.

In the case where the acceptable computational load does not allow the multicopy correlation operation such
25 as that described to be performed, the conventional processing method illustrated by figure 3 at first sight only offers two types of solution. A first solution therefore consists in decreasing the number of doppler channels utilized simultaneously, which allows
30 the number N_d of correlation operations performed simultaneously to be reduced. The other solution consists in limiting the bandwidth occupied by the elementary pulse which may be incompatible with the demands associated with the signal processing functions
35 employed elsewhere.

Faced with these constraints, the method according to the invention proposes a solution which is an alternative to the aforementioned solutions. For this

purpose, the principle of the method according to the invention mainly consists in considering the spectrum of the emitted signal as an assembly of elementary spectra formed by the spectral lines 21 composing the global spectrum. These elementary spectra are separated by frequency ranges which are redundant in the doppler processing and for which the signal level is very low. Similarly, since the received signal is correlated with doppler-shifted copies of the emitted signal, the inter-spectrum obtained also comprises frequency ranges for which the frequency components are very weak. This consideration allows the notion of effective bandwidth to be introduced, which can be defined by the following equation:

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$$B_{\text{eff}} = \frac{BT}{N} * \frac{\beta}{T} = \frac{\beta B}{N} \quad [7]$$

In the above equation, the effective band B_{eff} is defined as the product BT/N of the number of lines making up the signal spectrum with the spectral width $\beta B/N$ of a line.

The notion of effective bandwidth, such as is defined here, allows the fact that all the samples that are useful for performing a doppler analysis of the received signal, by digital correlation in the spectral domain, are not contained in B , but in B_{eff} to be taken into account.

30 The method according to the invention takes advantage of this observation in order to reduce the computation power required for performing the multicopy correlation operation. For this purpose, the method according to the invention includes a step comprising an operation for concatenating spectra. The object of this operation is to substitute for the received signal and for each doppler copy a synthetic signal whose spectrum is contained within a band equivalent to the previously-

defined band B_{eff} . For each copy, the synthetic spectrum comprises all the non-zero level frequency components of the original signal. The illustration in figure 4 allows, in a simple manner, the role of the step for
5 concatenating the spectra of the doppler copies to be clarified.

Figure 4 shows a magnified partial view of the real spectrum of the signal shown in figure 2. In this
10 figure, only three spectral lines 41 are shown, which could be any three lines taken from among the lines making up the spectrum of a signal such as, for example, the signal emitted by the sonar or else one of its doppler copies. Figure 4 also shows a partial view
15 of the whole set of frequency channels 42 defined by the frequency analysis operation performed on the signal. This frequency analysis can, for example, be carried out by an operation of the FFT type.

20 The concatenation step is carried out simultaneously for each Doppler copy, each having a different line spectrum. It can be broken down into a certain number of operations. A first operation consists in determining the frequency channels 42 coinciding with
25 the spectral lines 41, of known position, which make up the spectrum of the copy. The spectral band occupied by each of the lines is thus covered by a set 43 of adjacent frequency channels whose number notably depends on the resolution of the frequency analysis
30 initially carried out. This group of doppler channels 43 comprises the minimum number of channels necessary and its spectral width is, in practice, substantially equal to that of the line 41 in question.

35 Generally speaking, as illustrated in figure 4, the spectral band occupied by a line 41 of the spectrum of the analyzed signal is not necessarily centered on the central frequency of a frequency channel. Moreover, the spectral width of a line is greater than the width of a

doppler channel. This is the reason why, in order to cover the band occupied by a spectral line, several adjacent frequency channels need to be considered. The minimum number of channels required is determined by
5 the width of the line in question and by the size of the doppler channels.

The groups of adjacent doppler channels 43 corresponding to each of the lines being thus
10 determined, the concatenation operation itself consists in eliminating, from the spectral representation of the signal, the components situated in the intermediate frequency channels that do not belong to any group formed, and in re-forming a spectral representation of
15 the signal by juxtaposing the remaining components. This representation can be considered as that of the effective spectrum of the copy in question.

As is shown by figure 5, this spectral representation
20 takes the form of an assembly of lines of width β/T , separated from one another by a frequency interval b/T substantially equal to β/T . This interval is, in reality, defined by the number of frequency channels conserved around each spectral line. The whole of the
25 spectrum thus formed has a spectral width substantially equal to $\frac{\beta B}{N}$.

The concatenation step such as is described thus advantageously makes it possible to reduce the spectrum
30 of the signal or signals to be processed. The method according to the invention employs the concatenation of spectra in the manner illustrated by figure 6 which displays a flow diagram of the steps that the method comprises.

35 According to the invention, the received signal undergoes a spectral decomposition 32, for example of the FFT type. The spectral decomposition of the

received signal is preferably identical to that having been used to establish the spectra of the copies of the received signal. Furthermore, the concatenated spectra 63 of the frequency replicas of the emitted signal are available in the form of stored data, each concatenated spectrum comprising a set of given frequency channels. These channels are, for example, identified by a number representing their order in the series of channels 42 covering the band B of the signal.

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The spectrum 33 of the received signal 32 then goes through a step for the formation of concatenated spectra 62, each concatenated spectrum 62 combining the frequency components situated within the same frequency channels as those retained for forming the concatenated spectrum of the doppler copy 63 with which it must be correlated.

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The method then comprises an inter-spectra computation step 64, performed in a conventional manner, which consists, as before, in calculating in a known manner the inter-spectrum resulting from each product of a synthetic spectrum of the received signal with the corresponding conjugate spectrum of the stored doppler copy 35 of the emitted signal. The method according to the invention thus advantageously effects each product of spectra, not on the original spectra, but on the concatenated spectra. Since the concatenated spectra comprise a number N_2 of spectral components, less than the number N_1 from the original spectra, the multicopy correlation operation leads to a computational load that is smaller than in the case of a conventional method.

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The inter-spectra 65 obtained then undergo a frequency-time transformation step 66, of the inverse FFT type for example, in order to reconstitute the time signals representing the correlation products. This operation is carried out simultaneously on all the inter-spectra

calculated from the concatenated spectra of the received signal and from the doppler copies. This inverse transformation is similar, in its principle, to those implemented in the known methods of the prior art. However, it should be noted that, in the case of a transformation by inverse FFT, the operation is carried out on inter-spectra comprising fewer components, which reduces the size of the FFT to be performed and hence the number of computations required. These FFT operations are carried out on the number N_2 of frequency samples within an inter-spectrum or, in actual practice, on a number 2^p of samples corresponding to the power of 2 which is the closest to this number. The number of samples available is, in the latter case, completed by the addition of samples equal to zero. Thus, as for the inter-spectral correlation step, the effect of the concatenation results in a substantial reduction in the number of operations to be carried out, the order of magnitude of the reduction being given by the ratio N/β . The spectral analysis can be carried out more generally by a Discrete Fourier Transform (DFT) that is not necessarily applied to a number of points equal to a power of 2.

The method according to the invention, such as is described in the above, therefore allows the number of arithmetic operations required to perform the doppler analysis of the received signal to be substantially reduced, as long as the emitted signal has a line spectrum and where it has a weighted distribution allowing the spectral width of each line to be limited. The reduction advantageously applies to the correlation and frequency-time transformation steps which are the determinant steps of the method in terms of computational load.

This method has the advantage of being particularly adapted to the signals coming from emissions taking the form of a burst of N consecutive pulses over time, each

pulse being frequency-modulated over a band B centered on a frequency f_0 .

CLAIMS

1. A method for the doppler processing of echos of
5 emitted signals, these emitted signals having a line spectrum, characterized in that it performs a multicopy correlation of the received signal, this multicopy correlation comprising at least the following steps:
- 10 - a step (32) for the time-frequency transformation of the received signal,
- a step (61) for the formation of synthetic spectra by concatenation, starting from the spectrum of the
15 received signal,
- a step (64) for the computation of the inter-spectral product, in other words of the product of each synthetic spectrum with the concatenated conjugate
20 spectrum of the corresponding doppler copy,
- a step (66) for the frequency-time transformation of the inter-spectral products.
- 25 2. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that, for each doppler copy, the concatenated spectrum of said copy is obtained by selecting, for each spectral line making up the signal, the frequency channel closest to the position of the line, by also
30 selecting the adjacent frequency channels, by eliminating the other frequency channels and by concatenating the frequency ranges corresponding to the selected frequency channels.
- 35 3. The method as claimed in either of claims 1 and 2, characterized in that each synthetic spectrum is obtained by selecting and by concatenating the frequency ranges corresponding to the selected

frequency channels in order to form the concatenated spectrum of the corresponding doppler copy.

4. The method as claimed in any of the claims 1 to
5 3, characterized in that the frequency-time transformations of the inter-spectral products are performed by means of an inverse FFT carried out on a number N_2 of samples equal to the number of frequency channels making up the Doppler copies.

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5. The method as claimed in claim 4, characterized in that the inverse FFT is performed on a set of M samples formed by the N_2 samples corresponding to the frequency channels of the concatenated spectrum to which channels
15 $M - N_2$ zero samples are added such that M is equal to the power of two immediately above N_2 .