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Inventor(s)	Lesso; John P.

Driver circuitry comprising active inductor circuitry for piezoelectric transducers

Abstract

The present disclosure relates to circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer. The circuitry may be implemented as an integrated circuit and comprises driver circuitry configured to supply a drive signal to cause the transducer to generate an output signal and active inductor circuitry configured to be coupled with the piezoelectric transducer. The active inductor circuitry may be tuneable to adjust a frequency characteristic of the output signal.

Inventors:	Lesso; John P. (Edinburgh, GB)
Applicant:	Cirrus Logic International Semiconductor Ltd. (Edinburgh, GB)
Family ID:	1000008766629
Assignee:	Cirrus Logic Inc. (Austin, TX)
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Primary Examiner: Pham; Emily P
Assistant Examiner: Mata; Monica
Attorney, Agent or Firm: Jackson Walker L.L.P.

Background/Summary

(1) The present disclosure is a continuation of U.S. Non-Provisional patent application Ser. No. 17/075,255, filed Oct. 20, 2020, which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

(1) The present disclosure relates to driver circuitry for piezoelectric transducers.

BACKGROUND

(2) Piezoelectric transducers are used in a variety of applications. For example, parking sensor

systems for cars and other vehicles typically employ a plurality of piezoelectric transducers for transmitting and detecting ultrasonic signals.

(3) In such systems, an ultrasonic signal is transmitted by a piezoelectric element and the time taken for a reflection of the transmitted signal to be detected (usually by the same piezoelectric element) is measured. Based on this measured time, a distance to the object from which the ultrasonic signal was reflected can be calculated, and a signal (typically an audible signal) indicative of the distance to the object can be generated and output.

(4) A common approach in such systems is to use a transformer to provide a driving voltage (i.e. the voltage across the piezoelectric element when transmitting an ultrasonic signal) of the order of, for example, 70-100V, in order to increase the signal to noise ratio of the transmitted signal. This has the effect of increasing the effective range of the system, since the energy of a transmitted ultrasound signal is increased, allowing the transmitted signal and any resulting reflected ultrasound signal to travel further.

(5) This approach is illustrated in simplified form in FIG. 1, which shows a system **100** including driver circuitry **110**, a piezoelectric element **120**, and a transformer **130**. A primary coil **132** of the transformer **130** is coupled to the driver circuitry **110** so as to receive a primary drive signal V_{drive} output by the driver circuitry **110**. A secondary coil **134** of the transformer **130**, which has fewer turns than the primary coil **132**, is coupled to the piezoelectric element **120**, such that the piezoelectric element **120** receives a secondary drive signal V_{drive}' whose amplitude is greater than that of the primary drive signal V_{drive} . As will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art, the increase in the amplitude of the secondary drive signal V_{drive}' with respect to the primary drive signal V_{drive} is governed by the turns ratio of the transformer (i.e. the ratio of turns of the primary coil **132** to turns of the secondary coil **134**).

(6) There are a number of disadvantages to the approach illustrated in FIG. 1. In particular, the transformer **130** is typically physically large, heavy and costly (compared to an integrated circuit that may be used to implement the driver circuitry **110**). Further, the effective range of the system **100** is limited, and the system **100** is susceptible to interference from signals transmitted by other transducers.

SUMMARY

(7) According to a first aspect, the invention provides circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer, the circuitry comprising: driver circuitry configured to supply a drive signal to cause the transducer to generate an output signal; and active inductor circuitry configured to be coupled with the piezoelectric transducer, wherein the active inductor circuitry is tuneable to adjust a frequency characteristic of the output signal.

(8) The active inductor circuitry may comprise gyrator circuitry and a capacitance.

(9) The circuitry may be configured such that, in use of the circuitry, the active inductor circuitry is coupled in series with the piezoelectric transducer.

(10) The gyrator circuitry may comprise first and second transconductors arranged in a back-to-back configuration.

(11) The capacitance may be adjustable.

(12) Additionally or alternatively, a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductors may be adjustable.

(13) The first and second transconductors may comprise operational transconductance amplifiers, each having a variable bias current or voltage.

(14) The circuitry may further comprise current monitor circuitry configured to be coupled to the piezoelectric transducer, the current monitor circuitry comprising control circuitry configured to: estimate an impedance of the piezoelectric transducer; and output a control signal to the active inductor circuitry to cause the active inductor circuitry to adjust a parameter thereof so as to adjust an operational frequency characteristic of the piezoelectric transducer.

(15) The active inductor circuitry may comprise first and second transconductors and a capacitance,

and the active inductor circuitry may be configured to adjust a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductors or a capacitance value of the capacitance in response to the control signal.

(16) The control circuitry may be configured to estimate the impedance of the piezoelectric transducer based on a voltage of known amplitude output to the piezoelectric transducer by the driver circuitry and current through the piezoelectric transducer detected by the current monitor circuitry.

(17) The driver circuitry may be configured to output a chirp signal, and the active inductor circuitry may be configured to adjust a frequency characteristic thereof according to the chirp signal, such that the frequency characteristic of the active inductor circuitry tracks the changing frequency of the chirp signal.

(18) The active inductor circuitry may be configured to receive the chirp signal or a signal indicative of the chirp signal from the driver circuitry.

(19) The active inductor circuitry may comprise first and second transconductors and a capacitance, and the active inductor circuitry may be configured to adjust a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductor or a capacitance value of the capacitance according to the chirp signal.

(20) According to a second aspect the invention provides an integrated circuit comprising driver circuitry configured to generate a drive signal for driving a piezoelectric transducer to cause the transducer to generate an output signal and active inductor circuitry configured to be coupled with the piezoelectric transducer.

(21) The active inductor circuitry may be tuneable to adjust a frequency characteristic of the output signal.

(22) The active inductor circuitry may comprise gyrator circuitry and a capacitance.

(23) The gyrator circuitry may comprise first and second transconductors arranged in a back-to-back configuration.

(24) The capacitance and/or a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductors may be adjustable.

(25) According to a third aspect, the invention provides a system comprising a first piezoelectric transducer associated with first driver circuitry and first active inductor circuitry and a second piezoelectric transducer associated with second driver circuitry and second active inductor circuitry, wherein the first active inductor circuitry is tuneable so as to provide a first operational bandwidth for the first piezoelectric transducer and the second active inductor circuitry is tuneable so as to provide a second operational bandwidth, different from the first operational bandwidth, for the second piezoelectric transducer.

(26) According to a fourth aspect, the invention provides circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer, the circuitry comprising driver circuitry configured to supply a drive signal to the piezoelectric transducer and gyrator circuitry configured to be coupled with the piezoelectric transducer, wherein the gyrator circuitry is tuneable to adjust an operational frequency characteristic of the piezoelectric transducer.

(27) According to a fifth aspect, the invention provides an integrated circuit comprising the circuitry of the first aspect.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

(1) Embodiments of the invention will now be described, strictly by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

(2) FIG. 1 is a simplified schematic diagram illustrating circuitry for driving a piezoelectric

transducer for use in a parking sensor system;

(3) FIG. 2 is a simplified schematic diagram illustrating alternative circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer;

(4) FIG. 3a is a schematic diagram illustrating a Butterworth Van Dyke (BVD) model of a piezoelectric transducer;

(5) FIG. 3b illustrates a frequency response of the model of FIG. 3a;

(6) FIG. 4a is a schematic diagram illustrating the addition of a series inductor to the BVD model shown in FIG. 3a;

(7) FIG. 4b illustrates a frequency response of the modified model of FIG. 4a;

(8) FIG. 5 is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer, including driver circuitry and active inductor circuitry;

(9) FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram of a system for driving a piezoelectric transducer including example gyrator circuitry;

(10) FIG. 7 is a schematic diagram illustrating electrical equivalent circuitry of the circuitry illustrated in FIG. 6;

(11) FIG. 8 is a schematic diagram illustrating a system including a plurality of piezoelectric elements, each of which is associated with circuitry of the kind illustrated in FIG. 5;

(12) FIG. 9 is a schematic diagram illustrating an example of the circuitry of FIG. 5 in which the driver circuitry provides an indication of a frequency of a drive signal to the active inductor circuitry; and

(13) FIG. 10 is a schematic diagram illustrating a further example of circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer, including driver circuitry and active inductor circuitry.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

(14) In one alternative system, shown generally at **200** in FIG. 2, an inductance **210** is coupled in series between the driver circuitry **110** and the piezoelectric element **120**. This has the effect of increasing the operational bandwidth of the piezoelectric element **120**, thus enabling the transformer **130** of FIG. 1 to be removed, as lower frequency ultrasound signals, which inherently have longer range, can be used.

(15) FIG. 3a is a schematic diagram illustrating a Butterworth Van Dyke (BVD) model circuit **300** of a piezoelectric element such as the piezoelectric element **120**. As can be seen, in the circuit **300** the piezoelectric element is modelled as a filter comprising a first capacitance **310** of value $C_{sub.P}$ in parallel with a series combination of an inductance **320** of value $L_{sub.M}$, a second capacitance **330** of value $L_{sub.M}$ and a resistance **340** of value $R_{sub.M}$. In the circuit **300**, a voltage $V_{sub.RA}$ (representing acoustic power output by the piezoelectric element **120**) develops across the resistance **340** in response to an applied input voltage $V_{sub.IN}$. The transfer function from $V_{sub.IN}$ to $V_{sub.RA}$ in the model **300** is given by:

$$(16) T = \frac{V_{RA}}{V_{IN}} = \frac{sC_M R_A}{1 + s^2 C_M L_M + sC_M R_A},$$

where s is the frequency operator $j\omega$.

(17) As will be apparent from the equation above and the frequency response shown at **350** in FIG. 3b, the piezoelectric element **120** modelled by the circuit **300** is a strongly resonant system.

(18) Modifying the circuit **300** by adding a series inductance **210** of value $L_{sub.TUNE}$ to the circuit (as in the system **200** of FIG. 2) gives the model circuit illustrated at **400** in FIG. 4a. The transfer function of from $V_{sub.IN}$ to $V_{sub.RA}$ of the circuit **400** is given by:

$$(19) T = \frac{V_{RA}}{V_{IN}} = \frac{s^3 C_M L_{TUNE} R_A (C_P + C_M (1 + sC_P (sL_M + R_A)))}{(1 + sC_M (sL_M + R_A))(1 + s^2 C_P L_{TUNE} + sC_M (L_M (s + s^3 C_P L_{TUNE}) + R_A + sL_{TUNE} (1 + sC_P R_A)))}$$

(20) If the value of the series inductance **210** is selected to maximally split the poles in the transfer function in order to maximise the bandwidth of the circuit, by inspection the value $L_{sub.TUNE}$ of the series inductance is given by:

(21) $L_{\text{TUNE}} \approx L_M \frac{C_M}{C_P}$

(22) The frequency response of the circuit **400** is shown at **410** in FIG. **4b** (which also shows the frequency response **350** of the unmodified circuit **300** shown in FIG. **3**). As will be apparent from the frequency response **410**, the addition of the series inductance **410** has increased the bandwidth of the circuit **400**, in comparison to that of the circuit **300**. However, this increase in bandwidth requires a large inductor to implement the inductance **210**. Such an inductor cannot be implemented as part of an integrated circuit, but must instead be provided off-chip.

(23) FIG. **5** is a schematic illustration of an alternative approach according to an aspect of the present disclosure, which avoids the need for an off-chip inductor.

(24) In the system shown generally at **500** in FIG. **5**, driver circuitry **110** for providing a drive signal to a piezoelectric element **120** and active inductor circuitry **510** are provided on an integrated circuit **520**. The driver circuitry **110** provides a drive signal to a first terminal of the piezoelectric element **120** (which is provided externally of the integrated circuit **520**, i.e. off-chip), and a second terminal of the piezoelectric element is coupled to the active inductor circuitry **510**. The active inductor circuitry **510** is configured to implement an on-chip active inductor, and thus in the system **500** illustrated in FIG. **5** there is no need for a separate off-chip inductor. The active inductor circuitry **510** may be implemented using gyrator circuitry and a capacitance, for example. The active inductor circuitry **510** may be tuneable so as to permit adjustment of a frequency characteristic of an output signal generated by the piezoelectric element **120** in response to the drive signal.

(25) FIG. **6** is a schematic representation of a system for driving a piezoelectric transducer. The system, shown generally at **600**, includes driver circuitry **110** configured to provide a drive signal to a first terminal **122** of a piezoelectric element **120** of the piezoelectric transducer. The system **600** further includes gyrator circuitry **610** coupled to a second terminal **124** of the piezoelectric element **120** and a capacitor **620** of value $C_{\text{sub.G}}$ coupled between the gyrator circuitry **610** and a reference voltage source, which in this example is a ground rail. The driver circuitry **110**, gyrator circuitry **610** and capacitor **620** may be provided on an integrated circuit **630**, whilst the piezoelectric element **120** is external to the integrated circuit **630** (i.e. is off-chip). The combination of the gyrator circuitry **610** and the capacitor **620** constitutes active inductor circuitry of the kind shown at **510** in FIG. **5**.

(26) The gyrator circuitry **610** includes first and second transconductors **612**, **614** arranged in a back to back configuration. The transconductors **612**, **614** may be implemented by operational transconductance amplifiers, for example. Each of the transconductors **612**, **614** has a first and second input and an output, and is configured to generate an output current I_{out} based on 1) a difference between voltages V_1 , V_2 at its first and second inputs and 2) a transconductance value G_m of the transconductor, i.e. $I_{\text{out}} = G_m \cdot (V_1 - V_2)$.

(27) In use of the system **600**, a first input (labelled + in FIG. **6**) of the first transconductor **612** is coupled to the second terminal **124** of the piezoelectric element **120** so as to receive an input voltage $V_{\text{sub.IN}}$. A second input (labelled – in FIG. **6**) of the first transconductor **612** is coupled to a reference voltage source, which in the illustrated example is the ground rail. The first transconductor **612** is thus configured to generate a first output current $I_{\text{sub.1}}$ that is dependent upon the input voltage $V_{\text{sub.IN}}$ and a transconductance value G_m of the first transconductor **612**, i.e. $I_{\text{sub.1}} = G_m \cdot V_{\text{sub.IN}}$.

(28) The capacitor **620** is coupled to an output of the first transconductor **612** so as to receive the first output current $I_{\text{sub.1}}$. A voltage $V_{\text{sub.Cap}}$ develops across the capacitor **620** as a result of the first output current $I_{\text{sub.1}}$, and this voltage $V_{\text{sub.Cap}}$ lags the first output current $I_{\text{sub.1}}$ by 90 degrees. The voltage $V_{\text{sub.Cap}}$ thus also lags the input voltage $V_{\text{sub.IN}}$.

(29) A first input (labelled + in FIG. **6**) of the second transconductor **614** is coupled to the reference voltage source, and a second input (labelled – in FIG. **6**) of the second transconductor **614** is coupled to the output of the first transconductor **612**, and thus to the capacitor **620**. The second

transconductor **614** is thus configured to generate a second output current $I_{sub.2}$ that is dependent upon the voltage $V_{sub.Cap}$ that develops across the capacitor **620** and a transconductance value G_m (which in this example is equal to the transconductance value of the first transconductor **612**) of the second transconductor **614**, i.e. $I_{sub.2} = -G_m \cdot V_{sub.Cap}$. As it is based on the voltage $V_{sub.Cap}$ that develops across the capacitor **620**, the second output current $I_{sub.2}$ lags the input voltage $V_{sub.IN}$.

(30) Thus the combination of the gyrator circuitry **610** and the capacitor **620** acts as an inductor **710** of

$$(31) \text{ inductance} = \frac{C_G}{G_m^2},$$

as illustrated in the equivalent circuit **700** of FIG. 7.

(32) As will be apparent from the equation above, a desired equivalent inductance value L can be implemented by selecting appropriate values for the transconductances of the transconductors **612**, **614** of the gyrator circuitry **610** and/or the capacitance of the capacitor **620**. In this way frequency characteristics of the system **600** such as the operational frequency response and bandwidth can be set and (if the transconductance and capacitance values are adjustable) adjusted as required to achieve desired effects such as increased range and/or reduced susceptibility to interference.

(33) FIG. 8 is a schematic diagram illustrating a system **800** including a plurality of piezoelectric elements **120a-120n**, each of which is associated with separate driver circuitry **110a-110n** and separate active inductor circuitry **510a-510n** of the kind described above with reference to FIG. 5. The active inductor circuitry **510a-510n** of the system **800** may be based on the gyrator-capacitor arrangement described above with reference to FIG. 6.

(34) The active inductor circuitry **510a-510n** of the system **800** permits the operational frequency characteristics of each of the piezoelectric elements **120a-120n** to be tuned differently, e.g. by setting or adjusting the transconductance values of transconductors and/or the capacitance value of a capacitor used in the active inductor circuitry **510a-510n** associated with each piezoelectric element **120a-120n**. For example, first active inductor circuitry **510a** associated with a first piezoelectric element **120a** can be tuned so as to provide a first operational bandwidth for the first piezoelectric element **120a**, whilst second active inductor circuitry **510b** associated with a second piezoelectric element **120b** can be tuned so as to provide a second operational bandwidth, different from the first operational bandwidth, for the second piezoelectric element **120b**. Similarly, n th active inductor circuitry **510n** associated with an n th piezoelectric element **120n** can be tuned so as to provide an n th operational bandwidth, different from the first and second operational bandwidths, for the n th piezoelectric element **120bn**. In this way the risk of interference between the piezoelectric elements **120a-120n** can be reduced.

(35) Thus, in a system that has a plurality of co-located piezoelectric elements, each element can be statically tuned to a different operational bandwidth, so as to minimise co-existence problems such as interference between elements.

(36) For example, in a system such as a parking sensor system that includes a plurality of piezoelectric transducers that are to operate simultaneously, the frequency response and operational bandwidth of each transducer can be tuned differently (e.g. during a calibration process performed during manufacture or installation of the system) to reduce the risk of interference between the piezoelectric transducers.

(37) Additionally, the transconductance values of the transconductors **612**, **614** and/or the capacitance value of the capacitor **620** may be dynamically adjustable. For example, the transconductance values of the transconductors **612**, **614** may be adjustable by adjusting a bias voltage or current, and the capacitor **620** may be implemented using, for example, a switched capacitor network or other variable capacitance arrangement, thus allowing the capacitance value of the capacitor **620** to be adjusted. This allows the frequency parameters of the system **600** to be adjusted dynamically in use.

(38) For example, where the system **600** is used to drive a piezoelectric element **120** in a system

such as a parking sensor system, the operational bandwidth of the piezoelectric element **120** may be optimised by dynamically adjusting the frequency response and/or bandwidth of the system **600** to correspond to a driving signal generated by the driver circuitry **110**. Thus, a chirp signal (i.e. a signal whose frequency increases or decreases over time) can be generated by the driver circuitry **110** to drive the piezoelectric element **120**, and the frequency response and/or bandwidth of the system **600** may be adjusted accordingly.

(39) FIG. **9** is a schematic illustration of such a system. As shown, the system **900** includes driver circuitry **110** and active inductor circuitry **510**, configured as in the system **500** of FIG. **5**. The active inductor circuitry **510** may be implemented using the arrangement of gyrator circuitry **610** and a capacitor **620** shown in FIG. **6** and described above. The driver circuitry **110** and active inductor circuitry **510** may be provided on an integrated circuit **910**.

(40) In the system **900** of FIG. **9**, the driver circuitry **110** is configured to generate a chirp signal to drive the piezoelectric element **120**. The driver circuitry **110** in this example is coupled to the active inductor circuitry **510** so as to provide the chirp signal (or a signal indicative of the chirp signal) to the active inductor circuitry **510**. The active inductor circuitry **510** is configured to adjust a frequency characteristic (e.g. a bandwidth or frequency response) thereof according to the signal received from the driver circuitry **110**, such that the frequency characteristic of the active inductor circuitry **510** tracks the changing frequency of the chirp signal. In this way the frequency characteristic of the active inductor can be dynamically adjusted to correspond to the instantaneous frequency of the chirp signal, thus allowing a wider bandwidth chirp signal to be generated and transmitted by the piezoelectric element than when the frequency characteristic of the active inductor **510** is static. This can improve the range and selectivity of the system.

(41) As will be appreciated from the discussion above, where the active inductor circuitry **510** is implemented using transconductors and a capacitor as in the example illustrated in FIG. **6**, the frequency characteristic of the active inductor circuitry **510** may be adjusted by adjusting the transconductance values of the transconductors **612**, **614** and/or by adjusting the capacitance value of the capacitor **620** according to the chirp signal in order to track the frequency of the chirp signal.

(42) Additionally, the active inductor circuitry **510** can be tuned to compensate for component variations, e.g. a deviation from rated or nominal parameter values for the piezoelectric element **120**.

(43) FIG. **10** is a schematic diagram illustrating circuitry for detecting and compensating for a parameter value of a piezoelectric transducer **120**. As can be seen, the system **1000** include driver circuitry **110** and active inductor circuitry **510** of the kind described above. The system further includes current monitor circuitry **1010**, coupled in series between the piezoelectric transducer **120** and the active inductor circuitry. The driver circuitry **110**, active inductor circuitry **510** and current monitor circuitry **1010** may be provided in an integrated circuit **1020**.

(44) The current monitor circuitry **1010** may comprise, for example, a resistance of known value, voltage detector circuitry coupled to the resistance so as to detect a voltage across the resistance, and control circuitry operative to control one or more parameters of the active inductor circuitry **510** (e.g. a transconductance value and/or a capacitance value) based on the detected voltage.

(45) In operation of the system **1000**, the driver circuitry **110** outputs a voltage of known amplitude to the piezoelectric element **120**. The current monitor circuitry **1010** determines or infers a current through the piezoelectric element **120** and, based on the determined current and the known voltage output by the driver circuitry **110**, estimates an impedance of the piezoelectric element **120**. If this estimated impedance does not correspond to a rated or nominal impedance value for the piezoelectric element **120**, the control circuitry of the current monitor circuitry **1010** can output a control signal Ctrl to the active inductor circuitry **510** to adjust a parameter such as a transconductance and/or a capacitance of the active inductor circuitry **510** so as to adjust an operational frequency characteristic such as the operational bandwidth and/or frequency response of the piezoelectric element **120** to correspond to an operational bandwidth and/or frequency

response of the piezoelectric element **120** that would be expected if the actual impedance of the piezoelectric element **120** were the same as its rated or nominal impedance.

(46) Thus the active inductor circuitry **510** can be tuned to compensate for variations in the parameters of the piezoelectric element **120** from rated or nominal parameter values.

(47) The frequency characteristics of the active inductor circuitry **510** can then be dynamically adjusted as discussed above to track the frequency of a chirp signal output by the driver circuitry **110** in operation of the system **1000**.

(48) As will be appreciated, either or both of static tuning of the active inductor circuitry **510** to compensate for the effects of variations in the piezoelectric element **120**, as described above with reference to FIG. **10**, and dynamic tuning of the active inductor circuitry **510** to track the frequency of a chirp signal output by the driver circuitry **110**, as described above with reference to FIG. **10**, can be employed in the multi-element system **800** described above with reference to FIG. **8**.

(49) As will be apparent from the foregoing discussion, the circuitry of the present disclosure provides driver circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer obviates the need for a transformer or an off-chip inductor, as the operational frequency characteristics such as the frequency response and bandwidth of a piezoelectric transducer can be optimised to suit the requirements of a particular application by adjusting one or more parameters of the active inductor circuitry. Thus, parameters of the active inductor circuitry can be adjusted to compensate for variations in the electrical characteristics of individual piezoelectric elements (e.g. deviations from rated or nominal parameter values such as impedance). Further, parameters of the active inductor circuitry can be adjusted dynamically during use in order to tune an operational frequency characteristic such as the operational bandwidth of a piezoelectric element to a driving signal such as a chirp signal. Still further, in a system comprising a plurality of co-located piezoelectric elements, the operational frequency characteristics of the elements can be individually tuned to mitigate co-location issues such as interference between piezoelectric elements.

(50) Embodiments may be implemented as an integrated circuit which in some examples could be a codec or audio DSP or similar. Embodiments may be incorporated in an electronic device, which may for example be a portable device and/or a device operable with battery power. The device could be a communication device such as a mobile telephone or smartphone or similar. The device could be a computing device such as a notebook, laptop or tablet computing device. The device could be a wearable device such as a smartwatch. The device could be a device with voice control or activation functionality such as a smart speaker. In some instances the device could be an accessory device such as a headset, headphones, earphones, earbuds or the like to be used with some other product.

(51) The skilled person will recognise that some aspects of the above-described apparatus and methods, for example the discovery and configuration methods may be embodied as processor control code, for example on a non-volatile carrier medium such as a disk, CD- or DVD-ROM, programmed memory such as read only memory (Firmware), or on a data carrier such as an optical or electrical signal carrier. For many applications, embodiments will be implemented on a DSP (Digital Signal Processor), ASIC (Application Specific Integrated Circuit) or FPGA (Field Programmable Gate Array). Thus the code may comprise conventional program code or microcode or, for example code for setting up or controlling an ASIC or FPGA. The code may also comprise code for dynamically configuring re-configurable apparatus such as re-programmable logic gate arrays. Similarly the code may comprise code for a hardware description language such as Verilog™ or VHDL (Very high speed integrated circuit Hardware Description Language). As the skilled person will appreciate, the code may be distributed between a plurality of coupled components in communication with one another. Where appropriate, the embodiments may also be implemented using code running on a field-(re)programmable analogue array or similar device in order to configure analogue hardware.

(52) It should be noted that the above-mentioned embodiments illustrate rather than limit the

invention, and that those skilled in the art will be able to design many alternative embodiments without departing from the scope of the appended claims. The word “comprising” does not exclude the presence of elements or steps other than those listed in a claim, “a” or “an” does not exclude a plurality, and a single feature or other unit may fulfil the functions of several units recited in the claims. Any reference numerals or labels in the claims shall not be construed so as to limit their scope.

(53) As used herein, when two or more elements are referred to as “coupled” to one another, such term indicates that such two or more elements are in electronic communication or mechanical communication, as applicable, whether connected indirectly or directly, with or without intervening elements.

(54) This disclosure encompasses all changes, substitutions, variations, alterations, and modifications to the example embodiments herein that a person having ordinary skill in the art would comprehend. Similarly, where appropriate, the appended claims encompass all changes, substitutions, variations, alterations, and modifications to the example embodiments herein that a person having ordinary skill in the art would comprehend. Moreover, reference in the appended claims to an apparatus or system or a component of an apparatus or system being adapted to, arranged to, capable of, configured to, enabled to, operable to, or operative to perform a particular function encompasses that apparatus, system, or component, whether or not it or that particular function is activated, turned on, or unlocked, as long as that apparatus, system, or component is so adapted, arranged, capable, configured, enabled, operable, or operative. Accordingly, modifications, additions, or omissions may be made to the systems, apparatuses, and methods described herein without departing from the scope of the disclosure. For example, the components of the systems and apparatuses may be integrated or separated. Moreover, the operations of the systems and apparatuses disclosed herein may be performed by more, fewer, or other components and the methods described may include more, fewer, or other steps. Additionally, steps may be performed in any suitable order. As used in this document, “each” refers to each member of a set or each member of a subset of a set.

(55) Although exemplary embodiments are illustrated in the figures and described below, the principles of the present disclosure may be implemented using any number of techniques, whether currently known or not. The present disclosure should in no way be limited to the exemplary implementations and techniques illustrated in the drawings and described above.

(56) Unless otherwise specifically noted, articles depicted in the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale.

(57) All examples and conditional language recited herein are intended for pedagogical objects to aid the reader in understanding the disclosure and the concepts contributed by the inventor to furthering the art, and are construed as being without limitation to such specifically recited examples and conditions. Although embodiments of the present disclosure have been described in detail, it should be understood that various changes, substitutions, and alterations could be made hereto without departing from the spirit and scope of the disclosure.

(58) Although specific advantages have been enumerated above, various embodiments may include some, none, or all of the enumerated advantages. Additionally, other technical advantages may become readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art after review of the foregoing figures and description.

(59) To aid the Patent Office and any readers of any patent issued on this application in interpreting the claims appended hereto, applicants wish to note that they do not intend any of the appended claims or claim elements to invoke 35 U.S.C. § 112(f) unless the words “means for” or “step for” are explicitly used in the particular claim.

Claims

1. Circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer, the circuitry comprising: a driver circuitry configured to supply a drive signal to cause the piezoelectric transducer to generate an output signal; and an active inductor circuitry configured to be coupled with the piezoelectric transducer, wherein the active inductor circuitry is tuneable to adjust a frequency characteristic of the output signal; wherein the circuitry is configured such that, in use of the circuitry, the active inductor circuitry is coupled in series with the piezoelectric transducer.
2. The circuitry according to claim 1, wherein the active inductor circuitry comprises: gyrator circuitry; and a capacitance.
3. The circuitry according to claim 2, wherein the gyrator circuitry comprises first and second transconductors arranged in a back-to-back configuration.
4. The circuitry according to claim 2, wherein the capacitance is adjustable.
5. The circuitry according to claim 3, wherein a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductors is adjustable.
6. The circuitry according to claim 5 wherein the first and second transconductors comprise operational transconductance amplifiers, each having a variable bias current or a variable bias voltage.
7. The circuitry according to claim 1 further comprising current monitor circuitry configured to be coupled to the piezoelectric transducer, the current monitor circuitry comprising control circuitry configured to: estimate an impedance of the piezoelectric transducer; and output a control signal to the active inductor circuitry to cause the active inductor circuitry to adjust a parameter thereof so as to adjust an operational frequency characteristic of the piezoelectric transducer.
8. The circuitry according to claim 7 wherein the active inductor circuitry comprises first and second transconductors and a capacitance, and wherein the active inductor circuitry is configured to adjust a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductors or a capacitance value of the capacitance in response to the control signal.
9. The circuitry according to claim 7, wherein the control circuitry is configured to estimate the impedance of the piezoelectric transducer based on a voltage of known amplitude output to the piezoelectric transducer by the driver circuitry and current through the piezoelectric transducer detected by the current monitor circuitry.
10. The circuitry according to claim 1 wherein the driver circuitry is configured to output a chirp signal, and the active inductor circuitry is configured to adjust a frequency characteristic thereof according to the chirp signal, such that the frequency characteristic of the active inductor circuitry tracks a changing frequency of the chirp signal.
11. The circuitry according to claim 10 wherein the active inductor circuitry is configured to receive the chirp signal or a signal indicative of the chirp signal from the driver circuitry.
12. The circuitry according to claim 10 wherein the active inductor circuitry comprises first and second transconductors and a capacitance, and wherein the active inductor circuitry is configured to adjust a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductor or a capacitance value of the capacitance according to the chirp signal.
13. An integrated circuit comprising: a driver circuitry configured to generate a drive signal to cause a piezoelectric transducer to generate an output signal; and an active inductor circuitry configured to be coupled with the piezoelectric transducer; wherein the integrated circuit is configured such that, in use of the integrated circuit, the active inductor circuitry is coupled in series with the piezoelectric transducer.
14. The integrated circuit according to claim 13, wherein the active inductor circuitry is tuneable to adjust a frequency characteristic of the output signal.
15. The integrated circuit according to claim 13, wherein the active inductor circuitry comprises gyrator circuitry and a capacitance.
16. The integrated circuit according to claim 15, wherein the gyrator circuitry comprises first and

second transconductors arranged in a back-to-back configuration.

17. The integrated circuit according to claim 16, wherein the capacitance and/or a transconductance of at least one of the first and second transconductors is adjustable.

18. A system comprising: a first piezoelectric transducer associated with first driver circuitry and first active inductor circuitry; and a second piezoelectric transducer associated with second driver circuitry and second active inductor circuitry, wherein the first active inductor circuitry is tuneable so as to provide a first operational bandwidth for the first piezoelectric transducer and the second active inductor circuitry is tuneable so as to provide a second operational bandwidth, different from the first operational bandwidth, for the second piezoelectric transducer; wherein the system is configured such that, in use of the system, the first active inductor circuitry is coupled in series with the first piezoelectric transducer and the second active inductor circuitry is coupled in series with the second piezoelectric transducer.

19. A circuitry for driving a piezoelectric transducer, the circuitry comprising: driver circuitry configured to supply a drive signal; and gyrator circuitry configured to be coupled with the piezoelectric transducer, wherein the gyrator circuitry is tuneable to adjust an operational frequency characteristic of the piezoelectric transducer; wherein the circuitry is configured such that, in use of the circuitry, the gyrator circuitry is coupled in series with the piezoelectric transducer.

20. An integrated circuit comprising the circuitry of claim 1.
