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(54) **SENSOR SYSTEM WITH A SENSOR DATA BUFFER**

(71) Applicant: **Robert Bosch GmbH**, Stuttgart (DE)

(72) Inventors: **Matthias Scheulin**, Buggingen (DE); **Rainer Dorsch**, Dettenhausen (DE); **Dorde Cvejanovic**, Muenchen (DE); **Jan Hayek**, Muenchen (DE); **Urs Kanus**, Reutlingen (DE)

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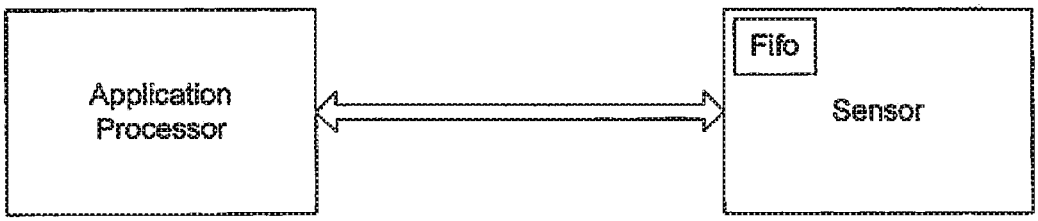
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A sensor system including a sensor data buffer, the sensor data buffer being configured in such a way that sensor data are organized in frames. The sensor data buffer is configured in such a way that a frame has a header and a sensor data area.



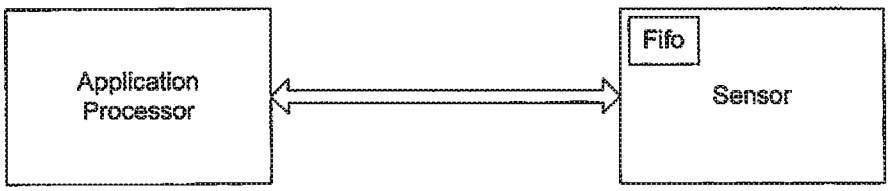
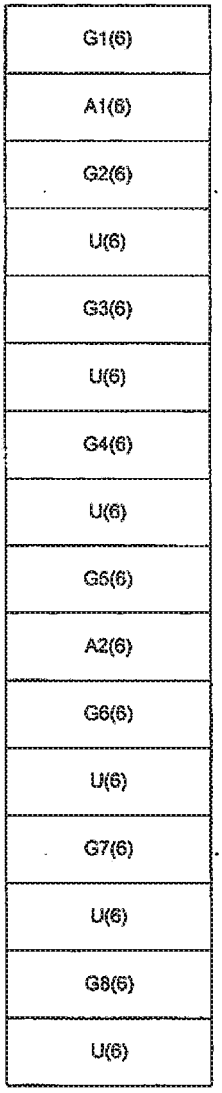
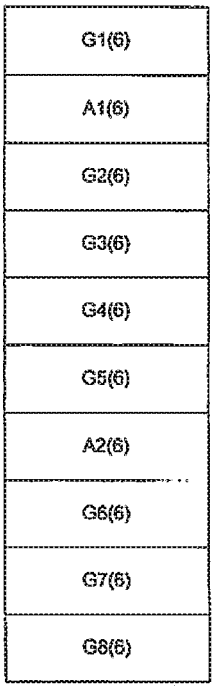


Fig. 1



Typ A

Fig. 2 A



Typ B

Fig. 2 B

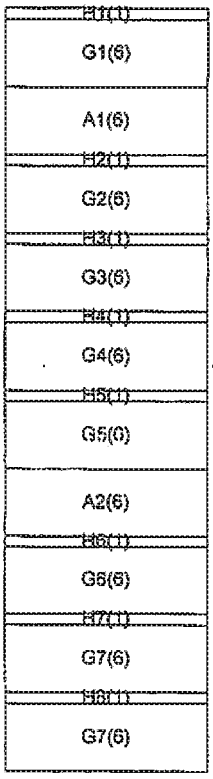

H1(1)
G1(6)
A1(6)
H2(1)
G2(6)
H3(1)
G3(6)
H4(1)
G4(6)
H5(1)
G5(6)
A2(6)
H6(1)
G6(6)
H7(1)
G7(6)
H8(1)
G7(6)

Fig. 3

SENSOR SYSTEM WITH A SENSOR DATA BUFFER

FIELD

[0001] The present invention is directed to a sensor system including a sensor data buffer, the sensor data buffer being configured in such a way that the sensor data are organized in frames.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[0002] Sensor subsystems in mobile computing devices (MCD) must be implemented in an energy efficient way in order to guarantee, for example, long battery life. The sensors in the MCD are often connected to application processors via a digital interface. Waking the application processor to read each result of a measurement of a sensor is not energy efficient enough for continuously running applications, such as step counters for fitness applications. Today, sensors implement sensor data buffers, for example, in the form of a FIFO memory, to buffer the measured data. The application processor reads the collected measured data during a wake-up cycle. If a sensor measures more than one measured variable, these are preferably stored in a common sensor data buffer, so that information such as sequence and, if necessary, concurrency of data from different sensors is retained. For example, in one sensor, acceleration and rotational speed may be measured. FIG. **1** shows a sensor system of this type in an MCD.

[0003] In a sensor which may measure multiple measured variables, often only a subset of the available measured variables is needed. Therefore, often only a subset of the measured variables is detected and recorded in the sensor data buffer. It is possible that the subsets of the determined and saved measured variables deterministically change, as, for example, in measured variables with different sampling frequencies. It is possible that the subset of the determined and to be saved measured variables does not change deterministically, as, for example, is the case when the MCD does not need a sensor variable for a specific time frame.

[0004] In order to cover the varying subset of the measured variable, some of the present solutions retain memory space for all possible measured variables in the sensor data buffer. FIG. **2**A shows an example of this as type A. A sensor data buffer structure is shown which respectively reserves 6 bytes for gyroscope and accelerometer data. The measured data are designated with sequential numbers, e.g., G5(6) means the 5^{th} sample from the gyroscope having a length of 6 bytes. The memory slots designated with U are not used. The example shows a sensor data buffer content with 8 samples from the gyroscope and 2 samples from the accelerometer. In the example, the gyroscope has four times the data rate of the accelerometer.

[0005] Other solutions in the related art optimize the memory space usage, in that they define a convention as to how the data are stored in the memory. The same example is used in FIG. **2**B as type B. In this case, the MCD must implicitly know the sequence in which the data are recorded.

[0006] Deviations therefrom are not possible.

[0007] The previously described type A sensor data buffer has the shortcoming that often the memory space is only partially used. This leads to the fact that the application processor of the MCD must be wakened more often than would be necessary if the entire available memory space were used. Using the type B sensor data buffer, scenarios with deterministic changes of the subset of the measured variables may be efficiently implemented. For each non-deterministic change, however, the sensor data buffer must be deleted and data are lost. In addition, there is the risk that the synchronization between the sensor data buffer and the MCD is lost, which may easily lead to data integrity errors.

[0008] In both types A and B, the sensor data buffer must be deleted when sensor parameters are changed.

[0009] In both types A and B, the synchronization of the data in the sensor data buffer with external data is complex. This may, however, be necessary, e.g. when a gyroscope must be synchronized with a camera for electronic image stabilization.

SUMMARY

[0010] It is an object of the present invention to provide a sensor data buffer architecture which preferably unites all advantages of the existing solutions without their disadvantages. In addition, an efficient synchronization of the sensor data with external events is to be supported.

[0011] The present invention is directed to a sensor system including a sensor data buffer, the sensor data buffer being configured in such a way that the sensor data are organized in frames. In accordance with the present invention, the sensor data buffer is configured in such a way that a data frame includes a header and a sensor data area. Advantageously, a sensor system of this type may be newly configured during operation without deleting the data in the buffer or having to reboot the system.

[0012] One advantageous embodiment of the sensor system according to the present invention provides that the header indicates which measured variables are contained in the sensor data area. It is hereby advantageous that the memory is used compactly, as only the data are stored which are available for the frame and the data composition may change from frame to frame.

[0013] One advantageous embodiment of the sensor system according to the present invention provides that the frame contains metadata.

[0014] One particularly advantageous embodiment of the sensor system according to the present invention provides that the frame contains a time stamp for the sensor data as metadata. Advantageously, the sensor data may thus also be assigned to specific points in time, even for non-realtime data transmission, thus sensor data fusion, in particular, is improved or even made possible for the first time.

[0015] One particularly advantageous embodiment of the sensor system according to the present invention provides that the frame contains the number of lost packets as the metadata. Using this information, the lost packets may be advantageously identified or declared invalid or also reread.

[0016] One particularly advantageous embodiment of the sensor system according to the present invention provides that the frame contains configuration data or also configuration changes of the sensor as metadata. Thus, the configuration of the sensor system and its changes may be advantageously communicated during operation.

[0017] The reconfigurable sensor data buffer structure according to the present invention contains not only data, but, according to the present invention, also a description of the respective data structure. A frame includes an information block of the description of the data, subsequently called a header, and the data. In addition, headers may designate

specific control frames, which contain information about changed sensor parameters. The headers contain information as to which data are contained in the frame; thus it is prevented that unused data have to be kept available in the buffer, as this is the case in type A. If a non-deterministic change is carried out, then this is also visible in the header, and the buffer does not need to be deleted as in type B.

[0018] Thus, the memory space is used approximately as efficiently or as efficiently as type A and also the sensor data buffer does not have to be deleted when a non-deterministic change of the subset of the measured variables occurs.

[0019] In addition, an efficient synchronization with external events is possible, in that markers are placed in the headers. The events are, for example, made available via external pins. A classic application case is, for example, a camera recording using an MCD, during which all frames are synchronized with the event "film."

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] FIG. **1** shows a sensor system in an MCD.

[0021] FIG. **2**A and 2B show two types of configurations of sensor data buffers in the related art.

[0022] FIG. **3** shows the structure of a sensor data buffer according to the present invention including frames.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXAMPLE EMBODIMENTS

[0023] The sensor data buffer stores the data in frames. A frame contains a header and measured data or other information. The type of information is defined in the header. A frame may contain measurements from multiple sensor variables; the measured data were recorded at the same point in time.

[0024] FIG. **3** shows the structure of a sensor data buffer according to the present invention including frames. In addition to the data Ax(6) and Gy(6), headers Hi(1) are included. i is a continuous index, 1 is the length of one byte (by way of example).

[0025] In the example shown, the first frame begins with a one-byte long header H1(1). This contains, among others, the information that 6-byte rotation rate sensor data G1(6) and 6-byte acceleration sensor data A1(6) are contained in the data part of the frame. The second frame begins with a one-byte long header H2(1). This contains the information that 6-byte rotation rate sensor data G2(6) is contained in the data part of the frame, etc.

[0026] The following represents by way of example, how a header may be structured and how it defines the semantics of the data. The following table shows a possible implementation of a header format according to the present invention:

Bit	7	6	5	4
Content	fh_mode		fh_parm<3:2>	

-continued

Bit	3	2	1	0
Read/Write	fh_parm<1:0>		fh_ext	

[0027] The fields fh_mode, fh_parm, and fh_ext describe the type of header, parameters for the type, and expansions.

[0028] Invalid (fh_mode=0b00):

[0029] The following frames are invalid, i.e., the end of the valid data has been reached.

[0030] Regular frame (fh_mode=0b10):

Name	fh_parm<3:0>			
Bit	3	2	1	0
Content	pressure_data	mag_data	gyr_data	acc_data

[0031] The fields fh_parm indicate which measured variables are contained in the regular frames. Thus, e.g., '1'('0') data are contained (not contained) for sensor X.

[0032] The field fh_ext<1:0>may be used for synchronization with external events.

[0033] Control frame (fh_mode=0b01):

[0034] Control frames do not contain measured variables, but instead metadata describing the events or changes to the sensor parameters. Examples might be frames missing in the data flow, time stamps, or changes to the sensor configuration, e.g., filter or data rates.

[0035] The synchronization with external events is carried out via markers in the header, for example, the value of an input pin may be recorded in the fx_ext field. The synchronization with the MCD is thus guaranteed, in that frames, which are read only partially from the reconfigurable sensor data buffer are completely repeated again during the next read access. Thus, an implicit synchronization is provided.

1-6. (canceled)

7. A sensor system including a sensor data buffer, the sensor data buffer being configured in such a way that sensor data are organized in frames, wherein the sensor data buffer is configured in such a way that a frame has a header and a sensor data area.

8. The sensor system as recited in claim **7**, wherein the header indicates which measured variables are contained in the sensor data area.

9. The sensor system as recited in claim **7**, wherein the frame contains metadata.

10. The sensor system as recited in claim **9**, wherein the frame contains a timestamp for the sensor data as the metadata.

11. The sensor system as recited in claim **9**, wherein the frame contains the number of lost packets as the metadata.

12. The sensor system as recited in claim **9**, wherein the frame contains at least one of configuration data and configuration changes of the sensor, as the metadata.

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