

# Robust pitch detection for normal and pathologic voice

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session Speech, Hearing and Communication

## Introduction

It is known that most of the laryngeal pathologies produce a change in the vocal quality of the patient. The pitch period ( $T_0$ ) is significantly affected by these diseases. In most of the pathological voices there are present:

- a) large deviations of  $T_0$  and in magnitudes of the peaks of the pitch;
  - b) deformation of the shape of pitch impulses;
  - c) abrupt changes in  $T_0$  and the magnitude of the peaks of the pitch;
  - d) interruptions of pitch generation during sustained vowel phonation - voice breaks;
  - e) noisy components having a significant amplitude.
- In order to overcome these difficulties a method is proposed for calculating  $T_0$  by analysis of different domains of the signal.

## METHOD

The speech signal is analyzed by means of the following procedure:

### Preprocessing of segments.

The signal is divided into segments with a duration of 30ms. In order to minimize errors caused by low level signals [1] a verification of the signal's level is carried out:

- a) search for at least 3 peaks:  $A_m(t_1)$ ,  $A_m(t_2)$ ,  $A_m(t_3)$ , (where:  $t_3 > t_2 > t_1$ ) fulfilling the following conditions:

$$A_m(t_1) > TR, A_m(t_2) > TR, A_m(t_3) > TR, \quad (1)$$

where:  $TR$  is 50% from the maximum possible value of the signal.

and

$$t_2 - t_1 > T_{hp} \text{ and } t_3 - t_2 > T_{hp} \quad (2)$$

The distances between these peaks have to be more than the highest  $T_0$  possible ( $T_{hp}$ ) for the pathologic voice.

- b) the signal in the segment is classified as a normal level and is processed if at least 3 peaks fulfilling these conditions are found. Otherwise the segment is rejected and the next one is processed.

## Pitch Period Evaluation.

The calculation of  $T_0$  is realized in parallel in 3 different domains:

### 1. PITCH EVALUATION IN TIME DOMAIN

1)  $T_0$  is calculated in the time domain using the autocorrelation function  $R(\tau)$  [2,3]. The  $R(\tau)$  is calculated over the center-clipped signal, allowing robust  $T_0$  detection from noisy speech [3]. However this method may give erroneous results due to [3]:

- a) strong harmonics coinciding with the first formant;
- b) strong harmonic and formant structure;
- c) presence of several peaks in  $R(\tau)$ .

On the basis of the fact that  $R(\tau)$  of a periodic signal is periodic the following procedure is used to minimize the above-mentioned errors:

1.1) Voiced-unvoiced detection by means of the algorithm described in [2];

1.2) In voiced segments the largest peak ( $R_{MAX}(\tau_{max})$ ) of the autocorrelation function in the range of  $T_0$  is found;

1.3) A threshold  $TR\tau$  is calculated:

$$TR\tau = 0.6R_{MAX}. \quad (3)$$

This threshold is used because it was found [1] that for some pathological voices the peak in  $R(\tau)$ , corresponding to  $T_0$  is with reduced amplitude (nearly  $0.6R_{MAX}$ );

1.4) Location of all the peaks ( $R_p(\tau_j)$ ) of  $R(\tau)$  in the range of  $T_0$  greater than  $TR\tau$ ;

1.5) Calculation of the differences (distances) between the lags of these peaks:

$$T(j) = \tau_{j+1} - \tau_j, \quad (4)$$

where:  $\tau_0, \tau_1, \dots, \tau_J$  - successive lags of  $R_p(\tau_j)$ ,

$$j=0,1,\dots,J,$$

$J$  - number of the peaks,

$$\tau_0=0.$$

1.6) Calculation of the maximal difference ( $\delta T$ ) found between  $T(j)$ ;

1.7) Calculation of the mean  $T(j) - \bar{T}$ ;

1.8) The value of the pitch is obtained in the time domain as  $T_{otime}$  in the following cases:

1.8.1) If only one peak in  $R(\tau)$  is found:

$$T_{otime} = \tau_{max}. \quad (5)$$

1.8.2) The autocorrelation function is periodic i. e. the values of  $T(j)$  nearly constant:

$$T_{time} = T \quad \text{if } \delta T < 0.2 T_o \quad (6)$$

When no decision about  $T_{time}$  is taken then all  $T(j)$  are saved as possible  $T_{time}$ .

## 2. PITCH EVALUATION IN SPECTRAL DOMAIN

2.1) Calculation of the cepstrum  $c(t)$ ;

2.2) Calculation of the smoothed spectrum by means of the group delay function (GDF) (the negative first derivative of the phase spectrum). The GDF is used because it was found [7] that it represents well the low and high energy spectral regions.

2.3) Coding the spectral components on the base of different thresholds for the low and high energy spectral regions:

a) For every spectral region are found the three largest peaks ( $X1(f1)$ ,  $X2(f2)$ ,  $X3(f3)$ ), having a distance between them greater than the lowest fundamental frequency  $F_{low}$  for pathological voices;

$$f2 - f1 > F_{low} \quad \text{and} \quad f3 - f2 > F_{low} \quad (7)$$

b) Calculation of a threshold for the region:

$$TR_{spec} = \text{lev}[X1(f1) + X2(f2) + X3(f3)]/3, \\ \text{where: lev}=0.7. \quad (8)$$

c) Coding the spectral components on the base of the different  $TR_{spec}$ .

2.5) Calculation of a spectral autocorrelation function over the coded spectral components and evaluation of  $T_o$  using the procedure already described in the previous stage "analysis in time domain". If the segment is classified as voiced  $T_o$  is evaluated as  $T_{spect}$  or no decision about  $T_o$  is taken and  $P$  possible values for  $T_{spect}$  (where  $P$  - number of peaks in spectral autocorrelation function) are obtained

## 3. PITCH EVALUATION IN CEPSTRAL DOMAIN

$T_o$  is evaluated in the cepstral domain using the robust method described in [2, 3]. The cepstral analysis is performed in order to compensate for inconveniences "b)" and "c)" of  $R(\tau)$  [p. 405 in 3]. If the segment is classified as voiced the value of  $T_o$  is obtained in the cepstral domain -  $T_{ceps}$ .

## 4. OBTAINING THE PITCH PERIOD ESTIMATE

The calculated values of  $T_o$  are analysed for determination of  $T_o$  by means of the following procedure:

The segment is classified as unvoiced in the following cases:

a) In two domains it is classified as unvoiced;

b) In two domains there are no decision for the pitch period and in cepstral domain it is classified as unvoiced.

The difference between  $T_{spect}$  and  $T_{ceps}$  is calculated:

$$T11 = T_{ceps} - T_{spect} \quad (9)$$

The segment is classified as unknown and is eliminated from future analysis if:

a)  $T11 > 0.3 \cdot T_{spect}$  and  $T11 > 0.3 \cdot T_{ceps}$ .

Here the results ( $T_{ceps}$  and  $T_{spect}$ ) from the most robust pitch detectors are used.

b) In two domains no decision for the pitch period is obtained;

c) In one domain it is classified as unvoiced and in one domain no decision for the pitch period is obtained

In all the other cases  $T_o$  is calculated as:

$$T_o = [T_{ceps} + T_{spect} + T_{time}] / 3 \quad (10)$$

As a result the erroneous values of  $T_o$  are eliminated almost in all the possible cases.

## Experimental research and results

The vowel "a" and a control phrase pronounced by 45 patients (laryngeal pathology) and 28 normal speakers are analysed. Normal and pathologic voice signals were passed through a low-pass filter with a cutoff frequency of 5kHz and sampled at 16 kHz with 16 bits directly into the computer's memory. No large errors in the values of calculated  $T_o$  and no wrong classification of unvoiced segments as voiced were found. However 2% of voiced segments are classified as unvoiced and nearly 8% of the segments are rejected as no decision for  $T_o$  was obtained.

## REFERENCES

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