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Systems and methods for optimizing spectral resolution for a hearing system

Abstract

An exemplary sound processor is configured to direct a cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in an audio signal that are within an upper region to a cochlea of a first ear of a recipient by way of a plurality of electrodes in accordance with a frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in the upper region of the audible frequency range of the recipient to the plurality of electrodes, the upper region of the audible frequency range comprising frequencies above and including a cutoff frequency, and direct the cochlear implant to apply electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the audio signal that are within a lower region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear by way of a most apical electrode and one or more compensating electrodes included in the plurality of electrodes in accordance with an electrode stimulation configuration.

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Background/Summary

RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/864,847, filed Jul. 14, 2022, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/525,841, filed Jul. 30, 2019, and issued as U.S. Pat. No. 11,433,236, each of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
(1) A cochlear implant system conventionally provides electrical stimulation representative of audio content in accordance with a frequency allocation table that maps frequencies within an audible frequency range to a plurality of electrodes located within a recipient's cochlea. For example, to present audio content having a certain frequency to the recipient, the cochlear implant system provides electrical stimulation by way of a certain electrode to which the certain frequency has been mapped in a frequency allocation table.
(2) Conventionally, frequencies within the audible frequency range that are below a place pitch of the most apical electrode (i.e., below a frequency that corresponds to a position within the cochlea at which the most apical electrode is located) are mapped to the most apical electrode in the frequency allocation table. This allows these relatively low frequencies to be presented to a recipient of a cochlear implant system. However, such a mapping disadvantageously increases the spectral distance between each of the mapped electrodes, thereby reducing spectral resolution for the cochlear implant system (e.g., by reducing the ability of the recipient to distinguish between frequencies represented by electrical stimulation applied by way of the electrodes).

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS
(1) The accompanying drawings illustrate various embodiments and are a part of the specification. The illustrated embodiments are merely examples and do not limit the scope of the disclosure. Throughout the drawings, identical or similar reference numbers designate identical or similar elements.
(2) FIGS. **1**A-**1**C illustrate exemplary hearing systems according to principles described herein.
(3) FIG. **2** illustrates an exemplary implementation of a cochlear implant system according to principles described herein.
(4) FIG. **3** illustrates an exemplary implementation of a hearing device according to principles described herein.
(5) FIG. **4** illustrates an exemplary implementation of a bimodal implant system according to principles described herein.
(6) FIG. **5** illustrates a schematic structure of the human cochlea according to principles described herein.
(7) FIGS. **6**-**7** illustrate exemplary mappings between frequencies in an audible frequency range and electrodes that may be defined by a frequency allocation table according to principles described herein.
(8) FIG. **8** illustrates exemplary gain parameters that may be employed to implement a phantom electrical stimulation configuration according to principles described herein.
(9) FIG. **9** shows an exemplary configuration in which a fitting device is communicatively coupled

to a hearing system according to principles described herein.
(10) FIG. **10** shows an exemplary mapping of frequencies within an upper region of a audible frequency range to electrodes according to principles described herein.
(11) FIG. **11** illustrates an exemplary method according to principles described herein.
(12) FIG. **12** illustrates an exemplary computing device according to principles described herein.
DETAILED DESCRIPTION
(13) Systems and methods for optimizing spectral resolution for a hearing system are described herein. For example, a system may include a sound processor associated with a first ear of a recipient and configured to control an operation of a cochlear implant associated with the first ear. The sound processor may be configured to maintain data representative of a frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in an upper region of an audible frequency range to a plurality of electrodes located within a cochlea of the first ear. The upper region of the audible frequency range includes frequencies above and including a cut-off frequency. A lower region of the audible frequency range includes frequencies below the cut-off frequency. As described herein, the frequencies in the lower region are not included in the frequency allocation table. Accordingly, when the sound processor receives an audio signal representative of audio content presented to the recipient, the sound processor may direct a cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the audio signal that are within the upper region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear by way of the plurality of electrodes in accordance with the frequency allocation table. For frequencies in the audio signal that are in the lower region of the audible frequency range, the sound processor may direct the cochlear implant to apply phantom electrical stimulation representative of these frequencies to the cochlea of the first ear by way of a most apical electrode and one or more compensating electrodes in accordance with a phantom electrode stimulation configuration.
(14) As used herein, “standard electrical stimulation” applied by way of an electrode refers to electrical stimulation configured to convey (e.g., cause a recipient to perceive) a frequency mapped to the electrode in a frequency allocation table. For example, the standard electrical stimulation may be focused only to a location within the cochlear tissue proximate (e.g., nearby, immediately surrounding, etc.) a location where the electrode is positioned. The standard electrical stimulation may additionally or alternatively be focused to a location within the cochlear tissue that is in between locations that correspond to where two or more electrodes are positioned (e.g., by using current steering).
(15) In contrast, “phantom electrical stimulation” is configured to convey (e.g., cause a recipient to perceive) a frequency that is not mapped to an electrode in the frequency allocation table. For example, in accordance with the systems and methods described herein, phantom electrical stimulation applied by way of the most apical electrode and one or more compensating electrodes adjacent to the most apical electrode may convey a frequency or pitch that is lower than the frequency mapped to the most apical electrode in the frequency allocation table.
(16) By not including the frequencies in the lower region of the audible frequency range in the frequency allocation table and instead conveying these frequencies using phantom electrical stimulation, the systems and methods described herein may increase the number of electrodes per octave in the upper region of the audible frequency range. This may facilitate increased spectral resolution in this region for a recipient of the cochlear implant system. Moreover, by using phantom electrical stimulation to convey frequencies in the lower frequency region of the audible frequency range (and, in some cases, a hearing device configured to provide acoustic stimulation representative of these frequencies), sound quality may be maintained or enhanced compared to conventional cochlear implant system configurations.
(17) FIGS. **1**A-**1**C illustrate exemplary hearing systems **100** (i.e., hearing systems **100**-**1** through **100**-**3**) that may be configured to implement the systems and methods described herein.
(18) As shown in FIG. **1**A, hearing system **100**-**1** includes a cochlear implant system **102**

configured to receive an audio signal and apply electrical stimulation representative of the audio signal to a recipient of cochlear implant system **102**. An exemplary cochlear implant system **102** is described herein. In the configuration shown in FIG. **1**A, cochlear implant system **102** is associated with a single ear of the recipient and is the only hearing prosthesis included in hearing system **100-1**. Hence, hearing system **100-1** may be referred to as a unilateral and/or single mode hearing system.

(19) As shown in FIG. **1**B, hearing system **100-2** includes both cochlear implant system **102** and a hearing device **104**. As described in FIG. **1**A, cochlear implant system **102** is configured to receive an audio signal and apply electrical stimulation representative of the audio signal to a recipient of cochlear implant system **102**. Hearing device **104** may be configured to receive the same audio signal (or a different audio signal representative of the same audio content represented by the audio signal received by cochlear implant system **102**) and apply acoustic stimulation representative of the audio signal to the recipient. An exemplary hearing device **104** configured to provide acoustic stimulation is described herein. In the configuration shown in FIG. **1**B, cochlear implant system **102** was associated with a first ear of the recipient and hearing device **104** is associated with a second ear of the recipient. Hence, hearing system **100-2** may be referred to as a bimodal hearing system.

(20) As shown in FIG. **1**C, hearing system **100-3** includes a bimodal implant system **106** configured to receive an audio signal and apply both electrical and acoustic stimulation representative of the audio signal to a recipient. Bimodal implant system **106** is associated with a single ear of the recipient and therefore provides the electrical and acoustic stimulation to the same ear. An exemplary bimodal implant system **106** is described herein.

(21) A bimodal hearing system, such as hearing systems **100-2** and **100-3**, may be useful in cases where the recipient has some degree of residual hearing in a lower frequency region. This will be described in more detail below.

(22) FIG. **2** illustrates an exemplary implementation of cochlear implant system **102**. As shown, cochlear implant system **102** may include a microphone **202**, a sound processor **204**, a headpiece **206** having a coil disposed therein, a cochlear implant **208**, and an electrode lead **210**. Electrode lead **210** may include an array of electrodes **212** disposed on a distal portion of electrode lead **210** and that are configured to be inserted into a cochlea of a recipient to stimulate the cochlea when the distal portion of electrode lead **210** is inserted into the cochlea. One or more other electrodes (e.g., including a ground electrode, not explicitly shown) may also be disposed on other parts of electrode lead **210** (e.g., on a proximal portion of electrode lead **210**) to, for example, provide a current return path for stimulation current generated by electrodes **212** and to remain external to the cochlea after electrode lead **210** is inserted into the cochlea. As shown, electrode lead **210** may be pre-curved so as to properly fit within the spiral shape of the cochlea. Additional or alternative components may be included within cochlear implant system **102** as may serve a particular implementation.

(23) As shown, cochlear implant system **102** may include various components configured to be located external to a recipient including, but not limited to, microphone **202**, sound processor **204**, and headpiece **206**. Cochlear implant system **102** may further include various components configured to be implanted within the recipient including, but not limited to, cochlear implant **208** and electrode lead **210**.

(24) Microphone **202** may be configured to detect audio signals presented to the user. Microphone **202** may be implemented in any suitable manner. For example, microphone **202** may include a microphone that is configured to be placed within the concha of the ear near the entrance to the ear canal, such as a T-MIC™ microphone from Advanced Bionics. Such a microphone may be held within the concha of the ear near the entrance of the ear canal during normal operation by a boom or stalk that is attached to an ear hook configured to be selectively attached to sound processor **204**. Additionally or alternatively, microphone **202** may be implemented by one or more microphones

disposed within headpiece **206**, one or more microphones disposed within sound processor **204**, one or more beam-forming microphones, and/or any other suitable microphone as may serve a particular implementation.

(25) Sound processor **204** may be configured to direct cochlear implant **208** to generate and apply electrical stimulation (also referred to herein as "stimulation current") representative of one or more audio signals (e.g., one or more audio signals detected by microphone **202**, input by way of an auxiliary audio input port, input by way of a clinician's programming interface (CPI) device, etc.) to one or more stimulation sites associated with an auditory pathway (e.g., the auditory nerve) of the recipient. Exemplary stimulation sites include, but are not limited to, one or more locations within the cochlea, the cochlear nucleus, the inferior colliculus, and/or any other nuclei in the auditory pathway. To this end, sound processor **204** may process the one or more audio signals in accordance with a selected sound processing strategy or program to generate appropriate stimulation parameters for controlling cochlear implant **208**. Sound processor **204** may be housed within any suitable housing (e.g., a behind-the-ear ("BTE") unit, a body worn device, headpiece **206**, and/or any other sound processing unit as may serve a particular implementation).

(26) In some examples, sound processor **204** may wirelessly transmit stimulation parameters (e.g., in the form of data words included in a forward telemetry sequence) and/or power signals to cochlear implant **208** by way of a wireless communication link **214** between headpiece **206** and cochlear implant **208** (e.g., a wireless link between a coil disposed within headpiece **206** and a coil physically coupled to cochlear implant **208**). It will be understood that communication link **214** may include a bi-directional communication link and/or one or more dedicated uni-directional communication links.

(27) Headpiece **206** may be communicatively coupled to sound processor **204** and may include an external antenna (e.g., a coil and/or one or more wireless communication components) configured to facilitate selective wireless coupling of sound processor **204** to cochlear implant **208**. Headpiece **206** may additionally or alternatively be used to selectively and wirelessly couple any other external device to cochlear implant **208**. To this end, headpiece **206** may be configured to be affixed to the recipient's head and positioned such that the external antenna housed within headpiece **206** is communicatively coupled to a corresponding implantable antenna (which may also be implemented by a coil and/or one or more wireless communication components) included within or otherwise associated with cochlear implant **208**. In this manner, stimulation parameters and/or power signals may be wirelessly transmitted between sound processor **204** and cochlear implant **208** via communication link **214**.

(28) Cochlear implant **208** may include any suitable type of implantable stimulator. For example, cochlear implant **208** may be implemented by an implantable cochlear stimulator. Additionally or alternatively, cochlear implant **208** may include a brainstem implant and/or any other type of cochlear implant that may be implanted within a recipient and configured to apply stimulation to one or more stimulation sites located along an auditory pathway of a recipient.

(29) In some examples, cochlear implant **208** may be configured to generate electrical stimulation representative of an audio signal processed by sound processor **204** (e.g., an audio signal detected by microphone **202**) in accordance with one or more stimulation parameters transmitted thereto by sound processor **204**. Cochlear implant **208** may be further configured to apply the electrical stimulation to one or more stimulation sites (e.g., one or more intracochlear regions) within the recipient via electrodes **212** disposed along electrode lead **210**. In some examples, cochlear implant **208** may include a plurality of independent current sources each associated with a channel defined by one or more of electrodes **212**. In this manner, different stimulation current levels may be applied to multiple stimulation sites simultaneously by way of multiple electrodes **212**.

(30) FIG. **3** illustrates an exemplary implementation of hearing device **104**. As shown, hearing device may be communicatively coupled to a microphone **302** configured to generate an audio signal representative of audio content presented to a recipient of hearing device **14**. A receiver **304**

(also called a speaker or loudspeaker) is also communicatively coupled to hearing device **104**. In this configuration, hearing device **104** may provide acoustic stimulation representative of an audio signal output by microphone **302** by way of receiver **304**. While microphone **302** and speaker **304** are shown to be communicatively coupled to hearing device **104**, it will be recognized that microphone **302** and speaker **304** may alternatively be integrated into hearing device **104**.

(31) Hearing device **104** may be implemented by any suitable device configured to provide acoustic stimulation. For example, hearing device **104** may be implemented by a hearing aid configured to amplify sound presented to a recipient of hearing device **104**.

(32) FIG. **4** illustrates an exemplary implementation of bimodal implant system **106**. As shown, bimodal implant system **106** is similar to cochlear implant system **102**. However, bimodal implant system **106** further includes an acoustic stimulation generator **402** configured to generate acoustic stimulation representative of an audio signal received by sound processor **204**. Sound processor **204** may be configured to apply the acoustic stimulation to the recipient by way of a receiver **404**. Hence, bimodal implant system **106** is configured to provide both acoustic stimulation and electrical stimulation representative of audio content presented to the recipient of bimodal implant system **106**.

(33) FIG. **5** illustrates a schematic structure of the human cochlea **500** into which electrode lead **110** may be inserted. As shown in FIG. **5**, cochlea **500** is in the shape of a spiral beginning at a base **502** and ending at an apex **504**. Within cochlea **500** resides auditory nerve tissue **506**, which is denoted by Xs in FIG. **5**. The auditory nerve tissue **506** is organized within the cochlea **500** in a tonotopic manner. Relatively low frequencies are encoded at or near the apex **504** of the cochlea **500** (referred to as an “apical region”) while relatively high frequencies are encoded at or near the base **502** (referred to as a “basal region”). Hence, electrical stimulation applied by way of electrodes disposed within the apical region (i.e., “apical electrodes”) may result in the recipient perceiving relatively low frequencies and electrical stimulation applied by way of electrodes disposed within the basal region (i.e., “basal electrodes”) may result in the recipient perceiving relatively high frequencies. The delineation between the apical and basal electrodes on a particular electrode lead may vary depending on the insertion depth of the electrode lead, the anatomy of the recipient's cochlea, and/or any other factor as may serve a particular implementation.

(34) FIG. **6** illustrates an exemplary mapping between frequencies in an audible frequency range **602** and electrodes **212** (i.e., electrodes **212-1** through **212-16**) that may be defined by a frequency allocation table. As described herein, the frequency allocation table may be used by sound processor **202** to direct cochlear implant **208** to apply electrical stimulation representative of various frequencies included in an audio signal.

(35) For purposes of this example, audible frequency range **602** includes a range of frequencies including and in between 250 Hz and 16 kHz. Each of these frequencies may be audible to a person with normal hearing. In some examples, the frequencies in audible frequency range **602** are also audible to a hearing impaired recipient of a hearing system, such as one of the hearing systems **100** described herein. It will be recognized that some frequencies lower than 250 Hz and some frequencies above 16 kHz may be included in audible frequency range **602**, depending on the particular person and/or listening scenario as may serve a particular implementation.

(36) In the example of FIG. **6**, electrode **212-1** is the most apical electrode on electrode lead **210**. In other words, electrode **212-1** is the most distally located electrode on electrode lead **210** such that when electrode lead **210** is inserted into the cochlea, electrode **212-1** is located closest to the apex of the cochlea. Electrode **212-16** is the most basal electrode on electrode lead **210**. In other words, electrode **212-16** is the most proximally located electrode on electrode lead **210** such that when electrode lead **210** is inserted into the cochlea, electrode **212-16** is located closest to the base of the cochlea.

(37) Once implanted within the cochlea, electrodes **212** may each be located at a different intracochlear location that corresponds to a particular place pitch **604**. As used herein, a “place

pitch" associated with a particular intracochlear location refers to a frequency that is perceived by the recipient when the intracochlear location is stimulated with electrical stimulation by an electrode **212** at the intracochlear location. For example, as shown, electrode **212-1** is located at an intracochlear location associated with a place pitch of approximately 700 Hz and electrode **212-16** is located at an intracochlear location associated with a place pitch of approximately 14 kHz.

(38) Arrows (e.g., arrow **606-1** through arrow **606-16**) represent mappings defined by a frequency allocation table between various frequencies in audible frequency range **602** and electrodes **212**. As shown, frequencies in the audible frequency range that are below the place pitch associated with the most apical electrode **212-1** are mapped to electrodes **212-1** through **212-3**. Frequencies in the audible frequency range that are greater than the place pitch associated with the most apical electrode **212-1** are mapped to electrodes **212-4** through **212-16**. In some examples, multiple frequencies may be mapped to a single electrode **212** or to multiple electrodes **212**. For example, intermediate frequencies in between the frequency shown as being mapped to electrode **212-1** and the frequency shown as being mapped to electrode **212-2** may be mapped to one or both of electrodes **212-1** and **212-2**. In this example, current steering or some other standard electrical stimulation configuration may be used to convey these intermediate frequencies.

(39) The mapping shown in FIG. **6** disadvantageously increases the spectral distance between each of the mapped electrodes, thereby reducing spectral resolution for cochlear implant system **102** (e.g., by reducing the ability of the recipient to distinguish between frequencies represented by electrical stimulation applied by way of electrodes **212**).

(40) Accordingly, in accordance with the systems and methods described herein, only frequencies included in an "upper region" of audible frequency range **602** are mapped to electrodes **212**, while frequencies included in a "lower region" of audible frequency range **602** are not mapped to electrodes **212**. Hence, as described herein, standard electrical stimulation is not used to convey these lower region frequencies to a recipient of hearing system **100**.

(41) To illustrate, FIG. **7** shows an exemplary mapping between frequencies in audible frequency range **602** and electrodes **212** that may be defined by a frequency allocation table in accordance with the systems and methods described herein. As shown, audible frequency range **602** may be divided into an upper region **702** and a lower region **704**. Upper region **702** includes a cutoff frequency **706** and frequencies above cutoff frequency **706**. Lower region **704** includes frequencies below cutoff frequency **706**. In the example of FIG. **7**, the cutoff frequency **706** is approximately 700 Hz. Hence, upper region **702** includes frequencies between and including 700 Hz and 16 kHz, and lower region **702** includes frequencies below 700 Hz.

(42) Cutoff frequency **706** may be set to be any suitable frequency that is greater than a lower bound (e.g., 250 Hz) of audible frequency range **602**. In some examples, cutoff frequency **706** is at least a frequency octave above the lower bound of audible frequency range **602** so that phantom electrical stimulation may be used to convey at least the frequency octave to the recipient, as will be described in more detail below. Various ways that may be used to specify cutoff frequency **706** are described herein.

(43) As shown, only the frequencies included in upper region **702** are mapped to electrodes **212**. For example, cutoff frequency **706** is mapped to electrode **212-1**. Other frequencies in upper region **702** are also mapped to electrodes **212**.

(44) In some examples, each electrode **212** is mapped to a frequency equal to a place pitch of the electrode. For example, FIG. **7** shows that a frequency of approximately 700 Hz, which corresponds to a place pitch of electrode **212-1**, is mapped to electrode **212-1**. Each of the other electrodes **212** is mapped to a frequency equal to its corresponding place pitch, as indicated by the vertical arrows **708-1** through **708-16** in FIG. **7**. Any other suitable mapping between frequencies in upper region **702** of audible frequency range **602** to electrodes **212** may be used as may serve a particular implementation.

(45) In this configuration, sound processor **204** may be configured to direct cochlear implant **210** to

apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in an audio signal that are within upper region **702** to a cochlea of a recipient by way of electrodes **212** in accordance with the mapping defined by the frequency allocation table represented in FIG. **7**. The standard electrical stimulation may include monopolar stimulation, multipolar (e.g., bipolar) stimulation, current steering, and/or any other type of stimulation other than phantom electrical stimulation.

(46) In contrast, based on the mapping illustrated in FIG. **7**, standard electrical stimulation is not used to convey frequencies in lower region **704**. Rather, sound processor **204** is configured to direct cochlear implant **210** to convey frequencies in lower region **704** by applying phantom electrical stimulation by way of a phantom stimulation channel **710** in accordance with a phantom electrode stimulation configuration. Phantom stimulation channel **710** comprises the most apical electrode **212-1** and one or more compensating electrodes **212**. In some examples, compensating electrodes **212** are adjacent to most apical electrode **212-1** (e.g., electrode **212-2** and/or electrode **212-3**).

(47) As described herein, phantom electrical stimulation is configured to convey (e.g., cause a recipient to perceive) a frequency that is not mapped to an electrode in a frequency allocation table (e.g., in a frequency allocation table that has the mapping illustrated in FIG. **7**). For example, phantom electrical stimulation applied by way of most apical electrode **212-1** and one or more compensating electrodes adjacent to the most apical electrode may convey a frequency or pitch that is lower than the frequency mapped to most apical electrode **212-1** in the frequency allocation table.

(48) Sound processor **204** may be configured to direct cochlear implant **110** to apply phantom electrical stimulation by directing cochlear implant **210** to apply a main stimulation current by way of the most apical electrode **212-1**, directing cochlear implant **210** to concurrently apply, while the main stimulation current is being applied by way of the most apical electrode **212-1**, a compensation stimulation current by way of the one or more compensating electrodes (e.g., electrodes **212-2** and/or **212-3**), and optimizing an amount of the compensation stimulation current to result in the frequencies in the audio signal that are within lower region **704** of audible frequency range **602** being presented to the recipient. Phantom electrical stimulation is described in more detail in U.S. Pat. No. 9,056,205, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

(49) FIG. **8** illustrates exemplary gain parameters that may be employed to implement a phantom electrical stimulation configuration in accordance with the systems and methods described herein. In this example, electrode **212-1** is the sole compensating electrode. As depicted in FIG. **8**, sound processor **204** may adjust relative gain levels of gain parameters **802-1** and **802-2** corresponding to compensating electrode **212-2** and most apical electrode **212-1**, respectively, such that a frequency perceived by a recipient is substantially identical to a frequency in an audio signal that is within lower region **704**. Gain parameter **802-1** may represent a level of compensation stimulation current applied by way of compensating electrode **212-1** and gain parameter **802-2** may represent a level of main stimulation current applied by way of most apical electrode **212-1**.

(50) In some examples, gain parameters **802-1** and **802-2** may be configured in accordance with a selected ratio of compensation stimulation current to main stimulation current corresponding to the particular frequency in the incoming audio signal. Additionally, gain parameters **802-1** and **802-2** may be adjusted such that the total current applied to electrodes **212-1** and **212-2** is substantially at the most comfortable current level. In some examples, the compensation stimulation current is out-of-phase with main current (e.g., by 180 degrees). The compensation stimulation current may additionally or alternatively have a polarity opposite that of the main stimulation current.

(51) Frequencies in lower region **704** of audible frequency range **602** may additionally be conveyed to a recipient in any other suitable manner. For example, in cases where a recipient is associated with bimodal hearing system **100-2**, frequencies in lower region **704** of audible frequency range **602** may additionally be conveyed by way of hearing device **104**. In these cases, hearing device **104** may receive the same audio signal received by cochlear implant system **102** (e.g., by detecting

the audio signal with a microphone and/or receiving the audio signal by way of an auxiliary audio input, etc.) and direct receiver **304** to apply acoustic stimulation representative of the frequencies in the audio signal that are in lower region **704** to the recipient. In this manner, low frequency content may be conveyed to the recipient using both phantom electrical stimulation (at one ear) and acoustic stimulation (at the other ear). This may increase the ability of the recipient to perceive the low frequency content.

(52) As another example, a recipient may be associated with bimodal hearing system **100**-**3**. In this example, in addition to directing cochlear implant **210** to convey frequencies in lower region **704** by applying phantom electrical stimulation way of phantom stimulation channel **710**, sound processor **204** may direct receiver **404** to apply acoustic stimulation representative of the frequencies in lower region **704** to the same ear of recipient.

(53) Data representative of a frequency allocation table, such as the frequency allocation table illustrated by the mapping shown in FIG. **7**, may be maintained by sound processor **204** in any suitable manner. For example, data representative of a frequency allocation table may be stored by sound processor **204** in memory located within sound processor **204**. The data representative of the frequency allocation table may be additionally or alternatively accessed by sound processor **204** in any other suitable manner.

(54) A frequency allocation table may be specified in any suitable manner. For example, sound processor **204** may automatically specify (e.g., modify, update, program, or otherwise set) a frequency allocation table based on one or more characteristics of a recipient, one or more program settings of sound processor **204**, and/or any other factor.

(55) A frequency allocation table may additionally or alternatively be specified by a computing device external to sound processor **204**. For example, FIG. **9** shows an exemplary configuration in which a fitting device **900** is communicatively coupled to hearing system **100**. As described herein, fitting device **900** may be configured to specify a frequency allocation table and transmit data representative of the frequency allocation table to hearing system **100** (e.g., to sound processor **204**). Fitting device **900** may be implemented by any suitable computing device, such as a desktop computer, a laptop computer, a tablet computer, a mobile phone, etc.

(56) As shown, fitting device **900** may include, without limitation, a storage facility **902** and a processing facility **904** selectively and communicatively coupled to one another. Facilities **902** and **904** may each include or be implemented by hardware and/or software components (e.g., processors, memories, communication interfaces, instructions stored in memory for execution by the processors, etc.).

(57) Storage facility **902** may maintain (e.g., store) executable data used by processing facility **904** to perform any of the operations described herein. For example, storage facility **902** may store instructions **906** that may be executed by processing facility **904** to perform any of the operations described herein. Instructions **906** may be implemented by any suitable application, software, code, and/or other executable data instance.

(58) Processing facility **904** may be configured to perform (e.g., execute instructions **906** stored in storage facility **902** to perform) various fitting operations with respect to hearing system **100**. For example, processing facility **904** may be configured to set one or more parameters that govern an operation of one or more components of hearing system **100**.

(59) Fitting device **900** may be selectively and communicatively coupled to hearing system **100** by way of a communication channel **908**. For example, fitting device **900** may be connected by way of a wired and/or wireless connection to sound processor **204**. While communicatively coupled to hearing system **100**, fitting device **900** may transmit data to hearing system **100** (e.g., to sound processor **204**). For example, fitting device **900** may transmit data representative of a frequency allocation table to sound processor **204**. Sound processor **204** may receive and store the data in any suitable manner.

(60) Fitting device **900** may specify the frequency allocation table in any suitable manner. For

example, fitting device **900** may set a value for cutoff frequency **706** and map the cutoff frequency to most apical electrode **212-1**. Fitting device **900** may set the value for cutoff frequency **706** in any suitable manner. For example, fitting device **900** may access data representative of a computerized tomography (CT) scan (or other medical imaging modality) of the recipient's cochlea while electrode lead **210** is located within the cochlea. Based on the CT scan, fitting device **900** may identify a place pitch of most apical electrode **212-1** and designate the place pitch as cutoff frequency **706**. Fitting device **900** may identify the place pitch of most apical electrode **212-1** based on the CT scan in any suitable manner.

(61) In some examples, fitting device **900** may be configured to specify the frequency allocation table by identifying a frequency region within audible frequency range **602** that has poor spectral resolution for the particular recipient. Fitting device **900** may then map frequencies within this frequency region to multiple electrodes **212**.

(62) To illustrate, FIG. **10** shows an exemplary mapping of frequencies within upper region **702** of audible frequency range **602** to electrodes **212**. FIG. **10** is similar to FIG. **7**, except that in FIG. **10**, a frequency region **1002** that has poor spectral resolution for the recipient has been identified. As shown, frequencies in this region **1002** are mapped to more electrodes than they are in FIG. **7**. In particular, frequencies within this region **1002** are mapped to electrodes **212-5** through **212-7**. In this manner, enhanced spectral resolution may be achieved within regions that have relatively poor native spectral resolution.

(63) Fitting device **900** may be configured to identify a frequency region that has poor spectral resolution for a recipient in any suitable manner. For example, fitting device **900** may be configured to perform various diagnostic tests to identify such regions.

(64) In some examples, fitting device **900** and/or sound processor **204** may be configured to set a most comfortable level (“M level”) for the phantom electrical stimulation applied by way of phantom stimulation channel **710**. This may be performed in any suitable manner. For example, fitting device **900** and/or sound processor **204** may set the M level based on a CT scan of the cochlea, a bandwidth of lower region **704**, an M level associated with one or more of electrodes **212**, and/or any other factor as may serve a particular implementation.

(65) In some examples, sound processor **204** may be configured to implement a frequency allocation table that does not include frequencies in lower region **704** (e.g., a frequency allocation table that defines the mapping illustrated in FIG. **7**) in accordance with an acclimatization heuristic. For example, sound processor **204** may further maintain an initial frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in both upper region **702** and lower region **704** to electrodes **212** (e.g., as shown in FIG. **6**). Sound processor **204** may initially direct the cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in an audio signal that are within both upper region **702** and lower region **704** in accordance with the initial frequency allocation table. Sound processor **204** may gradually switch from using the initial frequency allocation table to using a frequency allocation table that does not include frequencies in lower region **704** (e.g., a frequency allocation table that defines the mapping illustrated in FIG. **7**) over time in accordance with an acclimatization heuristic. The acclimatization heuristic may define incremental adaptions to the initial frequency allocation table such that, over time, sound processor **204** switches to using the frequency allocation table that does not include frequencies in lower region **704**.

(66) In some examples, fitting device **900** and/or sound processor **204** may perform one or more tests to predict recipient benefit after acclimatization. For example, one or more spectral ripple tests, behavioral tests, EEG measurements, and/or other types of tests may be performed by fitting device **900** and/or sound processor **204** with respect to the recipient to determine how well any of the stimulation schemes described herein are functioning. In response to the one or more tests, fitting device **900** and/or sound processor **204** may adjust one or more parameters associated with hearing system **100**. For example, fitting device **900** and/or sound processor **204** may adjust cutoff frequency **706**, one or more frequency-to-electrode mappings in a frequency allocation table, etc.

(67) In some examples, sound processor **204** may use an own-voice detector to improve sound quality of a recipient's own voice. For example, sound processor **204** may detect when the recipient himself or herself is talking. In response, sound processor **204** may adjust cutoff frequency **706**, one or more frequency-to-electrode mappings in a frequency allocation table, and/or any other parameter of hearing system **100** to enhance the sound quality of the recipient's own voice.
(68) FIG. **11** illustrates an exemplary method **1100**. The operations shown in FIG. **11** may be performed by sound processor **204** and/or any implementation thereof. While FIG. **11** illustrates exemplary operations according to one embodiment, other embodiments may omit, add to, reorder, and/or modify any of the operations shown in FIG. **11**.
(69) In operation **1102**, a sound processor maintains data representative of a frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in an upper region of an audible frequency range to a plurality of electrodes located within a cochlea of a first ear of a recipient. Operation **1102** may be performed in any of the ways described herein.
(70) In operation **1104**, the sound processor receives an audio signal. Operation **1104** may be performed in any of the ways described herein.
(71) In operation **1106**, the sound processor directs a cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the audio signal that are within the upper region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear by way of the plurality of electrodes in accordance with the frequency allocation table. Operation **1106** may be performed in any of the ways described herein.
(72) In operation **1108**, the sound processor directs the cochlear implant to apply phantom electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the audio signal that are within a lower region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear by way of a most apical electrode and one or more compensating electrodes included in the plurality of electrodes in accordance with a phantom electrode stimulation configuration. Operation **1108** may be performed in any of the ways described herein.
(73) In some examples, a non-transitory computer-readable medium storing computer-readable instructions may be provided in accordance with the principles described herein. The instructions, when executed by a processor of a computing device, may direct the processor and/or computing device to perform one or more operations, including one or more of the operations described herein. Such instructions may be stored and/or transmitted using any of a variety of known computer-readable media.
(74) A non-transitory computer-readable medium as referred to herein may include any non-transitory storage medium that participates in providing data (e.g., instructions) that may be read and/or executed by a computing device (e.g., by a processor of a computing device). For example, a non-transitory computer-readable medium may include, but is not limited to, any combination of non-volatile storage media and/or volatile storage media. Exemplary non-volatile storage media include, but are not limited to, read-only memory, flash memory, a solid-state drive, a magnetic storage device (e.g. a hard disk, a floppy disk, magnetic tape, etc.), ferroelectric random-access memory ("RAM"), and an optical disc (e.g., a compact disc, a digital video disc, a Blu-ray disc, etc.). Exemplary volatile storage media include, but are not limited to, RAM (e.g., dynamic RAM).
(75) FIG. **12** illustrates an exemplary computing device **1200** that may be specifically configured to perform one or more of the processes described herein. As shown in FIG. **12**, computing device **1200** may include a communication interface **1202**, a processor **1204**, a storage device **1206**, and an input/output ("I/O") module **1208** communicatively connected one to another via a communication infrastructure **1210**. While an exemplary computing device **1200** is shown in FIG. **12**, the components illustrated in FIG. **12** are not intended to be limiting. Additional or alternative components may be used in other embodiments. Components of computing device **1200** shown in FIG. **12** will now be described in additional detail.
(76) Communication interface **1202** may be configured to communicate with one or more

computing devices. Examples of communication interface **1202** include, without limitation, a wired network interface (such as a network interface card), a wireless network interface (such as a wireless network interface card), a modem, an audio/video connection, and any other suitable interface.

(77) Processor **1204** generally represents any type or form of processing unit capable of processing data and/or interpreting, executing, and/or directing execution of one or more of the instructions, processes, and/or operations described herein. Processor **1204** may perform operations by executing computer-executable instructions **1212** (e.g., an application, software, code, and/or other executable data instance) stored in storage device **1206**.

(78) Storage device **1206** may include one or more data storage media, devices, or configurations and may employ any type, form, and combination of data storage media and/or device. For example, storage device **1206** may include, but is not limited to, any combination of the non-volatile media and/or volatile media described herein. Electronic data, including data described herein, may be temporarily and/or permanently stored in storage device **1206**. For example, data representative of computer-executable instructions **1212** configured to direct processor **1204** to perform any of the operations described herein may be stored within storage device **1206**. In some examples, data may be arranged in one or more databases residing within storage device **1206**.

(79) I/O module **1208** may include one or more I/O modules configured to receive user input and provide user output. I/O module **1208** may include any hardware, firmware, software, or combination thereof supportive of input and output capabilities. For example, I/O module **1208** may include hardware and/or software for capturing user input, including, but not limited to, a keyboard or keypad, a touchscreen component (e.g., touchscreen display), a receiver (e.g., an RF or infrared receiver), motion sensors, and/or one or more input buttons.

(80) I/O module **1208** may include one or more devices for presenting output to a user, including, but not limited to, a graphics engine, a display (e.g., a display screen), one or more output drivers (e.g., display drivers), one or more audio speakers, and one or more audio drivers. In certain embodiments, I/O module **1208** is configured to provide graphical data to a display for presentation to a user. The graphical data may be representative of one or more graphical user interfaces and/or any other graphical content as may serve a particular implementation.

(81) In some examples, any of the systems, computing devices, and/or other components described herein may be implemented by computing device **1200**. For example, storage facility **902** may be implemented by storage device **1206**, and processing facility **904** may be implemented by processor **1204**.

(82) In the preceding description, various exemplary embodiments have been described with reference to the accompanying drawings. It will, however, be evident that various modifications and changes may be made thereto, and additional embodiments may be implemented, without departing from the scope of the invention as set forth in the claims that follow. For example, certain features of one embodiment described herein may be combined with or substituted for features of another embodiment described herein. The description and drawings are accordingly to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

Claims

1. A system comprising: a sound processor associated with a first ear of a recipient and configured to: direct a cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in an audio signal that are within an upper region of an audible frequency range to a cochlea of the first ear by way of a plurality of electrodes located within the cochlea of the first ear in accordance with a frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in the upper region of the audible frequency range of the recipient to the plurality of electrodes, the upper region of the audible frequency range comprising frequencies above and including a cutoff frequency that is selected based on an

insertion depth of the plurality of electrodes located within the cochlea, wherein a value for the cutoff frequency is set based on a place pitch of a most apical electrode included in the plurality of electrodes and the cutoff frequency is mapped to the most apical electrode; and direct the cochlear implant to apply electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the audio signal that are within a lower region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear by way of the most apical electrode included in the plurality of electrodes and one or more compensating electrodes included in the plurality of electrodes in accordance with an electrode stimulation configuration, the lower region of the audible frequency range comprising frequencies below the cutoff frequency, wherein, in the frequency allocation table, a first electrode included in the plurality of electrodes is mapped to a first frequency corresponding to a place pitch of the first electrode and a second electrode included in the plurality of electrodes is mapped to a second frequency corresponding to a place pitch of the second electrode.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising: a hearing device associated with a second ear of the recipient and configured to: receive the audio signal; and direct a receiver to apply, to the second ear, acoustic stimulation representative of the frequencies in the audio signal that are in the lower region of the audible frequency range.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the sound processor is further configured to maintain data representative of the frequency allocation table.

4. The system of claim 1, further comprising a fitting device configured to: be communicatively coupled to the sound processor; specify the frequency allocation table; and transmit data representative of the frequency allocation table to the sound processor.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the fitting device is configured to specify the frequency allocation table by: setting the value for the cutoff frequency based on the place pitch of the most apical electrode included in the plurality of electrodes; and mapping the cutoff frequency to the most apical electrode.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the fitting device is configured to set the value for the cutoff frequency by: accessing data representative of a computerized tomography (CT) scan of the cochlea; identifying, based on the CT scan, the place pitch of the most apical electrode; and designating the place pitch as the cutoff frequency.

7. The system of claim 4, wherein the fitting device is configured to specify the frequency allocation table by: identifying a frequency region within the audible frequency range that has poor spectral resolution for the recipient; and mapping frequencies within the frequency region to multiple electrodes included in the plurality of electrodes.

8. The system of claim 4, wherein at least one of the sound processor and the fitting device is configured to set an M level for the electrical stimulation applied in accordance with the electrode stimulation configuration.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the setting of the M level is based on at least one of a computerized tomography (CT) scan of the cochlea, a bandwidth of the lower region, and an M level associated with one or more of the plurality of electrodes.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the directing of the cochlear implant to apply the electrical stimulation representative of the frequencies in the audio signal that are within the lower region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear in accordance with the electrode stimulation configuration comprises: directing the cochlear implant to apply a main stimulation current by way of the most apical electrode; direct the cochlear implant to concurrently apply, while the main stimulation current is being applied by way of the most apical electrode, a compensation stimulation current by way of the one or more compensating electrodes, and optimizing an amount of the compensation stimulation current to result in the frequencies in the audio signal that are within the lower region of the audible frequency range being presented to the recipient.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the compensation stimulation current is out of phase with the

main stimulation current.
12. The system of claim 1, wherein the sound processor is further configured to: maintain an initial frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in both the upper region and the lower region to the plurality of electrodes; direct the cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the audio signal that are within both the upper region and the lower region to the cochlea of the first ear by way of the plurality of electrodes in accordance with the initial frequency allocation table; and gradually switch from using the initial frequency allocation table to using the frequency allocation table over time in accordance with an acclimatization heuristic.
13. The system of claim 1, wherein the sound processor is further configured to: detect when the recipient is talking; and adjust, in response to detecting when the recipient is talking, at least one of the cutoff frequency and a frequency-to-electrode mapping specified in the frequency allocation table.
14. A system comprising: a first microphone configured to detect audio content presented to a recipient and output a first audio signal representative of the audio content; a sound processor communicatively coupled to the first microphone and associated with a first ear of the recipient, the sound processor configured to: direct a cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the first audio signal that are within an upper region of an audible frequency range to a cochlea of the first ear by way of a plurality of electrodes located within the cochlea of the first ear in accordance with a frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in the upper region of the audible frequency range of the recipient to the plurality of electrodes, the upper region of the audible frequency range comprising frequencies above and including a cutoff frequency that is selected based on an insertion depth of the plurality of electrodes located within the cochlea, wherein a value for the cutoff frequency is set based on a place pitch of a most apical electrode included in the plurality of electrodes and the cutoff frequency is mapped to the most apical electrode; and direct the cochlear implant to apply electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the first audio signal that are within a lower region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear by way of the most apical electrode included in the plurality of electrodes and one or more compensating electrodes included in the plurality of electrodes in accordance with an electrode stimulation configuration, the lower region of the audible frequency range comprising frequencies below the cutoff frequency; a second microphone configured to detect the audio content presented to the recipient and output a second audio signal representative of the audio content; and a hearing device associated with a second ear of the recipient and configured to: receive, from the second microphone, the second audio signal; and direct a receiver to apply, to the second ear, acoustic stimulation representative of frequencies in the second audio signal that are in the lower region of the audible frequency range, wherein, in the frequency allocation table, a first electrode included in the plurality of electrodes is mapped to a first frequency corresponding to a place pitch of the first electrode and a second electrode included in the plurality of electrodes is mapped to a second frequency corresponding to a place pitch of the second electrode.
15. A method comprising: directing, by a sound processor, a cochlear implant to apply standard electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in an audio signal that are within an upper region of an audible frequency range to a cochlea of a first ear of a recipient by way of a plurality of electrodes located within the cochlea of the first ear in accordance with a frequency allocation table that maps frequencies in the upper region of the audible frequency range of the recipient to the plurality of electrodes, the upper region of the audible frequency range comprising frequencies above and including a cutoff frequency that is selected based on an insertion depth of the plurality of electrodes located within the cochlea, wherein a value for the cutoff frequency is set based on a place pitch of a most apical electrode included in the plurality of electrodes and the cutoff frequency is mapped to the most apical electrode; and directing, by the sound processor, the

cochlear implant to apply electrical stimulation representative of frequencies in the audio signal that are within a lower region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear by way of the most apical electrode included in the plurality of electrodes and one or more compensating electrodes included in the plurality of electrodes in accordance with an electrode stimulation configuration, the lower region of the audible frequency range comprising frequencies below the cutoff frequency, wherein, in the frequency allocation table, a first electrode included in the plurality of electrodes is mapped to a first frequency corresponding to a place pitch of the first electrode and a second electrode included in the plurality of electrodes is mapped to a second frequency corresponding to a place pitch of the second electrode.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising: receiving, by a hearing device associated with a second ear of the recipient, the audio signal; and directing, by the hearing device, a receiver to apply, to the second ear, acoustic stimulation representative of the frequencies in the audio signal that are in the lower region of the audible frequency range.

17. The method of claim 15, further comprising directing, by the sound processor, a receiver to apply, to the first ear, acoustic stimulation representative of the frequencies in the audio signal that are in the lower region of the audible frequency range.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the directing of the cochlear implant to apply the electrical stimulation representative of the frequencies in the audio signal that are within the lower region of the audible frequency range to the cochlea of the first ear in accordance with the electrode stimulation configuration comprises: directing the cochlear implant to apply a main stimulation current by way of the most apical electrode; direct the cochlear implant to concurrently apply, while the main stimulation current is being applied by way of the most apical electrode, a compensation stimulation current by way of the one or more compensating electrodes, and optimizing an amount of the compensation stimulation current to result in the frequencies in the audio signal that are within the lower region of the audible frequency range being presented to the recipient.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the compensation stimulation current is out of phase with the main stimulation current.