



# Perception of azimuth angle of sound source located at high elevation angle: Effective distance of auditory guide signal

Sato, Hayato

Morimoto, Masayuki

Sato, Hiroshi

---

## (Citation)

Applied Acoustics, 159:107084

## (Issue Date)

2020-02

## (Resource Type)

journal article

## (Version)

Accepted Manuscript

## (Rights)

© 2019 Elsevier.

This manuscript version is made available under the CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 license

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

## (URL)

<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14094/90006681>



# Perception of azimuth angle of sound source located at high elevation angle: Effective distance of auditory guide signal

Hayato Sato<sup>a,\*</sup>, Masayuki Morimoto<sup>a</sup>, Hiroshi Sato<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Environmental Acoustics Laboratory, Department of Architecture, Graduate School of Engineering, Kobe University, Rokko, Nada, Kobe 657-8501, Japan*

<sup>b</sup>*Human Technology Research Institute, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, Higashi, Tsukuba, 305-8566, Japan*

---

## Abstract

In Japan, auditory guide signals are commonly installed in public spaces to lead visually handicapped pedestrians to their destinations. The sound sources of the signals are usually installed at high places on walls. In other words, the sound sources have not only an azimuth angle but also an elevation angle when viewed from the users. In the present study, under the hypothesis that the horizontal localization error increases with increasing elevation angle of the sound source, a sound localization test allowing head movement was performed to clarify the upper limit of the elevation angle. The results of the test were consistent with the hypothesis and indicated that the upper limit of the elevation angle was  $65^\circ$  within the range of the signal used in the present study and the assumption that the correct discrimination of eight directions is sufficiently accurate in the application of auditory guide signals. Furthermore, the effective distance of auditory guide signals, that is, the closest distance that users can approach to the destination using the signals was studied on the basis of the results of the present study. As a result, it was found that the effective distance of auditory guide signals does not exceed 1 m, in other words, the signals work effectively in the range horizontally farther than 1 m, when the height of the sound source

---

\*Corresponding author.

Email address: [hayato@kobe-u.ac.jp](mailto:hayato@kobe-u.ac.jp) (Hayato Sato)

is less than 3 m.

*Keywords:* Sound localization, Head movement, Visually handicapped persons

---

## 1. Introduction

In Japan, auditory guide signals are commonly installed in public spaces to lead visually handicapped pedestrians to their destinations. The signal is radiated from a loudspeaker installed near destinations, and visually handicapped persons navigate with the help of the perceived direction of the signal. The sound sources of the signal are usually installed at high places on walls or on ceilings to decrease obstacles on the path to the users and to transmit the signal to as many users as possible. In other words, the sound sources have not only an azimuth angle but also an elevation angle when viewed from the users.

Usually, users can move their heads while listening to the signal and can listen to the signal as many times as they want. Previous studies[1–7] reported that head movement during sound localization produces dynamic cues, and utilization of the cues significantly decreases the front-back localization error. Therefore, if users are instructed to move their heads so that the sound image is localized somewhere in the front half of the median plane regardless of elevation angle, and to walk in the direction they are facing after moving their head, they can approach the destination. This means that the effectiveness of the signal does not depend on accuracy of the perceived elevation angle.

However, a too high elevation angle of the sound source can make it difficult to distinguish whether or not the sound image is localized in the median plane. Here, consider the perception of the difference between the perceived azimuth angle of the sound source and the median plane, premising the head movement. To simplify the discussion, the following are assumed.

- (1) The minimum audible angle (MAA) in the lateral angle with reference to the median plane does not depend on the height of the sound source[8].
- (2) The head movement of the listener is limited to *rotating*, which occurs most frequently[9].

28 In Fig. 1,  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  is the MAA in the lateral angle with reference to the median  
 29 plane,  $\varphi_{\text{rot}}$  is the rotation angle of the listener's head with reference to the  
 30 sound source direction, and  $\theta$  is the elevation angle of the sound source. The  
 31 listener cannot notice that sound sources located between the sagittal planes  
 32 for lateral angles of  $\pm\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  deviate from the median plane, because the absolute  
 33 value of the lateral angle is smaller than  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ . When the sound source shown  
 34 in Fig. 1 moves to a higher position on the circular arc indicated by a thick line,  
 35 namely it moves maintaining the same azimuth angle of  $-\varphi_{\text{rot}}$  and distance from  
 36 the listener ( $r$ ), the lateral angle of the sound source seen from the listener is  
 37 smaller than  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ . In this case, the listener has to rotate own head more than  
 38  $\varphi_{\text{rot}}$  shown in Fig. 1 to notice that the sound source deviates from the median  
 39 plane.

40 [Figure 1 about here.]

41 The relationship among  $\varphi_{\text{rot,min}}$ , which is the minimum rotation angle of the  
 42 listener's head required for the listener to notice that the sound source deviates  
 43 from the median plane,  $\theta$ , and  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  is given by Eq. 1.  $\varphi_{\text{rot,min}}$  can be regarded  
 44 as the potential maximum of the localization error in azimuth. Assuming that  
 45  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  is constant, Eq. 1 implies that the expected value of the localization error  
 46 in azimuth increases with increasing  $\theta$ .

$$\varphi_{\text{rot,min}} = \arcsin\left(\frac{\sin \varphi_{\text{thre}}}{\cos \theta}\right). \quad (1)$$

47 The hypothesis in the present study is that the elevation angle of the sound  
 48 source determines the accuracy of the azimuth localization of auditory guide  
 49 signals. Considering the hypothesis from the viewpoint of the application of  
 50 auditory guide signals, when the distance from the sound source becomes shorter  
 51 than a certain value, the elevation angle exceeds the angle at which people  
 52 cannot be guided correctly. This means that the elevation angle determines  
 53 how close the user can approach the destination. Makous and Middlebrooks[10]  
 54 reported that listeners could localize the horizontal direction of a loudspeaker

55 if the elevation angle is up to  $45^\circ$ , but there has been no previous research on  
56 sound localization in the azimuth angle for sound sources with elevation angles  
57 more than  $45^\circ$ .

58 In the present study, a sound localization test allowing head movement was  
59 performed to clarify the upper limit of the elevation angle. In addition, based  
60 on the results, the effective distance of auditory guide signals, that is, the closest  
61 distance that users can approach to the destination using the signals in the case  
62 of a typical sound source position in real situations, was studied.

## 63 **2. Experimental conditions**

64 Seven university students participated in the experiment as listeners. None  
65 of the listeners had received specialized education on sound localization. No  
66 listeners declared a visual impairment. The results of an audiometry test using  
67 pure tones from 125 Hz to 8 kHz confirmed that all listeners had normal hearing  
68 ability.

69 A wide-band noise from 100 Hz to 20 kHz and a low-pass noise from 100 Hz  
70 to 500 Hz were used as acoustic signals. A white noise with a duration of  
71 60 s was filtered through a band-pass filter (NF, 3625), with a frequency cutoff  
72 of  $-96$  dB/oct to obtain the two noises. The frequency characteristics of the  
73 two noises were determined so that the wide-band noise could provide both  
74 interaural difference cues and spectral cues for sound localization while the low-  
75 pass noise could only provide the ITD cue. As described later, the acoustic signal  
76 was repeatedly presented without interruption until the listener confirmed the  
77 answer.

78 The experiment was carried out in an anechoic chamber. Four loudspeakers  
79 (Fujitsu-Ten, ECLIPSE TD307II) were located at elevation angles of  $55^\circ$ ,  $65^\circ$ ,  
80  $75^\circ$ , and  $80^\circ$  on an arch of a circle of radius 1.5 m centered at the listener's head,  
81 as shown in Fig. 2. Figure 3 shows an example of the frequency characteristics of  
82 the four loudspeakers. Except for a steep dip around 18 kHz, the characteristics  
83 did not have dominant peaks or dips in the frequency range of the acoustic

84 signals. The binaural sound pressure level[11] of the acoustic signals was 65 dB  
 85 ( $L_{AF_{\max}}$ ), measured using a KEMAR dummy head facing the direction of  
 86  $\varphi = 0$  and  $\theta = 0$ .

87 [Figure 2 about here.]

88 [Figure 3 about here.]

89 Each listener was seated on a swivel chair without a headrest or armrests.  
 90 The listener’s head was not fixed. The listener could freely change the horizontal  
 91 direction of the head and the torso by rotating the chair. The chair was placed  
 92 on a protractor with scale lines every  $5^\circ$ . The zero angle of the protractor was  
 93 set to the azimuth angle of the loudspeakers. A laser pointer was mounted  
 94 vertically downward on the front center of the back of the seat to measure the  
 95 direction in which the listener was facing.

96 A total of 40 conditions (2 acoustic signals  $\times$  4 elevation angles  $\times$  5 initial  
 97 azimuth angles) were tested. The initial azimuth angle ( $\varphi_1$ ) is the direction that  
 98 the listener faces at the start of the experiment. Five initial azimuth angles of  
 99  $0^\circ$ ,  $45^\circ$ ,  $90^\circ$ ,  $180^\circ$ , and  $-135^\circ$  were used (see Fig. 2).

100 The experimental procedure was as follows.

- 101 (1) The listener was blindfolded before entering the anechoic chamber, and  
 102 remained blindfolded while in the chamber.
- 103 (2) The listener was guided by the experimenter to the chair, then sat down,  
 104 with his/her lower back resting against the vertical part of the chair.
- 105 (3) The experimenter rotated the chair randomly to confuse the spatial mind  
 106 map of the listener. After that, the experimenter set the direction of the  
 107 listener to one of the five initial azimuth angles.
- 108 (4) One of the two acoustic signals was presented from one of the four loud-  
 109 speakers.

110 (5) The listeners were instructed to perform the following two tasks: (a) to  
111 direct their face and body in the horizontal direction of the sound source by  
112 rotating the chair by themselves, (b) to push the button at hand when they  
113 had finished directing their face and body, (c) to maintain their posture  
114 at the beginning of the experiment as much as possible when rotating the  
115 chair.

116 (6) The acoustic signal was repeatedly presented without interruption until  
117 the listener pushed the button.

118 (7) After the sound stopped, the experimenter read the scale line of the pro-  
119 tractor under the chair that was closest to the light of the laser pointer.

120 Each condition was tested four times in random order for each listener.  
121 Therefore, each listener repeated the above procedure 160 times. The exper-  
122 iment for each listener was separated into 10 sessions with a break between  
123 them.

### 124 3. Results and discussion

125 [Figure 4 about here.]

126 Figures 4 (a)–(j) show bubble charts of the distribution of the azimuth lo-  
127 calization error for each combination of the initial azimuth angle ( $\varphi_1$ ) and the  
128 acoustic signal. The azimuth localization error is the difference in azimuth be-  
129 tween the loudspeaker direction and the direction read in the procedure (7)  
130 described in the previous section. The azimuth localization error is a value in  
131 steps of 5 degrees. A positive value indicates an error to the right, and a neg-  
132 ative value indicates an error to the left. The area of the circle in the figures  
133 is proportional to the number of the error. Since there were no qualitative in-  
134 dividual differences in the trend of the results, the results of all the listeners  
135 were combined. Therefore, the number of samples for each condition was 28 (7  
136 listeners  $\times$  4 trials).

137 *3.1. Trends common to wide-band and low-pass noise*

138 There are three common trends in the distributions of the wide-band noise  
139 and low-pass noise. Firstly, the maximum error was  $70^\circ$ , which is shown in  
140 Fig. 4(f) as a negative error. This means that no front-back error occurred in  
141 the experiment even for the low-pass noise, which did not contain spectral cues.  
142 This trend is consistent with the previous studies on sound localization with  
143 head movement[1–7].

144 Secondly, the effect of the initial azimuth angle was not systematic. This  
145 might have been due to the unlimited presentation time of the acoustic signal.  
146 The time from the start of presentation of the signal until the listener pushed  
147 the button was in the range of 5 s to 12 s. This range is sufficiently longer than  
148 the time required to utilize dynamic interaural cues caused by head movement  
149 (0.8 s–3 s)[4, 6, 7]. Table 1 shows the results of the Friedman test ( $p < 0.05$ ) on  
150 the absolute value of the localization error. The results indicate that the error  
151 was significantly affected by the initial azimuth angle when the elevation angle  
152 was  $55^\circ$  and  $65^\circ$ . However, systematic effects such as the error greatly decreasing  
153 at a specific initial azimuth angle could not be found at these elevation angles.

154 Thirdly, relatively large localization errors occurred at the elevation angles  
155 of  $75^\circ$  and  $80^\circ$  rather than at  $55^\circ$  and  $65^\circ$ . The Friedman test ( $p < 0.05$ ) on  
156 the absolute value of the localization error showed a significant effect of the  
157 elevation angle for nine out of ten cases (see Table 1). This trend supports the  
158 hypothesis in the present study that the elevation angle determines the accuracy  
159 of horizontal localization.

160 [Table 1 about here.]

161 *3.2. Differences in average and variance*

162 In the following, data combining all the initial azimuth angles for each ele-  
163 vation angle are analyzed because the effect of the initial azimuth angle was not  
164 systematic. The number of samples for the combined data was 140 (28 samples

165  $\times 5$  initial azimuth angles). The Anderson–Darling test ( $p < 0.05$ ) confirmed  
166 that all the combined data were normally distributed.

167 Table 2 shows the statistics of the localization error for each elevation angle  
168 and type of noise. The average error ranged from  $2.3^\circ$  to  $7.3^\circ$  for the low-pass  
169 noise, and from  $1.4^\circ$  to  $4.0^\circ$  for the wide-band noise. The averages indicate  
170 that the localization error had a positive bias, in other words, the sound source  
171 tended to be finally located to the left of the listener. This result might be  
172 related to the right-hemisphere dominance of the human brain for sound source  
173 lateralization[12, 13]; however, details are unknown. The bias was greater for  
174 the low-pass noise, but the data obtained in our previous study[7] using the  
175 same low-pass noise and the sound source located on the horizontal plane did  
176 not show such positive bias. This implies that a positive bias becomes apparent  
177 only under conditions where sound localization is difficult.

178 [Table 2 about here.]

179 Table 3 shows the results of an  $F$ -test ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the equality of the two  
180 variances. A comparison between the same noises indicated that the variances  
181 for the elevation angle of  $55^\circ$  did not significantly differ from those for  $65^\circ$  while  
182 they increased when the elevation angle exceeded  $75^\circ$ , regardless of the type of  
183 noise. This result clearly confirmed that the variance of the localization error  
184 increased with increasing elevation angle and supported the hypothesis in the  
185 present study.

186 On the other hand, when comparing the two types of noise at the same  
187 elevation angle, the variance of the wide-band noise was significantly smaller  
188 than that of the low-pass noise for the elevation angles of  $75^\circ$  and  $80^\circ$ . One  
189 possible reason for this result is that  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  in Fig. 1 for the wide-band noise is  
190 smaller than that for the low-pass noise. Considering the MAA as a function of  
191 frequency measured by Mills[14] and the MAA as a function of the bandwidth of  
192 the signal measured by Chandler and Grantham[15],  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  should decrease when  
193 acoustic signals contain mid-frequency components (around 600 Hz to 800 Hz),  
194 where the MAA is minimized. Another possibility is exact localization of the

195 elevation angle using the spectrum cues included in the head-related transfer  
 196 function (HRTF) that the wide band-noise provides. If the listener faces the  
 197 sound source direction, that is, upwards, the elevation angle of the sound source  
 198 relatively decreases. As a result, the localization error decreases. However,  
 199 this effect is considered to be negligible because the listeners were instructed to  
 200 maintain their posture as much as possible while listening to the stimulus and  
 201 rotating the chair. In this case, good matching of the elevation angle perception  
 202 using the spectrum cues and that using the dynamic cue suggested by Wallach[1]  
 203 might have lowered the localization error.

204 [Table 3 about here.]

### 205 3.3. *Acceptable accuracy and maximum elevation angle*

206 The 95% prediction interval of the localization error is a practically impor-  
 207 tant indicator in the application of auditory guide signal. The direction instruc-  
 208 tion of the mobility assistance device for the visually handicapped is often given  
 209 in twelve directions according to the clock[16], or eight directions according to  
 210 the compass[17]. Here, it is assumed that correctly distinguishing eight direc-  
 211 tions is a practically acceptable accuracy of azimuth localization. Under the  
 212 assumption, the risk of misjudgment can be reduced to 5% or less when the  
 213 95% prediction interval is within the range of  $\pm 22.5^\circ$ . Table 2 shows that the  
 214 95% prediction interval was within the range of  $\pm 22.5^\circ$  for the elevation angles  
 215 of  $55^\circ$  and  $65^\circ$  regardless of the type of noise. Therefore, in the range of the  
 216 present study, the maximum elevation angle to maintain acceptable accuracy  
 217 of azimuth localization ( $\theta_{\max}$ ) can be considered to be  $65^\circ$ . In other words,  
 218 until the elevation angle of the sound source from the user of the auditory guide  
 219 signals reaches  $65^\circ$ , the user will be able to judge the direction with an accuracy  
 220 of eight directions and to approach the destination.

221 However, from Eq. 1, it is expected that  $\theta_{\max}$  will depend on  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  for the  
 222 sound source and the acceptable accuracy of azimuth localization. Figure 5  
 223 shows  $\varphi_{\text{rot,min}}$  as a function of  $\theta$  with the parameter of  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ . The curves in

Fig. 5 show the functions for  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  from  $1^\circ$  to  $10^\circ$  in  $1^\circ$  steps. As  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  increases,  $\varphi_{\text{rot,min}}$  for a certain  $\theta$  increases. The acceptable localization accuracy can be thought of as a horizontal line in this figure, and it is possible to obtain  $\theta_{\text{max}}$  as the x-coordinate of the intersection of the horizontal line and the curve for the measured or expected  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ .

[Figure 5 about here.]

In the following, to simplify the discussion, we ignore the positive bias of the localization error described in section 3.2. When  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  is set to a value considering the application of the auditory guide signals, that is, a value giving 5% probability of incorrect judgment,  $\varphi_{\text{rot,min}}$  corresponds to half the width of the 95% prediction interval of the localization error. The half widths of the 95% prediction interval of the localization error in the present study are overlaid in Fig. 5. If the localization error is determined according to the mechanism shown in Fig. 1, the data for each type of noise will be located on a certain curve.

Regarding the low-pass noise, the widths for  $\theta$  from  $65^\circ$  to  $80^\circ$  were located close to the curve for  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  of  $7^\circ$  and  $8^\circ$ ; however, that for  $\theta$  of  $55^\circ$  was located at a higher position than for the other values of  $\theta$ , i.e., on the curve for  $10^\circ$ . Regarding the wide-band noise, the widths for  $\theta$  of  $75^\circ$  and  $80^\circ$  were located close to the curve for  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  of  $6^\circ$ ; however, also here those for  $\theta$  of  $55^\circ$  and  $65^\circ$  were located at higher positions than for the other values of  $\theta$ . In our previous study[7], we conducted an experiment similar to the present study using a continuous low-pass noise (100 Hz–500 Hz) with a duration of 1600 ms that was presented from one of eight loudspeakers located on the horizontal plane ( $\theta=0^\circ$ ). The 95% prediction interval of the localization error for the acoustic signal was  $\pm 15^\circ$ . Considering that the width of the interval in the previous study and that for  $\theta$  of  $55^\circ$  in the present study were not so different, it can be assumed that there is a lower limit of the width, which is determined by factors other than  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ . It is considered that accuracy of motion control, that is, how precisely head or body can be oriented toward the sound source, is one such factor. The result that there were not significant differences among

the variances of the localization error for the four combinations of  $\theta$  of  $55^\circ$  and  $65^\circ$  and the two types of noise (see Table 3) does not contradict the existence of such factors.

In the range where  $\varphi_{\text{rot},\text{min}}$  is clearly larger than  $15^\circ$ , the curves in Fig. 5 are considered to be an appropriate explanation of the experimental results. From Fig. 5, it can be assumed that  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  for the low-pass noise is  $8^\circ$ . In this case, if the acceptable localization accuracy is set to  $22.5^\circ$ ,  $\theta_{\text{max}}$  for the low-pass noise is read to be  $68.7^\circ$  from Fig. 5, which is roughly equal to  $\theta_{\text{max}}$  of  $65^\circ$  suggested from Table 2.

### 3.4. Comparison with the 75% thresholds

The MAA in front of a listener measured by Mills[14] was almost constant at  $1^\circ$  in the frequency range from 250 Hz to 1 kHz. The MAA is clearly smaller than  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  discussed in the previous section. However, in real situations, a larger  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  will be necessary, considering the following points.

Firstly, the head movement can decrease the MAA. Previous studies commonly reported that the localization accuracy decreased when the sound source or the listener was moving[18]. There have only been a few studies[19, 20] on the measurement of such thresholds when the sound source is stationary while the listener's head is moving. Brimijoin and Akeroyd[19] reported that the minimum angular separation for speech signals in front of a listener with head movement was  $4^\circ$ .

Secondly, it is doubtful that people can precisely judge whether or not a sound image is located on the median plane without a reference signal, which is usually used in threshold measurements. Furthermore, in general, the MAA is measured as the difference at which a correct answer rate of 75% is obtained with regarding the presence or absence of a difference between the locations of stimuli.

For comparison with previous studies,  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  corresponding to the 75% thresholds was estimated from the results of the present study. Generally, the threshold is obtained by comparative judgment of the signal presented from the front

direction and the signal presented from another direction. According to Case V of Thurstone’s law of comparative judgment, if there is a difference of  $\sqrt{2} \times 0.68$  times the standard deviation of the perceived direction of the sound image, it is possible to detect the difference with a correct answer rate of 75%. The 75% thresholds for each  $\theta$  and type of noise obtained from the standard deviation shown in Table 2 are overlaid in Fig. 5. The 75% thresholds were near the curve for  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  of  $3^\circ$  or  $4^\circ$ . These values are equivalent to the 75% threshold for the condition that listeners move their head during sound localization reported by Brimijoin and Akeroyd[19], and this indicates that the results of the present study are reasonable.

### 3.5. Effective distance of auditory guide signals

In this section, the method of arranging the sound source on the basis of  $\theta_{\text{max}}$  is discussed. The following relationship is obtained from Fig. 6:

$$h_1 = h_2 + d_e \tan \theta_{\text{max}}, \quad (2)$$

where  $h_1$  is the height of the sound source,  $h_2$  is the height of the user’s ear, and  $d_e$  is the effective distance of the auditory guide signal, that is, the closest distance that users can approach to the destination using the signal. The effective range of the auditory guide signals begins at  $d_e$  and continues until background noise and reverberation sound spoil sound localization of the distance-decayed direct sound.

[Figure 6 about here.]

From the discussion in section 3.3, it is expected that a higher  $\theta_{\text{max}}$  is acceptable in the case of wide-band noise, but here  $\theta_{\text{max}}$  of  $65^\circ$  is conservatively adopted as a criterion. As shown by Mills[14], the MAA greatly increases at frequencies above 1 kHz, while there is only a small difference in the frequency range from 250 Hz to 1 kHz. Therefore, provided wide-band auditory guide signals including this frequency range are used, it is unlikely that  $\theta_{\text{max}}$  will be lower than  $65^\circ$ .

$h_2$  in public spaces is assumed to range from 1.16 m to 1.75 m to include wheelchair users according to anthropometric data (eye level) published by the United Nations[21]. Therefore, the lower limit of  $h_2$ , which is critical for determining the upper limit of  $h_1$ , is considered to be about 1.0 m. When  $h_2$  is 1.0 m and  $\theta_{\max}$  is  $65^\circ$ ,  $h_1$  calculated to be 2.1 m for  $d_e$  of 0.5 m and 3.1 m for  $d_e$  of 1.0 m. In ISO Standard 19029:2016 on auditory guide signals[22], the height of the sound source is set to 0.8 m or less or 2.4 m or more to avoid an excessive presentation level and physical contact between users and sound sources. On the other hand, in the same standard, although the reason is not clarified, a height of 3.0 m is recommended as the upper limit of the sound source height. The worst combination of  $h_1$  and  $h_2$  considered here is  $h_1 = 3.00$  m and  $h_2 = 1.16$  m. In this case,  $d_e$  is calculated to be 0.86 m for  $\theta_{\max}$  of  $65^\circ$ . According to the report by Brungart and Rabinowitz[23], when the sound source was in front, the interaural differences that determines  $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$  are hardly dependent on the distance until the listener approaches the sound source closer than 0.5 m. Therefore, it is considered that users can approach the destination to a horizontal distance of about 1 m at least, given a sound source is installed in accordance with this standard.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this study, it was assumed that the localization error of the azimuth angle increases as the elevation angle of the sound source increases, and a sound localization test allowing head movement was performed.

Regarding the upper limit of the elevation angle of the sound source providing auditory guide signals, the following were clarified.

- (1) The hypothesis of the present study that the horizontal localization error increases with increasing elevation angle of the sound source was demonstrated from the results of the localization test. However, the error did not become sufficiently large to cause front-back misjudgment.

339 (2) The relationship among the elevation angle of the sound source, the thresh-  
340 old of the lateral angle of the signal, and the minimum rotation angle of  
341 the listener’s head required to notice that the sound source deviates from  
342 the median plane was formulated. The formulated relationship matched  
343 the results of the localization test reasonably well.

344 (3) Assuming that the correct discrimination of eight directions is sufficiently  
345 accurate in the application of auditory guide signals, the upper limit of the  
346 elevation angle was  $65^\circ$  within the range of the signal used in the present  
347 study.

348 Regarding the effective distance of auditory guide signals, that is, the closest  
349 distance that users can approach to the destination using the signals, the fol-  
350 lowing was found when applying the upper limit of the elevation angle obtained  
351 in the present study.

352 (4) The effective distance of auditory guide signals does not exceed 1 m, in  
353 other words, the signals work effectively in the range horizontally farther  
354 than 1 m, when the height of the sound source is less than 3 m.

## 355 Acknowledgments

356 The authors express their gratitude to the listeners. This work was partially  
357 supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 25282182. The authors would  
358 like to thank Ryuichi Kurahashi and Mao Hagiwara for their practical support  
359 in this work.

## 360 References

- 361 [1] H. Wallach, The role of head movements and vestibular and visual cues  
362 in sound localization, *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 27 (4) (1940)  
363 339—368.

- [2] W. R. Thurlow, P. S. Runge, Effects of induced head movements on localization of direction of sounds, *J. Acoust. Soc. Am.* 42 (1967) 480–488.
- [3] S. Perrett, W. Noble, The effect of head rotations on vertical plane sound localization, *J. Acoust. Soc. Am.* 102 (4) (1997) 2325–2332.
- [4] S. Perrett, W. Noble, The contribution of head motion cues to localization of low-pass noise, *Percept. Psychophys.* 59 (1997) 1018–1026.
- [5] F. L. Wightman, D. J. Kistler, Resolution of front–back ambiguity in spatial hearing by listener and source movement, *J. Acoust. Soc. Am.* 105 (1999) 2841–2853.
- [6] Y. Iwaya, Y. Suzuki, D. Kimura, Effects of head movement on front-back error in sound localization, *Acoust. Sci. and Tech.* 24 (5) (2003) 322–324.
- [7] H. Sato, H. Sato, M. Morimoto, Y. Nakai, Localization of intermittent sound with head movement: Basic study on optimum temporal characteristics of acoustic guide signals, *Applied Acoustics* 101 (2016) 58–63.
- [8] A. Kurosawa, T. Takagi, Z. Yamaguchi, On transfer function of human ear and auditory localization (in japanese), *J. Acoust. Soc. Jpn. (J)* 38 (3) (1982) 145–151.
- [9] W. R. Thurlow, J. W. Mangels, P. S. Runge, Head movements during sound localization, *J. Acoust. Soc. Am.* 42 (1967) 489–493.
- [10] J. C. Makous, J. C. Middlebrooks, Two-dimensional sound localization by human listeners, *J. Acoust. Soc. Am.* 87 (5) (1990) 2188–2200.
- [11] D. W. Robinson, L. S. Whittle, The loudness of directional sound fields, *Acustica* 10 (2) (1960) 74–80.
- [12] J. Kaiser, W. Lutzenberger, H. Preissl, H. Ackermann, N. Birbaumer, Right-hemisphere dominance for the processing of sound-source lateralization, *J. Neurosci.* 20 (17) (2000) 6631–6639.

- [13] K. Palomäki, P. Alku, V. Mäkinen, P. May, H. Tiitinen, Sound localization in the human brain: neuromagnetic observations, *Auditory and Vestibular Systems* 11 (7) (2000) 1535–1538.
- [14] A. W. Mills, On the minimum audible angle, *J. Acoust. Soc. Am.* 30 (4) (1958) 237–246.
- [15] D. W. Chandler, D. W. Grantham, Minimum audible movement angle in the horizontal plane as a function of stimulus frequency and bandwidth, source azimuth, and velocity, *J. Acoust. Soc. Am.* 91 (3) (1992) 1624–1636.
- [16] M. Nakajima, S. Haruyama, New indoor navigation system for visually impaired people using visible light communication, *EURASIP Journal on Wireless Communications and Networking* 2013:37 (2013) 1–10.
- [17] E. Ko, Y. Kim, A vision-based wayfinding system for visually impaired people using situation awareness and activity-based instructions, *Sensors* 17 (1882) (2017) 1–34.
- [18] S. Carlile, J. Leung, The perception of auditory motion, *Trends in Hearing* 20 (2016) 1–19.
- [19] W. O. Brimijoin, M. A. Akeroyd, The moving minimum audible angle is smaller during self motion than during source motion, *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 8 (2014) 1–8.
- [20] A. Honda, Y. Masumi, Y. Suzuki, S. Sakamoto, Passive horizontal rotation affects sound localization acuity at the subjective front, *Proc. 16th International Multisensory Research Forum* P.5.98 (2015) 99.
- [21] Accessibility for the disabled: A design manual for a barrier free environment (<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/designm/>), United Nations, 2003.
- [22] ISO 19029:2016, Accessible design – Auditory guiding signals in public facilities, 2016.

- 417 [23] D. S. Brungart, W. M. Rabinowitz, Auditory localization of nearby sources.  
418 head-related transfer functions, J. Acoust. Soc. Am. 106 (1999) 1465–1479.

419 **List of Figures**

420	1	Geometrical relationship among the elevation angle of the sound	
421		source ( $\theta$ ), listener's rotation angle relative to the source direction	
422		( $\varphi_{\text{rot}}$ ), and the minimum audible lateral angle ( $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ ) relative to	
423		the direction in which the listener is facing. $r$ represents the	
424		distance between the listener and the sound source. . . . .	19
425	2	Arrangement of the loudspeakers used for the experiment. $\theta$ is	
426		the elevation angle of each loudspeaker. $\varphi_i$ is the initial azimuth	
427		angle, that is, the direction that the listener faces at the start of	
428		the experiment. . . . .	20
429	3	Example of the frequency characteristics of the loudspeakers used	
430		in the experiment. . . . .	21
431	4	Distribution of the azimuth localization error for each condition.	
432		Panels (a)–(e) show the results for the wide-band noise (WB:	
433		100 Hz–20 kHz) and panels (f)–(j) show those for the low-pass	
434		noise (LP: 100 Hz–500 Hz). $\varphi_i$ is the initial azimuth angle (see	
435		Fig. 2). A positive value indicates an error to the right, and a	
436		negative value indicates an error to the left. The area of the circle	
437		is proportional to the number of the error. . . . .	22
438	5	The minimum rotation angle of the listener's head required for	
439		the listener to notice that the sound source deviates from the	
440		median plan ( $\varphi_{\text{rot,min}}$ ) as a function of the elevation angle of the	
441		sound source ( $\theta$ ) with the parameter of the minimum audible lat-	
442		eral angle ( $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ ). Open (closed) circles and squares represent	
443		half of the 95% prediction interval and the 75% threshold esti-	
444		mated from the S.D. for the wide-band (low-pass) noise for each	
445		elevation angle, respectively. . . . .	23
446	6	Definition of $d_e$ . . . . .	24

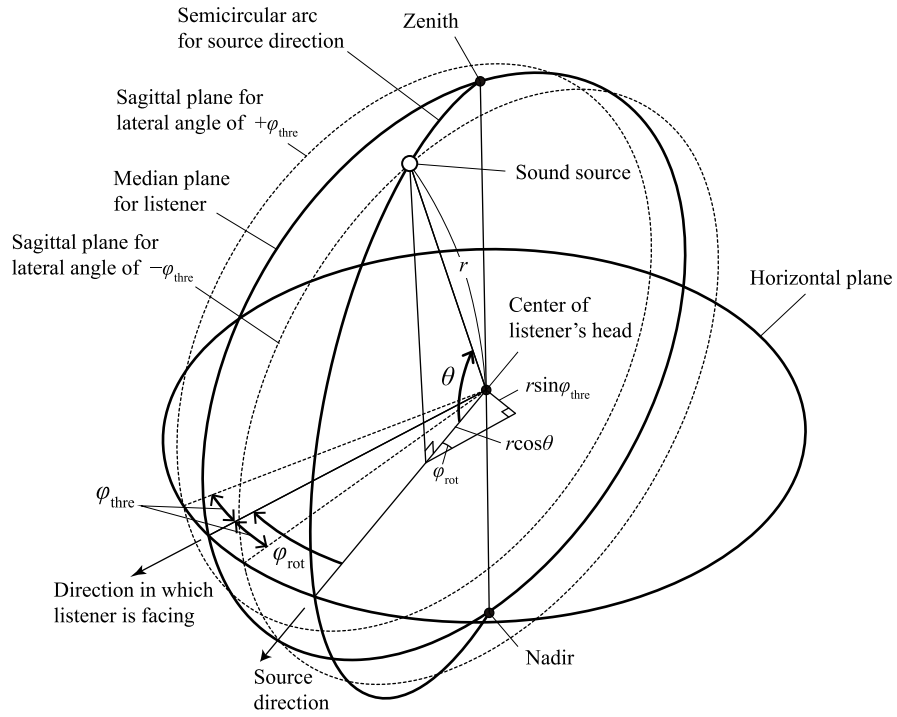


Figure 1: Geometrical relationship among the elevation angle of the sound source ( $\theta$ ), listener's rotation angle relative to the source direction ( $\varphi_{\text{rot}}$ ), and the minimum audible lateral angle ( $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ ) relative to the direction in which the listener is facing.  $r$  represents the distance between the listener and the sound source.

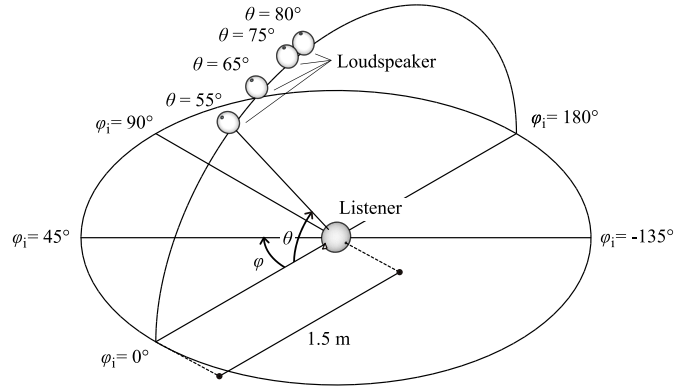


Figure 2: Arrangement of the loudspeakers used for the experiment.  $\theta$  is the elevation angle of each loudspeaker.  $\varphi_i$  is the initial azimuth angle, that is, the direction that the listener faces at the start of the experiment.

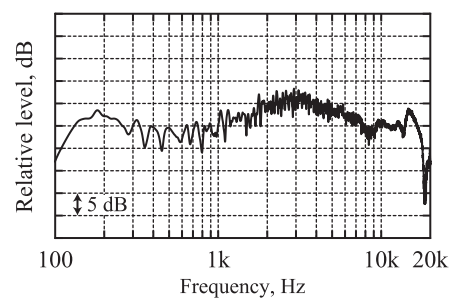


Figure 3: Example of the frequency characteristics of the loudspeakers used in the experiment.

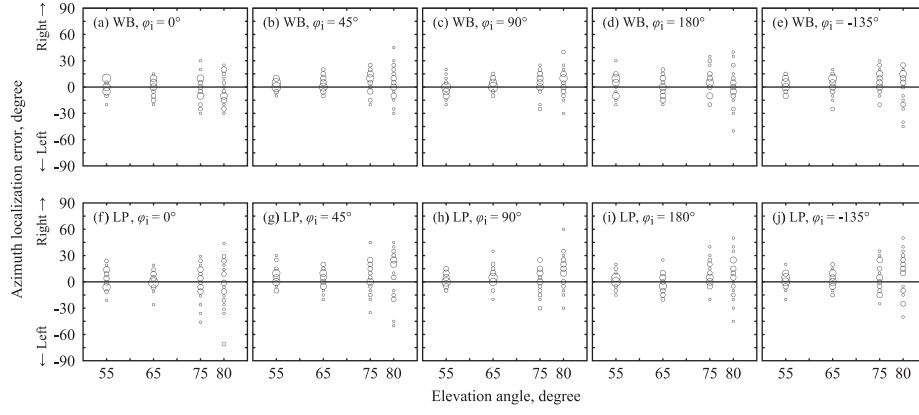


Figure 4: Distribution of the azimuth localization error for each condition. Panels (a)–(e) show the results for the wide-band noise (WB: 100 Hz–20 kHz) and panels (f)–(j) show those for the low-pass noise (LP: 100 Hz–500 Hz).  $\varphi_i$  is the initial azimuth angle (see Fig. 2). A positive value indicates an error to the right, and a negative value indicates an error to the left. The area of the circle is proportional to the number of the error.

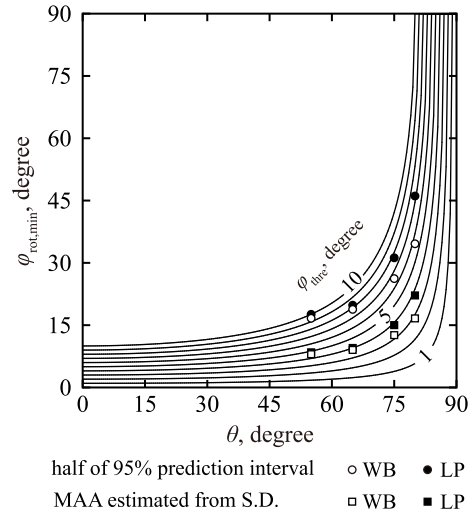


Figure 5: The minimum rotation angle of the listener's head required for the listener to notice that the sound source deviates from the median plan ( $\varphi_{\text{rot,min}}$ ) as a function of the elevation angle of the sound source ( $\theta$ ) with the parameter of the minimum audible lateral angle ( $\varphi_{\text{thre}}$ ). Open (closed) circles and squares represent half of the 95% prediction interval and the 75% threshold estimated from the S.D. for the wide-band (low-pass) noise for each elevation angle, respectively.

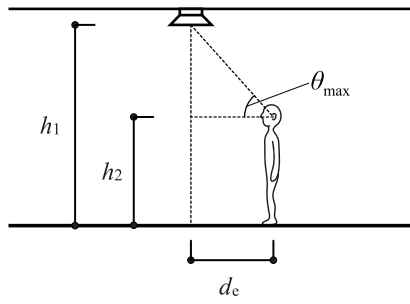


Figure 6: Definition of  $d_e$ .

447 **List of Tables**

448	1	$p$ -Values of the Friedman test ( $*p < 0.05$ ) for effects of the initial	
449		azimuth angle and the elevation angle on the absolute value of	
450		the localization error. . . . .	26
451	2	Statistics of the localization error for each elevation angle and	
452		type of noise. . . . .	27
453	3	$p$ -Values of the $F$ -test ( $*p < 0.05$ ) between the variances of the	
454		localization error. . . . .	28

Table 1:  $p$ -Values of the Friedman test ( $*p < 0.05$ ) for effects of the initial azimuth angle and the elevation angle on the absolute value of the localization error.

Effect of initial azimuth angle			Effect of elevation angle		
Elev. angle	Low-pass	Wide band	Azim. angle	Low-pass	Wide band
$55^\circ$	$1.74 \times 10^{-2*}$	$5.67 \times 10^{-3*}$	$0^\circ$	$9.59 \times 10^{-5*}$	$1.45 \times 10^{-3*}$
$65^\circ$	$3.74 \times 10^{-1}$	$4.16 \times 10^{-2*}$	$45^\circ$	$4.92 \times 10^{-5*}$	$2.49 \times 10^{-4*}$
$75^\circ$	$8.23 \times 10^{-1}$	$8.50 \times 10^{-1}$	$90^\circ$	$7.14 \times 10^{-4*}$	$7.78 \times 10^{-3*}$
$80^\circ$	$2.65 \times 10^{-1}$	$3.36 \times 10^{-1}$	$180^\circ$	$7.76 \times 10^{-5*}$	$9.10 \times 10^{-1}$
			$-135^\circ$	$1.16 \times 10^{-8*}$	$1.46 \times 10^{-3*}$

Table 2: Statistics of the localization error for each elevation angle and type of noise.

Noise	Elev. angle	Ave.	S.D.	95% prediction interval	
				Upper	Lower
Low-pass	55°	3.5°	8.9°	21.1°	−14.1°
	65°	2.3°	10.0°	22.1°	−17.5°
	75°	4.2°	15.7°	35.4°	−27.0°
	80°	7.3°	23.2°	53.3°	−38.8°
Wide-band	55°	1.4°	8.4°	18.0°	−15.3°
	65°	1.7°	9.5°	20.5°	−17.1°
	75°	4.0°	13.2°	30.2°	−22.2°
	80°	1.8°	17.4°	36.4°	−32.8°

Table 3:  $p$ -Values of the  $F$ -test (\* $p < 0.05$ ) between the variances of the localization error.

Between the same noises				Between low-pass and wide-band	
		Low-pass	Wide-band		
55°	65°	$1.69 \times 10^{-1}$	$1.54 \times 10^{-1}$	55°	$5.16 \times 10^{-1}$
	75°	$4.89 \times 10^{-11*}$	$1.51 \times 10^{-7*}$	65°	$5.49 \times 10^{-1}$
	80°	$2.20 \times 10^{-16*}$	$2.20 \times 10^{-16*}$	75°	$4.02 \times 10^{-2*}$
65°	75°	$1.30 \times 10^{-7*}$	$1.06 \times 10^{-4*}$	80°	$7.94 \times 10^{-4*}$
	80°	$2.20 \times 10^{-16*}$	$3.15 \times 10^{-12*}$		
75°	80°	$5.92 \times 10^{-6*}$	$1.18 \times 10^{-3*}$		