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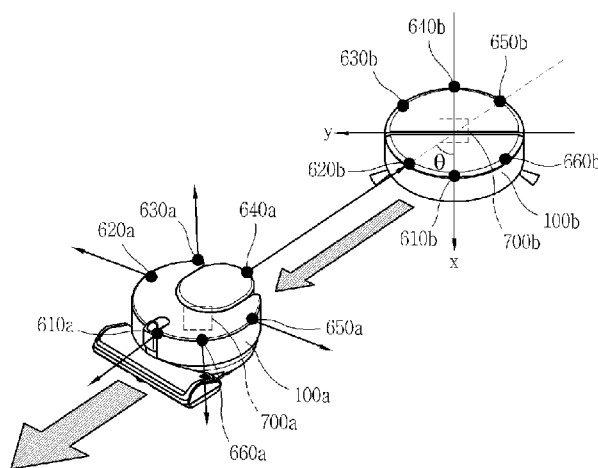
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(54) Title: PLURALITY OF AUTONOMOUS MOBILE ROBOTS AND CONTROLLING METHOD FOR THE SAME



(57) Abstract: A plurality of autonomous mobile robots include a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot. The first mobile robot is provided with a plurality of transmitting optical sensors for outputting light and a first module for transmitting and receiving a Ultra-Wideband (UWB) signal. The second mobile robot is provided with a plurality of receiving optical sensors for receiving light and a second module for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal. A control unit of the second mobile robot determines an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to a front of the second mobile robot using the light. The control unit also determines a distance from the second mobile robot to the first mobile robot using the UWB signal, and determines a relative position of the first mobile robot based on the angle and the distance.



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Description

Title of Invention: PLURALITY OF AUTONOMOUS MOBILE ROBOTS AND CONTROLLING METHOD FOR THE SAME

Technical Field

[1] The present invention relates to a plurality of autonomous mobile robots.

Background Art

[2] Generally, a mobile robot is a device that automatically performs a predetermined operation while traveling by itself in a predetermined area without a user's operation. The mobile robot senses obstacles located in the area and performs its operations by moving close to or away from such obstacles.

[3] Such mobile robot may include a robot cleaner that performs cleaning while traveling in an area.

[4] The robot cleaner is a cleaner that performs cleaning while traveling by itself without user's operation.

[5] In this manner, with the development of such mobile robots performing cleaning while traveling by themselves without users' operations, necessity to make a plurality of mobile robots perform cleaning in a collaborating manner without users' operations is emerging as an interest.

[6] The prior art document WO2017-036532 discloses a method in which a master robot cleaner (hereinafter, referred to as a master robot) controls at least one slave robot cleaner (hereinafter, referred to as a slave robot).

[7] The prior art document discloses a configuration in which the master robot detects adjacent obstacles by using an obstacle detection device and determines its position related to the slave robot using position data derived from the obstacle detection device.

[8] In addition, the prior art discloses a configuration in which the master robot and the slave robot perform communication with each other via a server using wireless local area network (WLAN) technology.

[9] According to the prior art document, the master robot can determine the position of the slave robot but the slave robot cannot determine the position of the master robot.

[10] Further, in order for the slave robot to determine (decide) the position of the master robot using the configuration disclosed in the prior art document, the master robot must transmit relative position information regarding the slave robot determined by the master robot to the slave robot through the server.

[11] However, the prior art fails to disclose such a configuration in which the master robot transmits relative position information to the slave robot via the server.

- [12] In addition, even if it is assumed that the master robot transmits relative position information, the master robot and the slave robot should perform communication only through the server. Accordingly, such communication with the server may be disconnected when the master robot or the slave robot is located at a place where it is difficult to communicate with a server.
- [13] In this case, since the slave robot does not receive the relative position information from the server, the slave robot is difficult to decide (determine) the relative position of the master robot, which causes a problem that seamless follow-up control of the master robot and the slave robot is not performed.
- [14] In order to perform seamless follow-up control through communication between a plurality of autonomous mobile robots, it is necessary to determine whether the master robot is located at the front or at the rear of the slave robot, or whether the slave robot is located at the front or at the rear of the master robot.
- [15] However, since the prior art document merely discloses that the master robot transmits the relative position information to the slave robot through the server, it is impossible to determine whether the master robot is located at the front or at the rear of the slave robot, or whether the slave robot is located at the front or at the rear of the master robot.

Disclosure of Invention

Technical Problem

- [16] One aspect of the present invention is to provide mobile robots, capable of performing cleaning in an optimized manner without user's intervention, and a control method thereof.
- [17] Another aspect of the present invention is to provide mobile robots that one of a plurality of mobile robots follows up another one in an optimized manner, and a control method thereof.
- [18] Still another aspect of the present invention is to provide mobile robots, capable of reducing costs of sensed used for follow-up control of a plurality of mobile robots, and a control method thereof.
- [19] Still another aspect of the present invention is to provide mobile robots, capable of recognizing relative positions of a plurality of mobile robots, irrespective of a communication state between the plurality of mobile robots and a server, and a control method thereof.
- [20] Still another aspect of the present invention is to provide mobile robots each of which is configured to recognize a direction that another robot is located with respect to the front so as to perform seamless follow-up control, and a control method thereof.

Solution to Problem

- [21] To achieve and these aspects and other advantages of the present invention, there are provided a plurality of autonomous mobile robots, including a first mobile robot provided with a plurality of transmitting optical sensors for outputting light and a first module for transmitting and receiving an Ultra-Wideband (UWB) signal, and a second mobile robot provided with a plurality of receiving optical sensors for receiving light and a second module for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal, wherein the second mobile robot is provided with a control unit that calculates by use of the light an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, and calculates a distance up to the first mobile robot using the UWB signal, and wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot decides a relative position of the first mobile robot based on the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot and the distance up to the first mobile robot.
- [22] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the first and second modules for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal may be UWB modules.
- [23] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the plurality of transmitting optical sensors for outputting light may correspond to a plurality of transmitting infrared sensors and may be arranged at predetermined intervals along an outer portion of an upper surface of the first mobile robot. The plurality of receiving optical sensors for receiving light may correspond to a plurality of receiving infrared sensors and may be arranged at predetermined intervals along the outer portion of the upper surface of the second mobile robot.
- [24] In an embodiment disclosed herein, each of the plurality of transmitting optical sensors may output light with a different attribute.
- [25] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the light with the different attribute may be light in which at least one of a frequency, a wavelength and a polarized direction is different.
- [26] In an embodiment disclosed herein, each of the plurality of transmitting optical sensors may output light including identification information related thereto.
- [27] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the first and second modules for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal may include a UWB tag and a UWB anchor. The first mobile robot may be provided with one UWB tag, and the second mobile robot may be provided with one UWB anchor.
- [28] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may control the UWB anchor to output the UWB signal, and a control unit of the first mobile robot may output the UWB signal through the UWB tag, in response to reception of the UWB signal.
- [29] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may

calculate a distance up to the first mobile robot, in response to reception of the UWB signal through the UWB anchor.

[30] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may control the UWB anchor to output the UWB signal, and a control unit of the first mobile robot may control the plurality of transmitting optical sensors which are configured to output light with different attributes, in response to reception of the UWB signal.

[31] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may calculate an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor, which has received light, among the plurality of receiving optical sensors.

[32] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may decide a relative position of the first mobile robot, based on the distance up to the first mobile robot calculated by use of the UWB signal received through the UWB module, and the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot calculated by use of the light.

[33] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may decide a direction that the first mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor, which has received light, among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and an attribute of the light received through the receiving optical sensor.

[34] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may predict a direction that the first mobile robot is to move based on the direction that the first mobile robot faces.

[35] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may decide a direction that the second mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the first mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor, which has received light, among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and an attribute of the light received through the receiving optical sensor.

[36] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may decide the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on reception of light through at least two receiving optical sensors among the plurality of receiving optical sensors.

[37] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the control unit of the second mobile robot may decide the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on intensities of the light received through the at least two receiving optical sensors.

[38] In an embodiment disclosed herein, the optical sensor may be an infrared sensor.

[39] To achieve these aspects and other advantages of the present invention, there is provided a method for controlling a plurality of autonomous mobile robots including a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot, the method including calculating by the second mobile robot an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot using light output from the first mobile robot, calculating by the second mobile robot a distance up to the first mobile robot using an Ultra-Wideband (UWB) signal, and deciding by the second mobile robot a relative position of the first mobile robot based on the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot and the distance up to the first mobile robot.

Advantageous Effects of Invention

[40] The present invention can provide a plurality of autonomous mobile robots capable of accurately determining relative position of a first mobile robot while reducing costs.

[41] The present invention can provide a plurality of new autonomous mobile robots, capable of reducing costs while improving accuracy, by extracting a distance between a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using a pair of UWB modules and determining a direction of the first mobile robot using a low-cost IR sensor.

[42] The present invention can provide a plurality of autonomous mobile robots, capable of allowing seamless follow-up by recognizing relative positions thereof irrespective of a communication state with a server because relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot can be determined.

Brief Description of Drawings

[43] FIG. 1 is a perspective view illustrating one embodiment of a robot cleaner according to the present invention.

[44] FIG. 2 is a planar view of the autonomous mobile robot illustrated in FIG. 1.

[45] FIG. 3 is a lateral view of the autonomous mobile robot illustrated in FIG. 1.

[46] FIG. 4 is a block diagram illustrating exemplary components of an autonomous mobile robot according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[47] FIG. 5A is a conceptual view illustrating network communication between a plurality of autonomous mobile robots according to one embodiment of the present invention, and FIG. 5B is a conceptual view illustrating an example of the network communication of FIG. 5A.

[48] FIG. 5C is a conceptual view illustrating follow-up traveling of a plurality of autonomous mobile robots according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[49] FIGS. 6A and 6B are conceptual views illustrating a method of determining relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using infrared sensors in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[50] FIGS. 7A and 7B are conceptual views illustrating a method of determining relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using UWB modules in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[51] FIGS. 8 and 9 are a conceptual view and a flowchart illustrating a method of determining relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using UWB modules and a plurality of laser infrared sensors according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[52] FIGS. 10A, 10B and 10C are conceptual views illustrating follow-up registration and follow-up control between a first mobile robot and a mobile device, according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention.

Mode for the Invention

[53] Hereinafter, autonomous mobile robots according to the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

[54] Hereinafter, description will be given in detail of embodiments disclosed herein. Technical terms used in this specification are merely used for explaining specific embodiments, and should not be constructed to limit the scope of the technology disclosed herein.

[55] First, the term "mobile robot" disclosed herein may be used as the same meaning as 'robot (for a specific function),' 'robot cleaner,' 'robot for cleaning' and 'autonomous cleaner,' and those terms will be used equally.

[56] A "plurality of mobile robots" disclosed in the present invention may be used as a "plurality of robot cleaners" or "a plurality of cleaners". Also, a "first mobile robot" may be named "first robot", "first robot cleaner", "first cleaner", or "leading or master cleaner". Further, a "second mobile robot" may be named as "second robot", "second robot cleaner", "second cleaner", or "following or slave cleaner".

[57] FIGS. 1 to 3 illustrate a robot cleaner as an example of a mobile robot according to the present invention.

[58] FIG. 1 is a perspective view illustrating one embodiment of an autonomous mobile robot 100 according to the present invention, FIG. 2 is a planar view of the autonomous mobile robot 100 illustrated in FIG. 1, and FIG. 3 is a lateral view of the autonomous mobile robot 100 illustrated in FIG. 1.

[59] In this specification, a mobile robot, an autonomous mobile robot, and a cleaner that performs autonomous traveling may be used in the same sense. In this specification, a plurality of autonomous mobile robots may include at least part of configurations illustrated in FIGS. 1 to 3.

[60] Referring to FIGS. 1 to 3, an autonomous mobile robot 100 performs a function of cleaning a floor while traveling on a predetermined area by itself. Cleaning the floor

disclosed herein includes sucking dust (including foreign materials) on the floor or mopping the floor.

[61] The autonomous mobile robot 100 may include a cleaner main body 110, a cleaning unit 120, a sensing unit 130, and a dust bin 140.

[62] The cleaner main body 110 is provided with various components in addition to a controller (not illustrated) for controlling the mobile robot 100. In addition, the cleaner main body 110 is provided with a wheel unit 111 for traveling the autonomous mobile robot 100. The autonomous mobile robot 100 may be moved or rotated forward, backward, left or right by the wheel unit 111.

[63] Referring to FIG. 3, the wheel unit 111 includes main wheels 111a and a sub wheel 111b.

[64] The main wheels 111a are provided on both sides of the cleaner main body 110 and configured to be rotatable in one direction or another direction according to a control signal of the control unit. Each of the main wheels 111a may be configured to be driven independently of each other. For example, each main wheel 111a may be driven by a different motor. Or each main wheel 111a may be driven by a plurality of different axes provided in one motor.

[65] The sub wheel 111b supports the cleaner main body 110 together with the main wheels 111a and assists the traveling of the autonomous mobile robot 100 by the main wheels 111a. The sub wheel 111b may also be provided on a cleaning unit 120 to be described later.

[66] The control unit controls the driving of the wheel unit 111, so that the autonomous mobile robot 100 is allowed to autonomously run the floor.

[67] Meanwhile, the cleaner main body 110 is provided with a battery (not shown) for supplying power to the autonomous mobile robot 100. The battery 190 may be configured to be rechargeable, and may be detachably disposed in a bottom portion of the cleaner main body 110.

[68] In FIG. 1, a cleaning unit 120 may be disposed in a protruding form from one side of the cleaner main body 110, so as to suck air containing dust or mop an area. The one side may be a side where the cleaner main body 110 travels in a forward direction F, that is, a front side of the cleaner main body 110.

[69] In this drawing, the cleaning unit 120 is shown having a shape protruding from one side of the cleaner main body 110 to front and both left and right sides. Specifically, a front end portion of the cleaning unit 120 is disposed at a position spaced forward apart from the one side of the cleaner main body 110, and left and right end portions of the cleaning unit 120 are disposed at positions spaced apart from the one side of the cleaner main body 110 in the right and left directions.

[70] As the cleaner main body 110 is formed in a circular shape and both sides of a rear

end portion of the cleaning unit 120 protrude from the cleaner main body 110 to both left and right sides, empty spaces, namely, gaps may be formed between the cleaner main body 110 and the cleaning unit 120. The empty spaces are spaces between both left and right end portions of the cleaner main body 110 and both left and right end portions of the cleaning unit 120 and each has a shape recessed into the autonomous mobile robot 100.

[71] If an obstacle is caught in the empty space, the autonomous mobile robot 100 may be likely to be unmovable due to the obstacle. To prevent this, a cover member 129 may be disposed to cover at least part of the empty space.

[72] The cover member 129 may be provided on the cleaner main body 110 or the cleaning unit 120. In an embodiment of the present invention, the cover member 129 protrude from each of both sides of the rear end portion of the cleaning unit 120 and covers an outer circumferential surface of the cleaner main body 110.

[73] The cover member 129 is disposed to fill at least part of the empty space, that is, the empty space between the cleaner main body 110 and the cleaning unit 120. This may result in realizing a structure capable of preventing an obstacle from being caught in the empty space, or to easily escape an obstacle even if the obstacle is caught in the empty space.

[74] The cover member 129 protruding from the cleaning unit 120 may be supported on the outer circumferential surface of the cleaner main body 110.

[75] The cover member 129 may be supported on a rear portion of the cleaning unit 120 if the cover member 129 protrudes from the cleaner main body 110. According to this structure, when the cleaning unit 120 is impacted due to colliding with an obstacle, a part of the impact is transferred to the cleaner main body 110 so as to be dispersed.

[76] The cleaning unit 120 may be detachably coupled to the cleaner main body 110. When the cleaning unit 120 is detached from the cleaner main body 110, a mop module (not shown) may be detachably coupled to the cleaner main body 110 in place of the detached cleaning unit 120.

[77] Accordingly, the user can mount the cleaning unit 120 on the cleaner main body 110 when the user wishes to remove dust on the floor, and may mount the mop module on the cleaner main body 110 when the user wants to mop the floor.

[78] When the cleaning unit 120 is mounted on the cleaner main body 110, the mounting may be guided by the cover member 129 described above. That is, as the cover member 129 is disposed to cover the outer circumferential surface of the cleaner main body 110, a relative position of the cleaning unit 120 with respect to the cleaner main body 110 may be determined.

[79] The cleaning unit 120 may be provided with a castor 123. The caster 123 assists the running of the autonomous mobile robot 100 and also supports the autonomous mobile

robot 100.

[80] The cleaner main body 110 is provided with a sensing unit 130. As illustrated, the sensing unit 130 may be disposed on one side of the cleaner main body 110 where the cleaning unit 120 is located, that is, on a front side of the cleaner main body 110.

[81] The sensing unit 130 may be disposed to overlap the cleaning unit 120 in an up and down direction of the cleaner main body 110. The sensing unit 130 is disposed at an upper portion of the cleaning unit 120 so as to detect an obstacle or feature in front of the robot so that the cleaning unit 120 positioned at the forefront of the autonomous mobile robot 100 does not hit the obstacle.

[82] The sensing unit 130 may be configured to additionally perform another sensing function other than the sensing function.

[83] By way of example, the sensing unit 130 may include a camera 131 for acquiring surrounding images. The camera 131 may include a lens and an image sensor. The camera 131 may convert a surrounding image of the cleaner main body 110 into an electrical signal that can be processed by the control unit. For example, the camera 131 may transmit an electrical signal corresponding to an upward image to the control unit. The electrical signal corresponding to the upward image may be used by the control unit to detect the position of the cleaner main body 110.

[84] In addition, the sensing unit 130 may detect obstacles such as walls, furniture, and cliffs on a traveling surface or a traveling path of the autonomous mobile robot 100. Also, the sensing unit 130 may sense presence of a docking device that performs battery charging. Also, the sensing unit 130 may detect ceiling information so as to map a traveling area or a cleaning area of the autonomous mobile robot 100.

[85] The cleaner main body 110 is provided with a dust container 140 detachably coupled thereto for separating and collecting dust from sucked air.

[86] The dust container 140 is provided with a dust container cover 150 which covers the dust container 140. In an embodiment, the dust container cover 150 may be coupled to the cleaner main body 110 by a hinge to be rotatable. The dust container cover 150 may be fixed to the dust container 140 or the cleaner main body 110 to keep covering an upper surface of the dust container 140. The dust container 140 may be prevented from being separated from the cleaner main body 110 by the dust container cover 150 when the dust container cover 150 is disposed to cover the upper surface of the dust container 140.

[87] A part of the dust container 140 may be accommodated in a dust container accommodating portion and another part of the dust container 140 protrudes toward the rear of the cleaner main body 110 (i.e., a reverse direction R opposite to a forward direction F).

[88] The dust container 140 is provided with an inlet through which air containing dust is

introduced and an outlet through which air separated from dust is discharged. The inlet and the outlet communicate with each other through an opening 155 formed through an inner wall of the cleaner main body 110 when the dust container 140 is mounted on the cleaner main body 110. Thus, an intake passage and an exhaust passage inside the cleaner main body 110 may be formed.

[89] According to such connection, air containing dust introduced through the cleaning unit 120 flows into the dust container 140 through the intake passage inside the cleaner main body 110 and the air is separated from the dust while passing through a filter and cyclone of the dust container 140. The separated dust is collected in the dust container 140, and the air is discharged from the dust container 140 and flows along the exhaust passage inside the cleaner main body 110 so as to be externally exhausted through an exhaust port.

[90] Hereinafter, an embodiment related to the components of the autonomous mobile robot 100 will be described with reference to FIG. 4.

[91] An autonomous mobile robot 100 or a mobile robot according to an embodiment of the present invention may include a communication unit 1100, an input unit 1200, a traveling unit 1300, a sensing unit 1400, an output unit 1500, a power supply unit 1600, a memory 1700, a control unit 1800, and a cleaning unit 1900, or a combination thereof.

[92] At this time, those components shown in FIG. 4 are not essential, and an autonomous mobile robot having greater or fewer components can be implemented. Also, as described above, each of a plurality of autonomous mobile robots described in the present invention may equally include only some of components to be described below. That is, a plurality of autonomous mobile robots may include different components.

[93] Hereinafter, each component will be described.

[94] First, the power supply unit 1600 includes a battery that can be charged by an external commercial power supply, and supplies power to the mobile robot. The power supply unit 1600 supplies driving force to each of the components included in the mobile robot to supply operating power required for the mobile robot to travel or perform a specific function.

[95] At this time, the control unit 1800 may detect a remaining amount of power (or remaining power level or battery level) of the battery. The control unit 1800 may control the mobile robot to move to a charging base connected to the external commercial power supply when the remaining power is insufficient, so that the battery can be charged by receiving charging current from the charging base. The battery may be connected to a battery sensing portion so that a remaining power level and a charging state can be transmitted to the control unit 1800. The output unit 1500 may

display the remaining battery level under the control of the control unit.

- [96] The battery may be located in a bottom portion of a center of the autonomous mobile robot, or may be located in either the left or right side. In the latter case, the mobile robot may further include a balance weight to eliminate weight bias of the battery.
- [97] The control unit 1800 performs processing of information based on an artificial intelligence (AI) technology and may include one or more modules that perform at least one of learning of information, inference of information, perception of information, and processing of natural language.
- [98] The control unit 1800 may use a machine learning technology to perform at least one of learning, inferring and processing a large amount of information (big data), such as information stored in the cleaner, environmental information around a mobile terminal, information stored in an external storage capable of performing communication, and the like. The control unit 1800 may control the cleaner to predict (or infer) at least one executable operation and execute an operation having the highest feasibility among the predicted at least one operation, by using the information learned using the machine learning technology.
- [99] Machine learning technology is a technology that collects and learns a large amount of information based on at least one algorithm, and judges and predicts information based on the learned information. The learning of information is an operation that grasps characteristics, rules, and judgment criteria of information, quantifies relationship between information and information, and predicts new data using a quantified pattern.
- [100] The at least one algorithm used by the machine learning technology may be a statistical based algorithm, for example, a decision tree that uses a tree structure type as a prediction model, an artificial neural network copying neural network architecture and functions, genetic programming based on biological evolutionary algorithms, clustering to distribute observed examples into subsets of clusters, Monte Carlo method to compute function values through randomly extracted random numbers from probability, or the like.
- [101] As a field of machine learning technology, deep learning is a technique that performs at least one of learning, judging, and processing of information using an Artificial Neural Network (ANN) or a Deep Neuron Network (DNN) algorithm. Such DNN may have an architecture in which layers are connected to transfer data between layers. This deep learning technology may allow learning of a large amount of information through the DNN using a graphic processing unit (GPU) optimized for parallel computing.
- [102] The control unit 1800 may use training data stored in an external server or memory, and may include a learning engine mounted to detect characteristics for recognizing a predetermined object. At this time, the characteristics for recognizing the object may

include a size, shape and shade of the object.

- [103] Specifically, when the control unit 1800 inputs a part of images acquired through the camera provided on the cleaner into the learning engine, the learning engine may recognize at least one object or organism included in the input images.
- [104] When the learning engine is applied to traveling of the cleaner, the control unit 1800 can recognize whether or not an obstacle such as a chair leg, a fan, and a specific shape of balcony gap, which obstruct the running of the cleaner, exists around the cleaner. This may result in enhancing efficiency and reliability of the traveling of the cleaner.
- [105] On the other hand, the learning engine may be mounted on the control unit 1800 or on an external server. When the learning engine is mounted on an external server, the control unit 1800 may control the communication unit 1100 to transmit at least one image to be analyzed, to the external server.
- [106] The external server may input the image transmitted from the cleaner into the learning engine and thus recognize at least one object or organism included in the image. In addition, the external server may transmit information related to the recognition result back to the cleaner. In this case, the information related to the recognition result may include information related to the number of objects included in the image to be analyzed and a name of each object.
- [107] On the other hand, the traveling unit 1300 may include a motor, and operate the motor to bidirectionally rotate left and right main wheels, so that the main body can rotate or move. At this time, the left and right main wheels may be independently moved. The traveling unit 1300 may advance the main body of the mobile robot forward, backward, left, right, curvedly, or in place.
- [108] On the other hand, the input unit 1200 receives various control commands for the autonomous mobile robot from the user. The input unit 1200 may include one or more buttons, for example, the input unit 1200 may include an OK button, a setting button, and the like. The OK button is a button for receiving a command for confirming detection information, obstacle information, position information, and map information from the user, and the setting button is a button for receiving a command for setting those information from the user.
- [109] In addition, the input unit 1200 may include an input reset button for canceling a previous user input and receiving a new user input, a delete button for deleting a preset user input, a button for setting or changing an operation mode, a button for receiving an input to return to the charging base.
- [110] In addition, the input unit 1200 may be implemented as a hard key, a soft key, a touch pad, or the like and may be disposed on a top of the mobile robot. For example, the input unit 1200 may implement a form of a touch screen together with the output unit 1500.

- [111] On the other hand, the output unit 1500 may be installed on a top of the mobile robot. Of course, an installation location and an installation type may vary. For example, the output unit 1500 may display a battery level state, a traveling mode or manner, or the like on a screen.
- [112] The output unit 1500 may output internal status information of the mobile robot detected by the sensing unit 1400, for example, a current status of each component included in the mobile robot. The output unit 1500 may also display external status information detected by the sensing unit 1400, obstacle information, position information, map information, and the like on the screen. The output unit 1500 may be configured as one device of a light emitting diode (LED), a liquid crystal display (LCD), a plasma display panel, and an organic light emitting diode (OLED).
- [113] The output unit 1500 may further include an audio output module for audibly outputting information related to an operation of the mobile robot executed by the control unit 1800 or an operation result. For example, the output unit 1500 may output warning sound to the outside in response to a warning signal generated by the control unit 1800.
- [114] In this case, the audio output module (not shown) may be means, such as a beeper, a speaker or the like for outputting sounds, and the output unit 1500 may output sounds to the outside through the audio output module using audio data or message data having a predetermined pattern stored in the memory 1700.
- [115] Accordingly, the mobile robot according to an embodiment of the present invention can output environmental information related to a traveling area through the output unit 1500 or output the same in an audible manner. According to another embodiment, the mobile robot may transmit map information or environmental information to a terminal device through the communication unit 1100 so that the terminal device outputs a screen to be output through the output unit 1500 or sounds.
- [116] The memory 1700 stores a control program for controlling or driving the autonomous mobile robot and data corresponding thereto. The memory 1700 may store audio information, image information, obstacle information, position information, map information, and the like. Also, the memory 1700 may store information related to a traveling pattern.
- [117] The memory 1700 mainly uses a nonvolatile memory. Here, the non-volatile memory (NVM, NVRAM) is a storage device that can continuously store information even when power is not supplied. Examples of the storage device include a ROM, a flash memory, a magnetic computer storage device (e.g., a hard disk, a diskette drive, a magnetic tape), an optical disk drive, a magnetic RAM, a PRAM, and the like.
- [118] On the other hand, the sensing unit 1400 may include at least one of an external signal sensor, a front sensor, a cliff sensor, a two-dimensional (2D) camera sensor, and

a three-dimensional (3D) camera sensor.

[119] The external signal sensor or external signal detection sensor may sense an external signal of a mobile robot. The external signal sensor may be, for example, an infrared ray (IR) sensor, an ultrasonic sensor, a radio frequency (RF) sensor, or the like.

[120] The mobile robot may detect a position and direction of the charging base by receiving a guidance signal generated by the charging base using the external signal sensor. At this time, the charging base may transmit a guidance signal indicating a direction and distance so that the mobile robot can return thereto. That is, the mobile robot may determine a current position and set a moving direction by receiving a signal transmitted from the charging base, thereby returning to the charging base.

[121] On the other hand, the front sensors or front detection sensors may be installed at a predetermined distance on the front of the mobile robot, specifically, along a circumferential surface of a side surface of the mobile robot. The front sensor is located on at least one side surface of the mobile robot to detect an obstacle in front of the mobile robot. The front sensor may detect an object, especially an obstacle, existing in a moving direction of the mobile robot and transmit detection information to the control unit 1800. That is, the front sensor may detect protrusions on the moving path of the mobile robot, household appliances, furniture, walls, wall corners, and the like, and transmit the information to the control unit 1800.

[122] For example, the frontal sensor may be an infrared ray (IR) sensor, an ultrasonic sensor, an RF sensor, a geomagnetic sensor, or the like, and the mobile robot may use one type of sensor as the front sensor or two or more types of sensors if necessary.

[123] An ultrasonic sensor, for example, may generally be used to detect a remote obstacle. The ultrasonic sensor may be provided with a transmitter and a receiver. The control unit 1800 may determine presence or non-presence of an obstacle according to whether ultrasonic waves radiated from the transmitter are reflected by an obstacle or the like and then received by the receiver, and calculate a distance from the obstacle using a Δ ultrasonic wave radiation time and a ultrasonic wave reception time.

[124] Also, the control unit 1800 may detect information related to a size of an obstacle by comparing ultrasonic waves radiated from the transmitter with ultrasonic waves received by the receiver. For example, the control unit 1800 may determine that the obstacle is larger in size when more ultrasonic waves are received in the receiver.

[125] In one embodiment, a plurality (e.g., five) of ultrasonic sensors may be installed on side surfaces of the mobile robot at the front side along an outer circumferential surface. At this time, the ultrasonic sensors may preferably be installed on the front surface of the mobile robot in a manner that the transmitter and the receiver are alternately arranged.

[126] That is, the transmitters may be disposed at right and left sides with being spaced

apart from a front center of the main body or one transmitter or at least two transmitters may be disposed between the receivers so as to form a reception area of an ultrasonic signal reflected from an obstacle or the like. With this arrangement, the reception area can increase while reducing the number of sensors. A radiation angle of ultrasonic waves may be maintained in a range of avoiding an affection to different signals so as to prevent a crosstalk. Also, receiving sensitivity of the receivers may be set differently.

[127] In addition, the ultrasonic sensor may be installed upward by a predetermined angle so that the ultrasonic waves emitted from the ultrasonic sensor are output upward. In this instance, the ultrasonic sensor may further include a predetermined blocking member to prevent the ultrasonic waves from being radiated downward.

[128] On the other hand, as described above, the front sensor may be implemented by using two or more types of sensors together, and thus the front sensor may use any one of an IR sensor, an ultrasonic sensor, an RF sensor and the like.

[129] For example, the front sensor may include an IR sensor as another sensor, in addition to the ultrasonic sensor.

[130] The IR sensor may be installed on an outer circumferential surface of the mobile robot together with the ultrasonic sensor. The IR sensor may also detect an obstacle existing on a front or side of the mobile robot and transmit obstacle information to the control unit 1800. That is, the IR sensor senses a protrusion, a household fixture, furniture, a wall, a wall edge, and the like, existing on the moving path of the mobile robot, and transmits detection information to the control unit 1800. Therefore, the mobile robot can move within a specific area without collision with an obstacle.

[131] On the other hand, a cliff sensor (or cliff detection sensor) may detect an obstacle on the floor supporting the main body of the mobile robot by mainly using various types of optical sensors.

[132] That is, the cliff sensor may also be installed on a rear surface of the mobile robot on the floor, but may be installed on a different position depending on a type of the mobile robot. The cliff sensor is located on the rear surface of the mobile robot and detects an obstacle on the floor. The cliff sensor may be an IR sensor, an ultrasonic sensor, an RF sensor, a Position Sensitive Detector (PSD) sensor, and the like, which include a transmitter and a receiver, similar to the obstacle detection sensor.

[133] For example, one of the cliff sensors may be installed on the front of the mobile robot, and two other cliff sensors may be installed relatively behind.

[134] For example, the cliff sensor may be a PSD sensor, but may alternatively be configured by a plurality of different kinds of sensors.

[135] The PSD sensor detects a short/long distance location of incident light at one p-n junction using semiconductor surface resistance. The PSD sensor includes a one-

dimensional PSD sensor that detects light only in one axial direction, and a two-dimensional PSD sensor that detects a light position on a plane. Both of the PSD sensors may have a pin photodiode structure. As a type of infrared sensor, the PSD sensor uses infrared rays. The PSD sensor emits infrared ray, and measures a distance by calculating an angle of the infrared ray reflected and returned from an obstacle. That is, the PSD sensor calculates a distance from the obstacle by using the triangulation method.

- [136] The PSD sensor includes a light emitter that emits infrared rays to an obstacle and a light receiver that receives infrared rays that are reflected and returned from the obstacle, and is configured typically as a module type. When an obstacle is detected by using the PSD sensor, a stable measurement value may be obtained irrespective of reflectivity and color difference of the obstacle.
- [137] The control unit 1800 may measure an infrared ray angle between a light signal of infrared ray emitted by the cliff detection sensor toward the ground and a reflection signal reflected and received from an obstacle, so as to detect a cliff and analyze a depth of the cliff.
- [138] Meanwhile, the control unit 1800 may determine whether to pass a cliff or not according to a ground state of the detected cliff by using the cliff detection sensor, and decide whether to pass the cliff or not according to the determination result. For example, the control unit 1800 determines presence or non-presence of a cliff and a depth of the cliff through the cliff sensor, and then allows the mobile robot to pass through the cliff only when a reflection signal is detected through the cliff sensor.
- [139] As another example, the control unit 1800 may also determine lifting of the mobile robot using the cliff sensor.
- [140] On the other hand, the two-dimensional camera sensor is provided on one surface of the mobile robot to acquire image information related to the surroundings of the main body during movement.
- [141] An optical flow sensor converts a lower image input from an image sensor provided in the sensor to generate image data of a predetermined format. The generated image data may be stored in the memory 1700.
- [142] Also, at least one light source may be installed adjacent to the optical flow sensor. The at least one light source emits light to a predetermined area of the floor, which is captured by the image sensor. That is, while the mobile robot moves in a specific area along the floor surface, a certain distance is maintained between the image sensor and the floor surface when the floor surface is flat. On the other hand, when the mobile robot moves on a floor surface which is not flat, the image sensor and the floor surface are spaced apart from each other by a predetermined distance due to an unevenness and an obstacle on the floor surface. At this time, the at least one light source may be

controlled by the control unit 1800 to adjust an amount of light to be emitted. The light source may be a light emitting device, for example, a light emitting diode (LED), which is capable of adjusting an amount of light.

- [143] The control unit 1800 may detect a position of the mobile robot irrespective of slippage of the mobile robot, using the optical flow sensor. The control unit 1800 may compare and analyze image data captured by the optical flow sensor according to time to calculate a moving distance and a moving direction, and calculate a position of the mobile robot based on the calculated moving distance and moving direction. By using the image information regarding the lower side of the mobile robot captured by the image sensor, the control unit 1800 may perform correction that is robust against slippage with respect to the position of the mobile robot calculated by another member.
- [144] The three-dimensional (3D) camera sensor may be attached to one surface or a part of the main body of the mobile robot to generate 3D coordinate information related to surroundings of the main body.
- [145] That is, the 3D camera sensor may be a 3D depth camera that calculates a remote/near distance between the mobile robot and an object to be captured.
- [146] Specifically, the 3D camera sensor may capture 2D images related to surroundings of the main body, and generate a plurality of 3D coordinate information corresponding to the captured 2D images.
- [147] In one embodiment, the 3D camera sensor may be configured in a stereoscopic vision type which includes two or more cameras for acquiring 2D images, and merges at least two images acquired by the two or more cameras to generate a 3D coordinate information.
- [148] Specifically, the 3D camera sensor according to the embodiment may include a first pattern irradiating portion for downwardly irradiating light of a first pattern toward the front of the main body, a second pattern irradiating portion for upwardly irradiating light of a second pattern toward the front of the main body, and an image acquiring portion for acquiring a front image of the main body. Thus, the image acquiring portion may acquire an image of an area where the light of the first pattern and the light of the second pattern are incident.
- [149] In another embodiment, the 3D camera sensor may include an infrared pattern irradiating portion for irradiating an infrared pattern, in addition to a single camera, and capture a shape that the infrared pattern irradiated from the infrared pattern irradiating portion is projected onto an object to be captured, thereby measuring a distance between the 3D camera sensor and the object to be captured. The 3D camera sensor may be an IR type 3D camera sensor.
- [150] In another embodiment, the 3D camera sensor may include a light emitting portion for emitting light, in addition to a single camera. The 3D camera sensor may receive a

part of laser light (or laser beam), which is emitted from the light emitting portion and reflected from an object to be captured, and analyze the received light, thereby measuring a distance between the 3D camera sensor and the object to be captured. The 3D camera sensor may be a time-of-flight (TOF) type 3D camera sensor.

[151] Specifically, the laser of the 3D camera sensor is configured to irradiate a laser beam extending in at least one direction. In one example, the 3D camera sensor may be provided with first and second lasers. The first laser irradiates linear laser beams intersecting each other, and the second laser irradiates single linear laser beam.

According to this, the lowermost laser is used to detect an obstacle on a bottom, the uppermost laser is used to detect an obstacle on a top, and an intermediate laser between the lowermost laser and the uppermost laser is used to detect an obstacle at a middle portion.

[152] On the other hand, the communication unit 1100 is connected to a terminal device and/or another device (also referred to as “home appliance” herein) through one of wired, wireless and satellite communication methods, so as to transmit and receive signals and data.

[153] The communication unit 1100 may transmit and receive data with another device located in a specific area. In this case, the another device may be any device if it can transmit and receive data through a network. For example, the another device may be an air conditioner, a heating device, an air purifier, a lamp, a TV, a vehicle, and the like. The another device may also be a device for controlling a door, a window, a water supply valve, a gas valve, or the like. The another device may also be a sensor for detecting temperature, humidity, air pressure, gas, or the like.

[154] Further, the communication unit 1100 may communicate with another autonomous mobile robot 100 located in a specific area or within a predetermined range.

[155] Referring to FIGS. 5A and 5B, a first autonomous mobile robot 100a and a second autonomous mobile robot 100b may exchange data with each other through a network communication 50. In addition, the first autonomous mobile robot 100a and/or the second autonomous mobile robot 100b may perform a cleaning related operation or a corresponding operation by a control command received from a terminal 300 through the network communication 50 or other communication.

[156] That is, although not shown, the plurality of autonomous mobile robots 100a and 100b may perform communication with the terminal 300 through a first network communication and perform communication with each other through a second network communication.

[157] Here, the network communication 50 may refer to short-range communication using at least one of wireless communication technologies, such as a wireless LAN (WLAN), a wireless personal area network (WPAN), a wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) Wi-Fi direct,

Digital Living Network Alliance (DLNA), Wireless Broadband (WiBro), World Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX), Zigbee, Z-wave, Blue-Tooth, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), Infrared Data Association (IrDA), Ultrawide-Band (UWB), Wireless Universal Serial Bus (USB), and the like.

[158] The network communication 50 may vary depending on a communication mode of the autonomous mobile robots desired to communicate with each other.

[159] In FIG. 5A, the first autonomous mobile robot 100a and/or the second autonomous mobile robot 100b may provide information sensed by the respective sensing units thereof to the terminal 300 through the network communication 50. The terminal 300 may also transmit a control command generated based on the received information to the first autonomous mobile robot 100a and/or the second autonomous mobile robot 100b via the network communication 50.

[160] In FIG. 5A, the communication unit of the first autonomous mobile robot 100a and the communication unit of the second autonomous mobile robot 100b may also directly communicate with each other or indirectly communicate with each other via another router (not shown), to recognize information related to a traveling state and positions of counterparts.

[161] In one example, the second autonomous mobile robot 100b may perform a traveling operation and a cleaning operation according to a control command received from the first autonomous mobile robot 100a. In this case, it may be said that the first autonomous mobile robot 100a operates as a master cleaner and the second autonomous mobile robot 100b operates as a slave cleaner. Alternatively, it can be said that the second autonomous mobile robot 100b follows up the first autonomous mobile robot 100a. In some cases, it may also be said that the first autonomous mobile robot 100a and the second autonomous mobile robot 100b collaborate with each other.

[162] Hereinafter, a system including a plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b performing autonomous traveling according to an embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to FIG. 5B.

[163] As illustrated in FIG. 5B, a cleaning system according to an embodiment of the present invention may include a plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b performing autonomous traveling, a network 50, a server 500, and a plurality of terminals 300a and 300b.

[164] The plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b, the network 50 and at least one terminal 300a may be disposed in a building 10 while another terminal 300b and the server 500 may be located outside the building 10.

[165] The plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b are cleaners that perform cleaning while traveling by themselves, and may perform autonomous traveling and autonomous cleaning. Each of the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b may include a commu-

nication unit 1100, in addition to the traveling function and the cleaning function.

[166] The plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b, the server 500 and the plurality of terminals 300a and 300b may be connected together through the network 50 to exchange data. To this end, although not shown, a wireless router such as an access point (AP) device and the like may further be provided. In this case, the terminal 300a located in the building (internal network) 10 may access at least one of the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b through the AP device so as to perform monitoring, remote control and the like with respect to the cleaner. Also, the terminal 300b located in an external network may access at least one of the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b through the AP device, to perform monitoring, remote control and the like with respect to the cleaner.

[167] The server 500 may be wirelessly connected directly through the terminal 300b. Alternatively, the server 500 may be connected to at least one of the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b without passing through the mobile terminal 300b.

[168] The server 500 may include a programmable processor and may include various algorithms. By way of example, the server 500 may be provided with algorithms related to performing machine learning and/or data mining. As an example, the server 500 may include a speech recognition algorithm. In this case, when receiving voice data, the received voice data may be output by being converted into data in a text format.

[169] The server 500 may store firmware information, operation information (course information and the like) related to the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b, and may register product information regarding the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b. For example, the server 500 may be a server operated by a cleaner manufacturer or a server operated by an open application store operator.

[170] In another example, the server 500 may be a home server that is provided in the internal network 10 and stores status information regarding the home appliances or stores contents shared by the home appliances. If the server 500 is a home server, information related to foreign substances, for example, foreign substance images and the like may be stored.

[171] Meanwhile, the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b may be directly connected to each other wirelessly via Zigbee, Z-wave, Blue-Tooth, Ultra-wide band, and the like. In this case, the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b may exchange position information and traveling information with each other.

[172] At this time, any one of the plurality of cleaners 100a and 100b may be a master cleaner 100a and another may be a slave cleaner 100b.

[173] In this case, the first mobile robot 100a may control traveling and cleaning of the second mobile robot 100b. In addition, the second mobile robot 100b may perform traveling and cleaning while following up the first mobile robot 100a. Here, the operation or action that the second mobile robot 100b follows up the first mobile robot

100a refers to that the second mobile robot 100b performs traveling and cleaning while following up the first mobile robot 100a with maintaining a proper distance from the first mobile robot 100a.

[174] Referring to FIG. 5C, the first mobile robot 100a controls the second mobile robot 100b such that the second mobile robot 100b follows up the first mobile robot 100a.

[175] For this purpose, the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b should exist in a specific area where they can communicate with each other, and the second mobile robot 100b should recognize at least a relative position of the first mobile robot 100a.

[176] For example, the communication unit of the first mobile robot 100a and the communication unit of the second mobile robot 100b exchange IR signals, ultrasonic signals, carrier frequencies, impulse signals, and the like, and analyze them through triangulation, so as to calculate movement displacements of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b, thereby recognizing relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b. However, the present invention is not limited to this method, and one of the various wireless communication technologies described above may be used to recognize the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b through triangulation or the like.

[177] When the first mobile robot 100a recognizes the relative position with the second mobile robot 100b, the second mobile robot 100b may be controlled based on map information stored in the first mobile robot 100a or map information stored in the server, the terminal or the like. In addition, the second mobile robot 100b may share obstacle information sensed by the first mobile robot 100a. The second mobile robot 100b may perform an operation based on a control command (for example, a control command related to a traveling direction, a traveling speed, a stop, etc.) received from the first mobile robot 100a.

[178] Specifically, the second mobile robot 100b performs cleaning while traveling along a traveling path of the first mobile robot 100a. However, the traveling directions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b do not always coincide with each other. For example, when the first mobile robot 100a moves or rotates up/down/right/left, the second mobile robot 100b may move or rotate up/down/right/left after a predetermined time, and thus current advancing directions of the first and second mobile robot 100a and 100b may differ from each other.

[179] Also, a traveling speed V_a of the first mobile robot 100a and a traveling speed V_b of the second mobile robot 100b may be different from each other.

[180] The first mobile robot 100a may control the traveling speed V_b of the second mobile robot 100b to be varied in consideration of a distance at which the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b can communicate with each other. For

example, if the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b move away from each other by a predetermined distance or more, the first mobile robot 100a may control the traveling speed V_b of the second mobile robot 100b to be faster than before. On the other hand, when the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b move close to each other by a predetermined distance or less, the first mobile robot 100a may control the traveling speed V_b of the second mobile robot 100b to be slower than before or control the second mobile robot 100b to stop for a predetermined time. Accordingly, the second mobile robot 100b can perform cleaning while continuously following up the first mobile robot 100a.

[181] According to the present invention, the first mobile robot 100a may be provided with reception sensors on front and rear sides, so that the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a can recognize a receiving direction of an optical signal received from the second mobile robot 100b by distinguishing the front and rear sides. To this end, a UWB module may be provided at the rear of the first mobile robot 100a and another UWB module or a plurality of optical sensors may be disposed at the front of the first mobile robot 100a in a spacing manner. The first mobile robot 100a may recognize a receiving direction of an optical signal received from the second mobile robot 100b and determine whether the second mobile robot 100b is coming from behind it or is located at the front of it.

[182] The first autonomous mobile robot 100a of the present invention may be referred to as a first mobile robot or a first mobile robot 100a and the second autonomous mobile robot 100b may be referred to as a second mobile robot or a second mobile robot 100b.

[183] In this specification, the first autonomous mobile robot 100a will be referred to as a first mobile robot 100a and the second autonomous mobile robot 100b will be referred to as a second mobile robot 100b.

[184] In this specification, for the sake of convenience of explanation, the first mobile robot 100a serves as a leading cleaner that travels in a direction ahead of the second mobile robot 100b, and the second mobile robot 100b serves as a following cleaner that follows up the first mobile robot 100a.

[185] The first and second mobile robots 100a and 100b may perform traveling and cleaning in a following manner without user's intervention.

[186] To this end, it is necessary that the first mobile robot 100a recognizes the position of the second mobile robot 100b or the second mobile robot 100b recognizes the position of the first mobile robot 100a. This may mean that the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b must be determined.

[187] The present invention can grasp the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b by using various methods.

[188] For example, the communication unit of the first mobile robot 100a and the commu-

nication unit of the second mobile robot 100b exchange IR signals, ultrasonic signals, carrier frequencies, impulse signals, and the like, and recognize the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b through triangulation using the exchanged signals.

[189] In addition, the present invention can recognize the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b through triangulation using one of the various wireless communication technologies described above (e.g., Zigbee, Z-wave, Blue-Tooth and Ultra-wide Band).

[190] Since the triangulation method for obtaining the relative positions of the two devices is a general technique, a detailed description thereof will be omitted in this specification.

[191] FIGS. 6A and 6B are conceptual views illustrating a method of determining relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using IR sensors in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[192] The present invention may include a transmitting optical sensor (IR sensor or laser sensor) and a receiving optical sensor (IR sensor or laser sensor) in order to recognize the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b. For example, one transmitting IR sensor and three receiving IR sensors may be used.

[193] For example, the transmitting IR sensor may be mounted on the first mobile robot 100a among the plurality of cleaners, and the receiving IR sensors may be mounted on the second mobile robot 100b.

[194] In this specification, the IR sensor (or laser sensor) may be a sensor capable of emitting or receiving infrared rays having a specific wavelength or a wavelength of a specific wavelength band among infrared wavelength bands (for example, 25 micrometers or more).

[195] Here, the infrared sensor may be referred to as first type sensors 600a and 600b.

[196] As shown in FIG. 6A, the first type sensors (IR sensors) may include a first type transmitting sensor 600a and a first type receiving sensor 600b.

[197] The transmitting IR sensor 600a may be provided on the first mobile robot 100a as the leading cleaner, for example, on an outer circumferential surface of a main body of the first mobile robot 100a.

[198] The receiving IR sensor 600b may be provided on the second mobile robot 100b, which is the following cleaner.

[199] As illustrated in FIG. 6A, the receiving IR sensor 600b may be provided in plural.

[200] For example, the receiving IR sensors 600b may include a first receiving IR sensor 610b-1, a second receiving IR sensor 610b-2, and a third receiving IR sensor 610b-3. The first to third receiving IR sensors 610b-1, 610b-2, and 610b-3 may be mounted on the outer circumferential surface of the main body of the second mobile robot 100b at

different positions.

[201] In this case, the first to third receiving IR sensors 610b-1, 610b-2, and 610b-3 may be spaced apart from one another on the outer circumferential surface of the main body of the second mobile robot 100b.

[202] On the other hand, the control unit 1800 of the second mobile robot 100b may receive light, which is output from the transmitting IR sensor 600a provided on the first mobile robot 100a, through the receiving IR sensor 600b. Here, the light may be laser light or infrared light.

[203] At this time, the control unit 1800 of the second mobile robot 100b may measure intensities of laser beams received in the first to third receiving IR sensors 610b-1, 610b-2, and 610b-3 included in the receiving IR sensor 600b.

[204] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b, as illustrated in FIG. 6B, may apply triangulation based on the intensities of the laser beams measured in the first to third receiving IR sensors 610b-1, 610b-2, 610b-3.

[205] Brief description of triangulation using intensity of laser light will be given. The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate a first distance D1 from the first receiving IR sensor 610b-1 based on intensity of laser light received in the first receiving IR sensor 610b-1.

[206] At this time, the first distance D1 may be decided by multiplying intensity of laser light by scale, and the scale may be decided through experiments.

[207] For example, the radius may be shortened as the intensity of the laser light is great. That is, the radius and the intensity of the laser light may be in inverse proportion.

[208] Likewise, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate a second distance D2 from the second receiving IR sensor 610b-2 based on intensity of laser light received in the second receiving IR sensor 610b-2.

[209] In addition, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate a third distance D2 from the third receiving IR sensor 610b-3 based on intensity of laser light received in the third receiving IR sensor 610b-3.

[210] Afterwards, as illustrated in FIG. 6B, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may extract (calculate, decide, determine) three circles C1, C2, and C3 respectively having radiuses of the first to third distances D1, D2, and D3 calculated with respect to the receiving IR sensors, and an intersection (intersection point) P of the three circles. The control unit of the second mobile robot may determine the intersection as the position of the first mobile robot (the position of the transmitting IR sensor, more accurately).

[211] At this time, the first to third receiving IR sensors 610b-1, 610b-2, and 610b-3 may be arranged at different positions on the second mobile robot 100b, and coordinates of the arranged positions may be stored in the control unit of the mobile robot 100b.

- [212] The first to third receiving infrared sensors 610b-1, 610b-2, and 610b-3 may have different distances from the transmitting IR sensor 600a of the first mobile robot 100a, and thus have different intensity of laser light output from the first type transmitting sensor 600a.
- [213] Therefore, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b can decide the first to third distances D1, D2, and D3 with respect to the respective sensors based on intensities of laser light received through the first to third receiving IR sensors 610b-1, 610b-2, and 610b-3, and decide the intersection P of the circles C1, C2, and C3, which have the first to third distances as radiuses, as the position of the first mobile robot 100a.
- [214] More specifically, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate an intersection of a first circle in which the first IR sensor 610b-1 is a center point and the first distance is a radius, a second circle in which the second IR sensor 610b-2 is a center point and the second distance is a radius, and a third circle in which the third IR sensor 610b-3 is a center point and the third distance is a radius, as position coordinates (spatial coordinates) of the first mobile robot.
- [215] That is, the intersection P may be formed as spatial coordinates, and the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b may be recognized by using the spatial coordinates.
- [216] With this configuration, the present invention can provide mobile robots in which relative positions of a plurality of cleaners can be recognized by using inexpensive IR sensors.
- [217] On the other hand, when the IR sensor is used, if an obstacle is present between the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b, the reception of the laser light is interrupted, and the relative positions of the first and second mobile robots cannot accurately be recognized.
- [218] To solve this problem, as illustrated in FIGS. 6A and 6B, the present invention can measure the relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot by using UWB modules instead of the transmitting/receiving IR sensors.
- [219] FIGS. 7A and 7B are conceptual views illustrating a method of determining relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using UWB modules in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.
- [220] As described above, the UWB module (or UWB sensor) may be included in the communication units 1100 of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b. In view of the fact that the UWB modules are used to sense the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b, the UWB modules may be included in the sensing units 1400 of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b.

- [221] The first mobile robot 100a may include a transmitting UWB module 700a for transmitting ultra-wideband (UWB) signals. The transmitting UWB module may be termed as a second type transmitting sensor or a UWB tag.
- [222] The second mobile robot 100b may include a receiving UWB module 700b for receiving the UWB signals output from the transmitting UWB module 700a provided in the first mobile robot 100a. The receiving UWB module may be named as a second type receiving sensor or a UWB anchor.
- [223] UWB signals transmitted/received between the UWB modules may be smoothly transmitted and received within a specific space.
- [224] Accordingly, even if an obstacle exists between the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b, if the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b exist within a specific space, they can transmit and receive the UWB signals. This may mean that accuracy is increased.
- [225] The first mobile robot and the second mobile robot according to the present invention can measure time of each signal transmitted and received between the UWB tag and the UWB anchor to recognize a distance (spaced distance) between the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot.
- [226] In general, the UWB tag and the UWB anchor are both UWB modules, which may be modules to transmit and receive UWB signals.
- [227] For example, the UWB module included in one robot 100b for calculating (determining) a relative position of another mobile robot 100a may be referred to as a UWB anchor, and a UWB module included in the robot 100a whose relative position is to be recognized may be referred to as a UWB tag.
- [228] Specifically, for example, each of the plurality of mobile robots 100a and 100b may be provided with one UWB sensor, or the first mobile robot 100a may be provided with a single UWB sensor, and the second mobile robot 100b following up the first mobile robot 100a may be provided with a single UWB sensor and at least one antenna or provided with at least two UWB sensors, so that the first mobile robot 100a can measure distances to the second mobile robot 100b at two different time points t_1 and t_2 .
- [229] The UWB sensor of the first mobile robot 100a and the UWB sensor of the second mobile robot 100b radiate UWB signals to each other, and measure distances and relative speed using Time of Arrival (ToA) or Time of Flight (ToF) which is a time that the signals come back by being reflected from the robots. However, the present invention is not limited to this, and may recognize the relative positions of the plurality of mobile robots 100a and 100b using a Time Difference of Arrival (TDoA) or Angle of Arrival (AoA) positioning technique.
- [230] For example, as shown in FIG. 7B, the control unit 1800 of the second mobile robot

100b may output a first signal (Radio message 1) at the UWB anchor of the second mobile robot.

[231] The first signal may be received in the UWB tag of the first mobile robot 100a.

[232] The control unit 1800 of the first mobile robot 100a may output a second signal (Radio message 2) in response to the reception of the first signal.

[233] The control unit 1800 of the second mobile robot 100b may receive the second signal through the UWB anchor 700b.

[234] The second signal may include delay time (t_{reply}) information which is calculated based on a time at which the first mobile robot 100a has received the first signal and a time at which the first mobile terminal 100a has output the second signal.

[235] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate a signal transmission time, namely, Time of Flight (ToF) between the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot using an output time t_1 of the first signal, a received time t_2 of the second signal, and the delay time t_{reply} included in the second signal.

[236] The control unit 1800 of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate a distance between the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b (accurately, a distance between the UWB tag and the UWB anchor) using the output time t_1 of the first signal, the received time t_2 of the second signal, and the delay time t_{reply} included in the second signal. Here, c in FIG. 7B denotes speed of light.

[237] Hereinafter, description will be given of a method of determining the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b using an AoA positioning technique. In order to use the AoA (Angle of Arrival) positioning technique, each of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b should be provided with one receiver antenna or a plurality of receiver antennas. The first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b may determine their relative positions using a difference (or phase difference) of angles that the receiver antennas provided in the robots, respectively, receive signals. To this end, each of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b must be able to sense an accurate signal direction coming from the receiver antenna array.

[238] Since signals, for example, UWB signals, generated in the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b, respectively, are received only in specific directional antennas, they can determine (recognize) received angles of the signals. Under assumption that positions of the receiver antennas provided in the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b are known, the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b may be calculated based on signal receiving directions of the receiver antennas.

[239] At this time, if one receiver antenna is installed, a 2D position may be calculated in a space of a predetermined range. On the other hand, if at least two receiver antennas are

installed, a 3D position may be determined. In the latter case, a distance d between the receiver antennas is used for position calculation in order to accurately determine a signal receiving direction.

[240] For example, one UWB tag may be provided in the first mobile robot 100a, and at least two UWB anchors may be provided in the second mobile robot 100b. At this time, the second mobile robot 100b may receive UWB signals transmitted from the UWB tag of the first mobile robot 100a through the at least two UWB anchors.

[241] Thereafter, the second mobile robot 100b may determine position information (or angle information) where the first mobile robot 100a is located with reference to a forward direction of the second mobile robot 100b, by using a phase difference between the UWB signals received through the at least two UWB anchors and a distance between the at least two UWB anchors.

[242] That is, the second mobile robot of the present invention may extract distance information between the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot using the ToF scheme, and determine direction information (or angle information) in which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the forward direction of the second mobile robot 100b using the AoA scheme. Further, the second mobile robot may determine the relative position of the first mobile robot using the distance information and the angle information.

[243] On the other hand, as illustrated in FIG. 7A, the second mobile robot 100b may be provided with a plurality of UWB anchors (a plurality of receiving UWB modules).

[244] For example, the second mobile robot 100b may include three UWB anchors, and the three UWB anchors may include a first UWB anchor 710b-1, a second UWB anchor 710b-2, and a third UWB anchor 710b-3.

[245] The present invention can calculate the relative positions (spatial coordinates) of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b using the plurality of UWB anchors. The triangulation described in FIG. 6B will be equally/similarly applied to calculating the relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot using three UWB anchors and one UWB tag.

[246] For example, the second mobile robot 100b may control each of the first to third UWB anchors 710b-1, 710b-2, and 710b-3 and extract distances between the first to third UWB anchors and the UWB tag 700a provided in the first mobile robot 100a.

[247] The configuration described in FIG. 7B will be equally/similarly applied to extracting the distance between each UWB anchor provided in the second mobile robot 100b and the UWB tag 700a provided in the first mobile robot 100a.

[248] For example, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may extract a first distance between the first UWB anchor 710b-1 and the UWB tag 700a, a second distance between the second UWB anchor 710b-2 and the UWB tag 700a, and a third

distance between the third UWB anchor 710b-3 and the UWB tag 700a, respectively.

[249] Afterwards, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate an intersection of a first circle in which the first UWB anchor 710b-1 is a center point and the first distance is a radius, a second circle in which the second UWB anchor 710b-2 is a center point and the second distance is a radius, and a third circle in which the third UWB anchor 710b-3 is a center point and the third distance is a radius, as position coordinates (spatial coordinates) of the first mobile robot.

[250] In this manner, according to the present invention, the relative positions (or spatial coordinates) of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100a can be calculated in the triangulation manner by using the one UWB tag 700a and the three UWB anchors 710b-1, 710b-2 and 710b-3.

[251] That is, when one UWB tag and one UWB anchor are used, the distance between the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot may be extracted, but the relative positions (i.e., spatial coordinates) may not be extracted. Accordingly, the present invention can extract even the relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot using one UWB tag and three UWB anchors.

[252] On the other hand, if one UWB tag and three UWB anchors are used to extract the relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot, the highest accuracy is obtained but cost increase occurs.

[253] In case where the IR sensors described with reference to FIGS. 6A and 6B are used, if an obstacle is present between the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot, laser transmission and reception is interrupted in view of the laser characteristic. Accordingly, when only the IR sensor is used, the determination of the relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot becomes inaccurate.

[254] In addition, when the UWB modules described with reference to FIGS. 7A and 7B are used, the relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot can be accurately extracted regardless of existence of an obstacle between the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot. However, there is a problem that cost increases.

[255] Hereinafter, various embodiments of the present invention for measuring accurate relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot while reducing costs will be described in more detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

[256] To overcome and obviate the aforementioned problems, the present invention can utilize a pair of UWB modules and a plurality of optical sensors (IR sensors).

[257] FIGS. 8 and 9 are a conceptual view and a flowchart illustrating a method of determining relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using UWB modules and a plurality of laser infrared sensors according to one embodiment of the present invention.

- [258] A plurality of autonomous mobile robots according to the present invention may include a first mobile robot 100a and a second mobile robot 100b. The first mobile robot 100a may serve as a leading cleaner that travels in a direction ahead of the second mobile robot 100b, and the second mobile robot 100b may serve as a following cleaner that follows up the first mobile robot 100a.
- [259] In order to determine relative positions of the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot, the first mobile robot 100a of the present invention may include a plurality of transmitting optical sensors for outputting laser light or beam and a module for transmitting and receiving a UWB signal.
- [260] In addition, the second mobile robot 100b may include a plurality of receiving optical sensors for receiving the laser beam and a module for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal.
- [261] The plurality of transmitting optical sensors may be a plurality of transmitting IR sensors (or laser sensors) and the plurality of receiving optical sensors may be a plurality of receiving IR sensors (or laser sensors).
- [262] The module for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal may be a UWB module.
- [263] The UWB module may be included in the communication unit as described above. With no limit to this, the UWB module may alternatively be formed as a separate module or sensor.
- [264] The UWB module may include a UWB tag 700a and a UWB anchor 700b.
- [265] For example, the UWB tag 700a may serve as a transmitting UWB module, and the UWB anchor 700b may serve as a receiving UWB module. However, the present invention is not limited to this, and the UWB tag may also receive a UWB signal, and the UWB anchor may also output a UWB signal.
- [266] The plurality of optical sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a that output the laser light may be a plurality of transmitting IR sensors (or laser sensors).
- [267] The plurality of receiving optical sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b that receive the laser light may be a plurality of receiving IR sensors (or laser sensors).
- [268] The plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a provided in the first mobile robot 100a may be disposed at different positions, for example, may be arranged in a symmetrical manner with respect to a center of the first mobile robot 100a.
- [269] Specifically, the plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a provided in the first mobile robot 100a may be arranged to have the same interval with respect to the center of the first mobile robot 100a and the same angle between neighboring lines connecting the IR sensors and the center of the first mobile robot 100a.
- [270] That is, it can be understood that the plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a,

630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a provided in the first mobile robot 100a may be disposed at apexes of a regular polygon.

[271] For example, in a case where the plurality of transmitting IR sensors is 6 in number, the plurality of transmitting IR sensors may be arranged at the apexes of a regular hexagon.

[272] The plurality of transmitting optical sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a may be arranged on an outer side of a main body of the first mobile robot 100a and disposed at predetermined intervals along an outer portion of an upper surface (a circumference of a side surface) of the first mobile robot 100a. For example, the plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a may be arranged at predetermined intervals along the outer portion of the upper surface (the circumference of the side surface) on a boundary between the side surface and upper surface of the main body, as illustrated in FIG. 8.

[273] That is, the plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a may be arranged to have predetermined intervals along the circumference of the side surface of the first mobile robot 100a at the same distance from the center of the first mobile robot 100a, so that angles formed by lines connecting the center of the first mobile robot 100a and the plurality of transmitting optical sensors are all the same.

[274] Similarly, the plurality of receiving IR sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b provided in the second mobile robot 100b may be disposed at different positions, for example, may be arranged in a symmetrical manner with respect to a center of the second mobile robot 100b.

[275] Specifically, the plurality of receiving IR sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b provided in the second mobile robot 100b may be arranged to have the same interval with respect to the center of the second mobile robot 100b and the same angle between neighboring lines connecting the IR sensors and the center of the second mobile robot 100b.

[276] That is, it can be understood that the plurality of receiving IR sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b provided in the second mobile robot 100b may be disposed at apexes of a regular polygon.

[277] For example, in a case where the plurality of receiving IR sensors is 6 in number, the plurality of receiving IR sensors may be arranged at the apexes of a regular hexagon.

[278] The plurality of receiving optical sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b may be arranged on an outer side of the main body of the second mobile robot 100b and disposed at predetermined intervals along an outer portion of an upper surface (a circumference of a side surface) of the second mobile robot 100a. For example, the plurality of receiving IR sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b may be arranged at predetermined intervals along an outer portion of an upper surface (a cir-

cumference of a side surface) on a boundary between the side surface and upper surface of the main body, as illustrated in FIG. 8.

[279] That is, the plurality of receiving IR sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b may be arranged to have predetermined intervals along the outer portion of the upper surface of the second mobile robot 100b at the same distance from the center of the second mobile robot 100b, so that angles formed by lines connecting the center of the second mobile robot 100b and the plurality of receiving optical sensors are all the same. The number of transmitting IR sensors provided in the first mobile robot and the number of receiving IR sensors provided in the second mobile robot may be the same as or different from each other.

[280] The plurality of transmitting optical sensors may be configured to output infrared light (laser light) in a direction perpendicular to the main body of the first mobile robot 100a. In other words, center lines of the infrared light output from the plurality of transmitting optical sensors may be the same direction as virtual lines extending from the center of the main body of the first mobile robot 100a to the respective optical sensors.

[281] Similarly, the plurality of receiving optical sensors may be configured to receive infrared light (laser light) in a direction perpendicular to the main body of the second mobile robot 100b. In other words, the plurality of receiving optical sensors may receive infrared light received within a predetermined range from virtual lines extending from the center of the main body of the second mobile robot 100b to the respective optical sensors.

[282] In this specification, for convenience of description, it is assumed that the number of transmitting IR sensors provided in the first mobile robot 100a and the number of receiving IR sensors provided in the second mobile robot 100b are the same and the number is six.

[283] The plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a provided in the first mobile robot 100a may be configured to output laser light (or infrared light) in a direction connecting the center of the first mobile robot 100a to the respective IR sensors.

[284] That is, each of the plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a may output laser light in a direction opposite to a direction in which the center of the first mobile robot 100a is located.

[285] In other words, the laser beams output from the plurality of transmitting IR sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a may advance in different directions.

[286] Each of the plurality of transmitting optical sensors (IR sensors) 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a may output laser light having a different attribute.

[287] Here, having the different attribute may mean that at least one of frequency,

wavelength, or polarization direction is different.

[288] For example, it may be understood that the first transmitting IR sensor 610a outputs a laser beam having a first attribute, and the second transmitting IR sensor 620a outputs a laser beam having a second attribute different from the first attribute.

[289] Here, the laser beam having the first attribute and the laser beam having the second attribute may differ in at least one of a frequency, a wavelength, and a polarization direction of the laser beam.

[290] The attribute of each laser light may be used to identify each transmitting IR sensor.

[291] For example, when the receiving IR sensor receives laser light having a first attribute, the second mobile robot 100b may determine that the laser light output from the first transmitting IR sensor 610a of the first mobile robot 100a has been received. On the other hand, when the receiving IR sensor receives laser light having a second attribute, the second mobile robot 100b may determine that the laser light output from the second transmitting IR sensor 620a of the first mobile robot 100a has been received.

[292] That is, according to the present invention, a transmitting IR sensor which has output a received laser beam can be identified by making each transmitting IR sensor output laser beam having a different attribute.

[293] As another example, each of the plurality of transmitting IR sensors of the present invention may output laser light including identification information related to the transmitting IR sensor.

[294] As described above, the present invention can provide a plurality of transmitting IR sensors capable of being identified by differing attributes of laser beams and of outputting laser beams to include separate identification information.

[295] For example, the first transmitting IR sensor 610a may output a laser beam including first identification information, and the second transmitting IR sensor 620a may output a laser beam including second identification information different from the first identification information.

[296] Here, the first identification information or the second identification information may mean separate data (or information) transmitted by being included in the laser light.

[297] At this time, the attributes of the laser light output from the plurality of transmitting IR sensors may be the same or different.

[298] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may extract identification information included in laser light when the laser light is received through a receiving IR sensor.

[299] Afterwards, when identification information included in a received laser beam is first identification information, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine that a laser beam output from the first transmitting IR sensor 610a of the first mobile robot 100a has been received. On the other hand, when laser beam

including second identification information is received, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine that a laser beam output from the second transmitting IR sensor 620a of the first mobile robot 100a has been received.

[300] On the other hand, the second mobile robot 100b may store therein position information related to arranged positions of the plurality of receiving IR sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b.

[301] For example, the second mobile robot 100b may store therein arranged angle information related to each receiving IR sensor with respect to an axis (for example, x-axis) which penetrates through the center of the second mobile robot in a forward direction F.

[302] The angle information may mean angle information between the penetrating axis and a line connecting a receiving infrared sensor to the center of the second mobile robot 100b.

[303] The present invention may calculate (determine) a direction of the first mobile robot 100a with reference to the second mobile robot 100b by using the laser light transmitted and received between the plurality of transmitting IR sensors and the plurality of receiving IR sensors.

[304] Specifically, the second mobile robot 100b may calculate an angle (i.e., a direction of the first mobile robot 100a) at which the first mobile robot 100a is located with respect to the second mobile robot 100b, by using laser light transmitted and received between the plurality of transmitting optical sensors and the plurality of receiving optical sensors. Here, the direction of the first mobile robot may refer to a direction in which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the second mobile robot (or the front of the second mobile robot).

[305] The present invention can also calculate (determine) a distance up to the first mobile robot 100a from the second mobile robot 100b by using UWB signals transmitted and received between a UWB tag 700a and a UWB anchor 700b.

[306] Thereafter, the present invention can determine the relative position (spatial coordinate) of the first mobile robot on the basis of the calculated direction of the first mobile robot and the calculated distance up to the first mobile robot.

[307] Hereinafter, description will be given in more detail of a method of determining the relative position of the first mobile robot using a pair of UWB modules, a plurality of transmitting IR sensors, and a plurality of receiving IR sensors.

[308] Referring to FIG. 9, the control unit of the second mobile robot may control the UWB anchor 700b to output a UWB signal (S902). For example, the control unit of the second mobile robot may output a UWB signal through the UWB anchor 700b.

[309] The UWB signal output from the UWB anchor may serve as a trigger signal for starting a process of recognizing the relative position of the first mobile robot.

- [310] The control unit of the first mobile robot 100a may receive the UWB signal through the UWB tag 700a. The control unit of the first mobile robot 100a may output the UWB signal through the UWB tag, in response to the reception of the UWB signal (S904).
- [311] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate (measure, determine) a distance up to the first mobile robot 100a (in detail, a distance between the UWB anchor 700b and the UWB tag 700a), in response to the UWB anchor 700b receiving the UWB signal output from the UWB tag 700a (S906). The description given with reference to FIG. 7B will be equally/similarly applied to the method of calculating (measuring, determining) the distance between the UWB anchor 700b and the UWB tag 700a.
- [312] In this embodiment, since only one receiving UWB module is used instead of three receiving UWB modules, the triangulation method cannot be applied.
- [313] In order to solve this problem, the embodiment of the present invention may use a plurality of transmitting IR sensors and a plurality of receiving IR sensors.
- [314] Referring back to FIG. 9, the control unit of the first mobile robot 100b may control the plurality of transmitting IR sensors to output laser light with different attributes, in response to the UWB tag provided in the first mobile robot receiving the UWB signal after the step S902 (S908).
- [315] At this time, the control unit of the first mobile robot 100b may also output laser light through the plurality of transmitting IR sensors while outputting the UWB signal through the UWB tag or may output the UWB signal and the laser light to have a pre-determined time interval, in the step S904.
- [316] In addition, the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a may control the plurality of transmitting IR sensors to output laser light including identification information related to the transmitting IR sensors, in the step S908.
- [317] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate a direction (or direction information) of the first mobile robot (an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the second mobile robot or a direction in which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot), based on an optical sensor (IR sensor) having received laser light of the plurality of receiving laser sensors (IR sensors) and an attribute of the received laser light (or identification information included in the received laser light) (S910).
- [318] For example, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on a type of an optical sensor that receives laser light among the plurality of receiving optical sensors.
- [319] Here, calculating the direction of the first mobile robot may refer to calculating the

angle (angle information or direction information) at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot. The direction of the first mobile robot may refer to a direction in which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the second mobile robot (or the front of the second mobile robot).

[320] In addition, the direction of the first mobile robot 100a may refer to a relative azimuth angle at which the first mobile robot 100a is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b.

[321] For example, the direction of the first mobile robot 100a may be determined (calculated) by an angle (azimuth angle) between a reference line extending forward through the center of the second mobile robot 100b and a virtual line connecting the center of the second mobile robot 100b and the center of the first mobile robot 100a.

[322] The angle (or the direction of the first mobile robot 100a) at which the first mobile robot 100a is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b may be determined based on an optical sensor, which has received laser light output from the first mobile robot 100a, of the plurality of receiving optical sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b of the second mobile robot 100b.

[323] For example, as illustrated in FIG. 8, when laser light is received through the second optical sensor 620b disposed at a 60-degree angle to right with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine that the first mobile robot 100a is located in a direction having 60 degrees to right with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b.

[324] As another example, although not shown, when laser light is received through the sixth optical sensor 660b disposed at a 60-degree angle to left with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine that the first mobile robot 100a is located in a direction having 60 degrees to left with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b.

[325] That is, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may know angle information at which the plurality of receiving optical sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b are arranged with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b, and may determine (calculate) the angle at which the first mobile robot 100a is located (i.e., the direction of the first mobile robot 100a) with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b, based on an optical sensor which has received laser light output by a transmitting optical sensor of the first mobile robot 100a among the plurality of receiving optical sensors.

[326] As described above, the angle (i.e., the direction of the first mobile robot) at which the first mobile robot 100a is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b may refer to an angle (azimuth angle) θ between a reference line (e.g., x-axis of FIG. 8) extending forward through the center of the second mobile robot 100b

and a virtual line connecting the center of the second mobile robot 100b and the center of the first mobile robot 100a.

[327] That is, since the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b determines a receiving optical sensor (i.e., its type) which has received laser light among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and knows an arrangement angle of the receiving optical sensor, which has received the laser light, with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, the control unit of the second mobile robot can calculate the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot based on the type of the receiving optical sensor which has received the laser light.

[328] On the other hand, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine the direction that the first mobile robot 100a faces and/or the direction that the second mobile robot 100b faces, based on types of the receiving optical sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b that receive the laser light, and attributes of the received laser light (or identification information included in the laser light).

[329] For example, referring to FIG. 8, when the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot are both positioned to face forward, laser light output from the fourth transmitting IR sensor 640a should be received by the first receiving IR sensor 610b.

[330] On the other hand, when laser light output from the fourth transmitting IR sensor is received by the second receiving IR sensor 620b, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine that the second mobile robot does not face the first mobile robot.

[331] In this case, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine the direction that the first mobile robot 100a faces, based on an attribute of the laser light (or identification information included in the laser light) received through the second receiving IR sensor 620b.

[332] In detail, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine a direction that the first mobile robot faces based on a type of a receiving optical sensor which has received laser light among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and an attribute of the received laser light.

[333] Here, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine a transmitting optical sensor which has output the laser light received in the receiving optical sensor of the second mobile robot, among the plurality of transmitting optical sensors, based on the attribute of the received laser light

[334] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may be aware of angle information at which each of the plurality of transmitting optical sensors provided in the first mobile robot 100a is disposed with respect to the front of the first mobile robot 100a.

[335] Thus, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine a transmitting

light sensor which has output the received laser light, among the plurality of transmitting optical sensors, based on the attribute of the received laser light, and determine an angle of a position where the determined transmitting optical sensor is located with respect to the front of the first mobile robot.

[336] In addition, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine at least one of a direction that the first mobile robot faces and a direction that the second mobile robot faces, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor which has received laser light among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and a type of a transmitting optical sensor which has output the laser light among the plurality of transmitting optical sensors provided in the first mobile robot 100a.

[337] The direction in which the first mobile robot faces may refer to a direction that the first mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, and the direction in which the second mobile robot faces may refer to a direction that the second mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the first mobile robot.

[338] In summary, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine the direction that the first mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor which has received laser light among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and an attribute of the laser light received through the receiving optical sensor.

[339] The control unit of the second mobile robot may predict a direction in which the first mobile robot is to move, based on the direction that the first mobile robot faces.

[340] The control unit of the second mobile robot may determine a direction that the second mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the first mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor which has received laser light among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and an attribute of the laser light received through the receiving optical sensor.

[341] Afterwards, the control unit of the second mobile robot may determine a direction in which the second mobile robot should rotate (or a direction in which the second mobile robot should travel) to follow up the first mobile robot, based on the direction in which the second mobile robot faces.

[342] For example, as illustrated in FIG. 8, laser light which has been output from the fourth transmitting optical sensor 640a among the plurality of transmitting optical sensors 610a, 620a, 630a, 640a, 650a, and 660a provided in the first mobile robot 100a, may be received through the second receiving optical sensor 620b among the plurality of receiving optical sensors 610b, 620b, 630b, 640b, 650b, and 660b provided in the second mobile robot 100b.

[343] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine that the laser light received through the second receiving optical sensor 620b has been output through the

fourth transmitting optical sensor 640a of the first mobile robot 100a, based on the attribute of the received laser light (or identification information included in the laser light).

[344] In this case, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may be aware of angle information at which the plurality of transmitting optical sensors provided in the first mobile robot 100a is disposed with respect to the front of the first mobile robot 100a.

[345] For example, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine on the basis of the angle information that the fourth transmitting optical sensor 640a is located at a position having an angle of 180 degrees (i.e., at the rear of the first mobile robot 100a) with respect to the front of the first mobile robot 100a.

[346] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may also determine an angle θ at which the first mobile robot 100a is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b, based on the fact that the second receiving optical sensor 620b has received the laser light.

[347] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine at least one of the direction that the first mobile robot 100a faces and the direction that the second mobile robot 100b faces, based on the fact that the laser light has been received through the second receiving optical sensor 620b and the fourth transmitting optical sensor 640a has output the laser light.

[348] In this case, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine a direction having an angle of 60 degrees to right from the front of the second mobile robot 100b as the direction that the first mobile robot 100a faces with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b.

[349] Likewise, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine that a direction having an angle of 60 degrees to left with respect to the front of the first mobile robot 100b as a direction that the second mobile robot 100b faces with respect to the front of the first mobile robot 100a.

[350] In addition, the second mobile robot 100b may determine a direction in which the first mobile robot 100a is located (i.e., an angle θ at which the first mobile robot 100a is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot 100b), in response to the laser light being received through the second receiving optical sensor 620b.

[351] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may predict an advancing direction of the first mobile robot 100a and the second mobile robot 100b, by using at least one of the angle at which the first mobile robot is located (i.e., the direction in which the first mobile robot is located) with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, the direction that the first mobile robot faces, and the direction that the second mobile robot faces.

[352] On the other hand, the control unit of the second mobile robot may also determine

the direction in which the second mobile robot faces with respect to the first mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor which has received the laser light. This may mean that the direction that the second mobile robot faces is not determined with respect to the front of the first mobile robot but determined with respect to a position at which the first mobile robot is located.

- [353] The control unit of the second mobile robot may determine the direction that the second mobile robot faces with respect to a position where the first mobile robot is located, by using only a type of a receiving optical sensor which has received laser light among the plurality of receiving optical sensors.
- [354] Here, the direction in which the second mobile robot faces with respect to the position where the first mobile robot is located may be calculated based on an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot. For example, when the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot is 60 degrees to left with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, the direction in which the second mobile robot faces with respect to the position where the first mobile robot is located may be a direction in which the second mobile robot faces a position which is 60 degrees to right with respect to the first mobile robot.
- [355] Here, the control unit of the second mobile robot must additionally consider an attribute of laser light received through a receiving optical sensor, in order to determine the direction in which the second mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the first mobile robot.
- [356] On the other hand, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine a direction that the second mobile robot 100b faces with respect to the first mobile robot 100a (also, calculate the direction of the first mobile robot 100a), based on the fact that a receiving IR sensor having received laser light is the second receiving IR sensor 620b.
- [357] For example, the second mobile robot 100b may store therein arranged angle information related to each receiving IR sensor with respect to an axis (for example, x-axis) which penetrates through the center of the second mobile robot in a forward direction F.
- [358] Based on the angle information, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may calculate an angle θ , at which the second receiving IR sensor 620b having received the laser light is placed with respect to an axis (x axis), which is parallel to a forward direction while penetrating through the center of the second mobile robot, as the direction of the first mobile robot 100a (i.e., an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot).
- [359] In the example illustrated in FIG. 8, the second mobile robot 100b may determine

that it faces a different direction by the angle θ with respect to the first mobile robot 100a. That is, the second mobile robot 100b may determine that the first mobile robot is located in a direction turned by the angle θ with respect to the axis (x axis) which is parallel to the forward direction while penetrating through the center of the second mobile robot 100b.

[360] Afterwards, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine a relative position (or spatial coordinates) of the first mobile robot, based on the distance up to the first mobile robot calculated based on the UWB signal received through the UWB module (UWB anchor) and the direction of the first mobile robot calculated based on the laser light (the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot).

[361] For example, if the distance up to the first mobile robot is D and the direction of the first mobile robot has an angle θ from a center axis (x axis) which is parallel to the forward direction while penetrating through the center of the second mobile robot, the relative position (x , y) of the first mobile robot may be ($D\cos\theta$, $D\sin\theta$).

[362] In addition, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine a transmitting IR sensor, which has output laser light, based on the laser light received through the receiving IR sensor, and determine a direction that the first mobile robot 100a faces based on the determined transmitting IR sensor.

[363] Accordingly, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may also predict a direction in which the first mobile robot 100a is to move.

[364] In addition, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may transmit to the first mobile robot 100a information related to the decided direction that the first mobile robot 100a faces and a direction that the second mobile robot faces (i.e., the direction of the first mobile robot with respect to the second mobile robot (x axis)).

[365] On the other hand, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may receive laser light through at least two receiving IR sensors.

[366] In this case, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine the direction of the first mobile robot (the direction that the second mobile robot faces, or an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot), based on intensities of laser light received through the two receiving IR sensors.

[367] For example, it is assumed that the laser light is received through the first receiving IR sensor 610b and the second receiving IR sensor 620b, an angle between the first IR sensor 610b and the second IR sensor 620b is 60 degrees, and a ratio of intensity of the laser light received through the first receiving IR sensor 610b and intensity of the laser light received through the second receiving IR sensor 620b is 2:1.

[368] In this case, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may determine the

direction of the first mobile robot (the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot or the direction that the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot), as the first mobile robot is located at an angle of 20 degrees with respect to the first receiving IR sensor 610b.

[369] The control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may transmit information related to the determined relative position of the first mobile robot 100a to the first mobile robot 100a through the communication unit. Accordingly, the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a may determine the relative position of the second mobile robot 100b based on its relative position information.

[370] The present invention can provide a plurality of autonomous mobile robots capable of accurately determining a relative position of a first mobile robot while reducing costs.

[371] The present invention can provide a plurality of new autonomous mobile robots, capable of reducing costs while improving accuracy, by extracting a distance between a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot using a pair of UWB modules and determining a direction of the first mobile robot using a low-cost IR sensor.

[372] The present invention can provide a plurality of autonomous mobile robots, capable of allowing seamless follow-up by recognizing relative positions thereof irrespective of a communication state with a server because relative positions of a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot can be determined.

[373] The functions/operations/control methods performed by the first mobile robot 100a disclosed herein may be performed by the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a or the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b, and the functions/operations/control methods performed by the second mobile robot 100b may be performed by the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b or the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a.

[374] In addition, the present invention may allow the second mobile robot 100b to determine the relative position of the first mobile robot 100a.

[375] Since the first mobile robot 100a is the leading cleaner and the second mobile robot 100b is the following cleaner following up the first mobile robot 100b, the second mobile robot 100b can more easily follow the first mobile robot 100a by recognizing the relative position of the first mobile robot 100a, which may result in reducing accuracy of follow-up and calculation time of the relative position.

[376] Since the first mobile robot has to perform many calculations such as detecting an obstacle according to a preset algorithm, creating map information, determining a cleaning progress direction, and so on, such calculation load of the first mobile robot can be reduced as the second mobile robot recognizes the relative position of the first mobile robot.

[377] In this specification, description has been given of the example in which the second mobile robot 100b recognizes the relative position of the first mobile robot 100a, but the present invention is not limited to this.

[378] In general, when a plurality of autonomous mobile robots exist and their follow-up control is performed, the first mobile robot may determine the relative position of the second mobile robot so as to increase accuracy and rapidity because the specification (Spec) of components provided in the first mobile robot as the leading robot is better than specification of components provided in the second mobile robot.

[379] Accordingly, the present invention may allow the first mobile robot 100a to determine the relative position of the second mobile robot 100b.

[380] To this end, the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may transmit information related to an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot (or related information) (or a direction of the first mobile robot or a direction in which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot), which is determined through a plurality of receiving optical sensors, and information related to a distance up to the first mobile robot calculated using a UWB signal to the first mobile robot 100a through the communication unit.

[381] In this case, the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a may determine the relative position of the second mobile robot 100b (or the relative position of the first mobile robot 100a with respect to the second mobile robot 100b), based on the angle information at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot and the distance information up to the first mobile robot, received from the second mobile robot 100b through the communication unit.

[382] In order to determine (decide) the relative position of the second mobile robot 100b, the first mobile robot 100a may include those components provided in the second mobile robot 100b and the second mobile robot 100b may include those components provided in the first mobile robot.

[383] For example, a plurality of receiving optical sensors may be provided in the first mobile robot 100a, and a plurality of transmitting optical sensors may be provided in the second mobile robot 100b. Also, a UWB anchor may be provided in the first mobile robot 100a, and a UWB tag may be provided in the second mobile robot 100b.

[384] In this case, the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a may perform the functions/operations/control methods performed by the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b described in this specification, and the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b may perform the functions/operations/control methods performed by the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a.

[385] Accordingly, the control unit of the first mobile robot 100a may determine the

relative position of the second mobile robot 100b (the direction that the first mobile robot faces, the direction that the second mobile robot faces, etc.) through the functions/operations/control methods performed by the control unit of the second mobile robot 100b.

- [386] When the first mobile robot 100a determines the relative position of the second mobile robot 100b, the first mobile robot 100a may transmit the determined relative position information of the second mobile robot 100b to the second mobile robot 100b. Further, the second mobile robot 100b may determine the relative position of the first mobile robot 100a based on the received relative position information of the second mobile robot.
- [387] Whether the first mobile robot 100a determines the relative position of the second mobile robot 100b or the second mobile robot 100b determines the relative position of the first mobile robot 100a may be decided at the time of product production, and may be determined/changed by user setting.
- [388] A method of controlling a plurality of autonomous mobile robots according to one embodiment of the present invention may include calculating by a second mobile robot an angle, at which a first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, using laser light output from the first mobile robot, calculating by the second mobile robot a distance up to the first mobile robot using a UWB signal, and determining a relative position of the first mobile robot based on the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot and the distance up to the first mobile robot.
- [389] In addition, the method of controlling the plurality of autonomous mobile robots may include the function/operation/control method described in this specification.
- [390] When it is determined that the first mobile robot has determined the relative position of the second mobile robot, the method may further include transmitting by the second mobile robot to the first mobile robot information related to a direction in which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot and the distance up to the first mobile robot, and determining by the first mobile robot a relative position of the second mobile robot based on the received information.
- [391] When it is determined that the first mobile robot determines the relative position of the second mobile robot, the first mobile robot includes components of the second mobile robot and the second mobile robot includes components, the control method performed by the second mobile robot 100b may be performed by the first mobile robot 100a and the control method performed by the first mobile robot 100a may be performed by the second mobile robot 100b.
- [392] FIGS. 10A, 10B, and 10C are alternative embodiments of follow-up control between the first mobile robot and the second mobile robot in accordance with the present

invention. Hereinafter, a follow-up control between the first mobile robot and a mobile device will be described in detail. Here, the follow-up control disclosed herein means only that the mobile device follows a movement path of the first mobile robot.

[393] Referring to FIG. 10A, the first mobile robot 100a may control the follow-up of a mobile device 200 by communicating with the mobile device 200 instead of the second mobile robot.

[394] Here, the mobile device 200 may not have a cleaning function, and may be any electronic device if it is provided with a driving function. For example, the mobile device 200 may include various types of home appliances or other electronic devices, such as a dehumidifier, a humidifier, an air purifier, an air conditioner, a smart TV, an artificial intelligent speaker, a digital photographing device, and the like, with no limit.

[395] In addition, the mobile device 200 may be any device if it is equipped with a traveling function, and may not have a navigation function for detecting an obstacle by itself or traveling up to a predetermined destination.

[396] The first mobile robot 100a is a mobile robot having both the navigation function and the obstacle detection function and can control the follow-up of the mobile device 200. The first mobile robot 100a may be a dry-type cleaner or a wet-type cleaner.

[397] The first mobile robot 100a and the mobile device 200 can communicate with each other through a network (not shown), but may directly communicate with each other.

[398] Here, the communication using the network is may be communication using, for example, WLAN, WPAN, Wi-Fi, Wi-Fi Direct, Digital Living Network Alliance (DLNA), Wireless Broadband (WiBro), World Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMAX), etc. The mutual direct communication may be performed using, for example, UWB, Zigbee, Z-wave, Blue-Tooth, RFID, and Infrared Data Association (IrDA), and the like.

[399] If the first mobile robot 100a and the mobile device 200 are close to each other, the mobile device 200 may be set to follow up the first mobile robot 100a through a manipulation in the first mobile robot 100a.

[400] If the first mobile robot 100a and the mobile device 200 are far away from each other, although not shown, the mobile device 200 may be set to follow up the first mobile robot 100a through a manipulation in an external terminal 300 (see FIG. 5A).

[401] Specifically, follow-up relationship between the first mobile robot 100a and the mobile device 200 may be established through network communication with the external terminal 300 (see FIG. 5A). Here, the external terminal 300 is an electronic device capable of performing wired or wireless communication, and may be a tablet, a smart phone, a notebook computer, or the like. At least one application related to follow-up control by the first mobile robot 100a (hereinafter, 'follow-up related application') may be installed in the external terminal 300. The user may execute the

follow-up related application installed in the external terminal 300 to select and register the mobile device 200 subjected to the follow-up control by the first mobile robot 100a. When the mobile device 200 subjected to the follow-up control is registered, the external terminal may recognize product information of the mobile device, and such product information may be provided to the first mobile robot 100a via the network.

[402] The external terminal 300 may recognize the position of the first mobile robot 100a and the position of the registered mobile device 200 through communication with the first mobile robot 100a and the registered mobile device 200. Afterwards, the first mobile robot 100a may travel toward the position of the registered mobile device 200 or the registered mobile device 200 may travel toward the position of the first mobile robot 100a according to a control signal transmitted from the external terminal 300. When it is detected that the relative positions of the first mobile robot 100a and the registered mobile device 200 are within a predetermined following distance, the follow-up control for the mobile device 200 by the first mobile robot 100a is started. After then, the follow-up control is performed by direct communication between the first mobile robot 100a and the mobile device 200 without the intervention of the external terminal 300.

[403] The setting of the follow-up control may be released by the operation of the external terminal 300 or automatically terminated as the first mobile robot 100a and the mobile device 200 move away from the predetermined following distance.

[404] The user can change, add or remove the mobile device 200 to be controlled by the first mobile robot 100a by manipulating the first mobile robot 100a or the external terminal 300. For example, referring to FIG. 10B, the first mobile robot 100a may perform the follow-up control for at least one mobile device 200 of another cleaner 200a or 100b, an air purifier 200b, a humidifier 200c, and a dehumidifier 200d.

[405] Generally, since the mobile device 200 is different from the first mobile robot 100a in its function, product size, and traveling ability, it is difficult for the mobile device 200 to follow up the movement path of the mobile terminal 100a as it is. For example, there may be an exceptional situation in which it is difficult for the mobile device 200 to follow the movement path of the first mobile robot 100a according to a geographical characteristic of a space, a size of an obstacle, and the like. In consideration of such an exceptional situation, the mobile device 200 may travel or wait by omitting a part of the movement path even if it recognizes the movement path of the first mobile robot 100a. To this end, the first mobile robot 100a may detect whether or not the exceptional situation occurs, and control the mobile device 200 to store data corresponding to the movement path of the first mobile robot 100a in a memory or the like. Then, depending on situations, the first mobile robot 100a may control the mobile

device 200 to travel with deleting part of the stored data or to wait in a stopped state.

[406] FIG. 10C illustrates an example of a follow-up control between the first mobile robot 100a and the mobile device 200, for example, the air cleaner 200b having a traveling function. The first mobile robot 100a and the air purifier 200b may include communication modules A and B for determining relative positions thereof, respectively. The communication modules A and B may be one of modules for emitting and receiving an IR signal, an ultrasonic signal, a carrier frequency, or an impulse signal. The recognition of the relative positions through the communication modules A and B has been described above in detail, so a description thereof will be omitted. The air purifier 200b may receive traveling information corresponding to a traveling command (e.g., changes in traveling including a traveling direction and a traveling speed, traveling stop, etc.) from the first mobile robot 100a, travel according to the received traveling information, and perform air purification. Accordingly, the air purification may be performed in real time with respect to a cleaning space in which the first mobile robot 100a operates. In addition, since the first mobile robot 100a has already recognized the production information related to the mobile device 200, the first mobile robot 100a can control the air purifier 200b to record the traveling information of the first mobile robot 100a, and travel with deleting part of the traveling information or wait in a stopped state.

[407] The present invention described above can be implemented as computer-readable codes on a program-recorded medium. The computer readable medium includes all kinds of recording devices in which data readable by a computer system is stored. Examples of the computer-readable medium include a hard disk drive (HDD), a solid state disk (SSD), a silicon disk drive (SDD), a ROM, a RAM, a CD-ROM, a magnetic tape, a floppy disk, an optical data storage device and the like, and may also be implemented in the form of a carrier wave (e.g., transmission over the Internet). In addition, the computer may also include the control unit 1800. The above detailed description should not be limitedly construed in all aspects and should be considered as illustrative. The scope of the present invention should be determined by rational interpretation of the appended claims, and all changes within the scope of equivalents of the present invention are included in the scope of the present invention.

Claims

- [Claim 1] A plurality of autonomous mobile robots, comprising:
a first mobile robot including a plurality of transmitting optical sensors for outputting light, and a first module for transmitting and receiving an Ultra-Wideband (UWB) signal; and
a second mobile robot including a plurality of receiving optical sensors for receiving light, and a second module for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal,
the second mobile robot comprising a control unit configured to determine an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to a front of the second mobile robot by using the light, and determine a distance from the second mobile robot to the first mobile robot by using the UWB signal, and
the control unit of the second mobile robot being further configured to determine a relative position of the first mobile robot based on the angle and the distance.
- [Claim 2] The robots of claim 1, wherein the first and second modules for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal are UWB modules.
- [Claim 3] The robots of claim 1, wherein the plurality of transmitting optical sensors for outputting light output infrared light and are arranged at predetermined intervals along an outer portion of an upper surface of the first mobile robot, and the plurality of receiving optical sensors for receiving light receive infrared light and are arranged at predetermined intervals along an outer portion of an upper surface of the second mobile robot.
- [Claim 4] The robots of claim 1, wherein the plurality of transmitting optical sensors output light with different attributes.
- [Claim 5] The robots of claim 4, wherein the different attributes of the light include at least one of a different frequency, a different wavelength and a different polarized direction of the output light.
- [Claim 6] The robots of claim 1, wherein each respective one of the plurality of transmitting optical sensors outputs light including identification information related to the respective transmitting optical sensor.
- [Claim 7] The robots of claim 1, wherein:
the first and second modules for transmitting and receiving the UWB signal include a UWB tag and a UWB anchor,
the first mobile robot comprises one UWB tag, and

- the second mobile robot comprises one UWB anchor.
- [Claim 8] The robots of claim 7, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is configured to control the UWB anchor to output the UWB signal, and a control unit of the first mobile robot is configured to control the UWB tag to output the UWB signal in response to reception of the UWB signal from the UWB anchor.
- [Claim 9] The robots of claim 8, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is further configured to determine a distance from the second mobile robot to the first mobile robot in response to reception of the UWB signal output from the UWB tag at the UWB anchor.
- [Claim 10] The robots of claim 7, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is configured to control the UWB anchor to output the UWB signal, and a control unit of the first mobile robot is configured to control the plurality of transmitting optical sensors to output light with different attributes, in response to reception of the UWB signal output from the UWB anchor.
- [Claim 11] The robots of claim 1, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is configured to determine an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor, which has received light, among the plurality of receiving optical sensors.
- [Claim 12] The robots of claim 1, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is configured to determine a relative position of the first mobile robot, based on the distance from the second mobile robot to the first mobile robot calculated by use of the UWB signal received through the second module, and the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot calculated by use of the light.
- [Claim 13] The robots of claim 1, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is configured to determine a direction that the first mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor, which has received light, among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and an attribute of the light received through the receiving optical sensor.
- [Claim 14] The robots of claim 13, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is configured to predict a direction in which the first mobile robot is to move based on the direction that the first mobile robot faces.
- [Claim 15] The robots of claim 1, wherein the control unit of the second mobile

robot is configured to determine a direction that the second mobile robot faces with respect to the front of the first mobile robot, based on a type of a receiving optical sensor, which has received light, among the plurality of receiving optical sensors and an attribute of the light received through the receiving optical sensor.

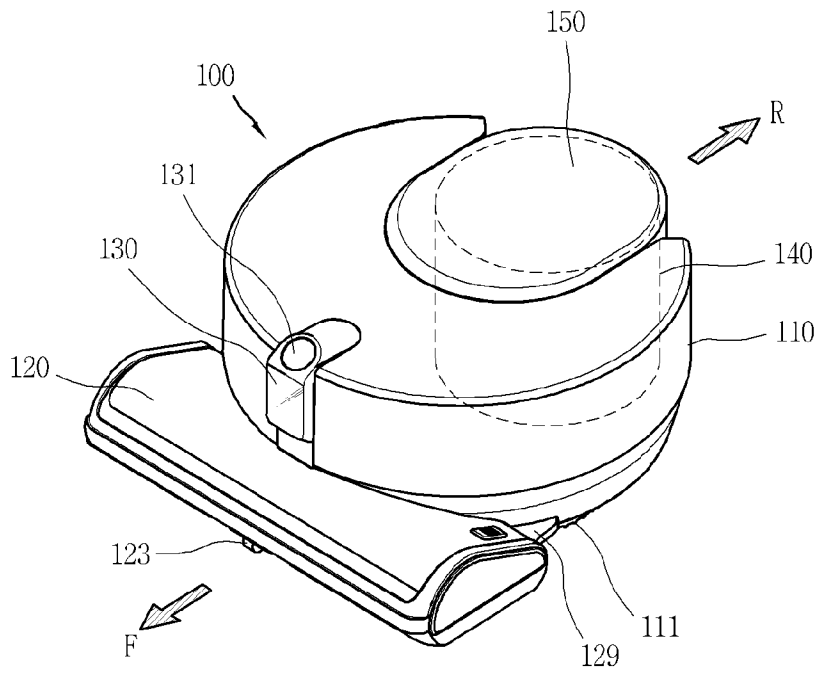
[Claim 16] The robots of claim 1, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is configured to determine the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on reception of light through at least two receiving optical sensors among the plurality of receiving optical sensors.

[Claim 17] The robots of claim 16, wherein the control unit of the second mobile robot is further configured to determine the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot, based on an intensity of the light received through the at least two receiving optical sensors.

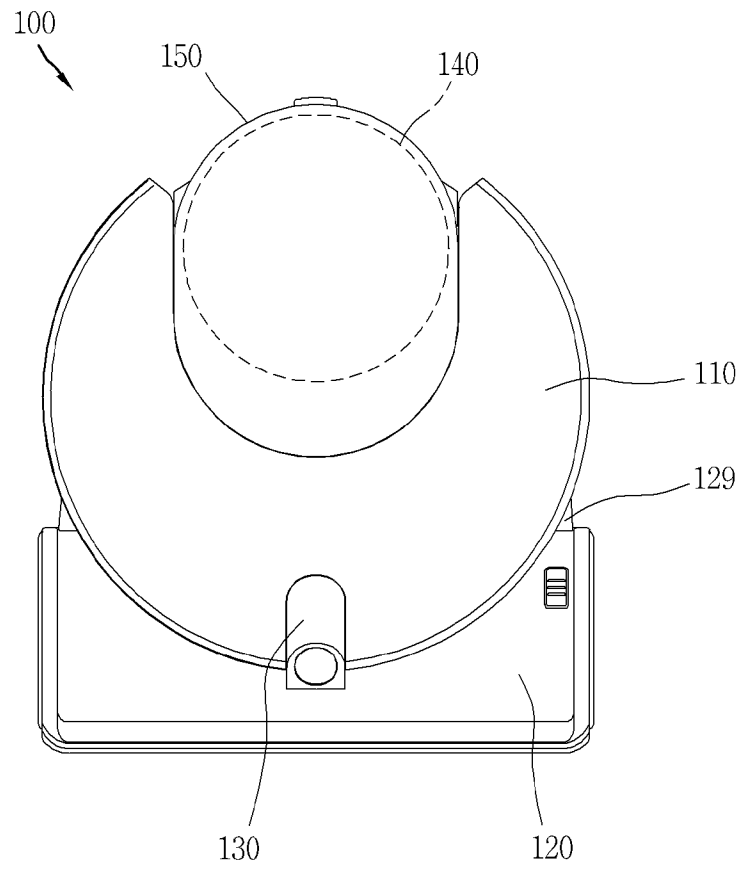
[Claim 18] The robots of claim 1, wherein each of the optical sensors is an infrared sensor.

[Claim 19] A method for controlling a plurality of autonomous mobile robots including a first mobile robot and a second mobile robot, the method comprising:
determining, by the second mobile robot, an angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to a front of the second mobile robot using light output from the first mobile robot;
determining, by the second mobile robot, a distance from the second mobile robot to the first mobile robot using an Ultra-Wideband (UWB) signal; and
determining, by the second mobile robot, a relative position of the first mobile robot based on the angle at which the first mobile robot is located with respect to the front of the second mobile robot and the distance from the second mobile robot to the first mobile robot.

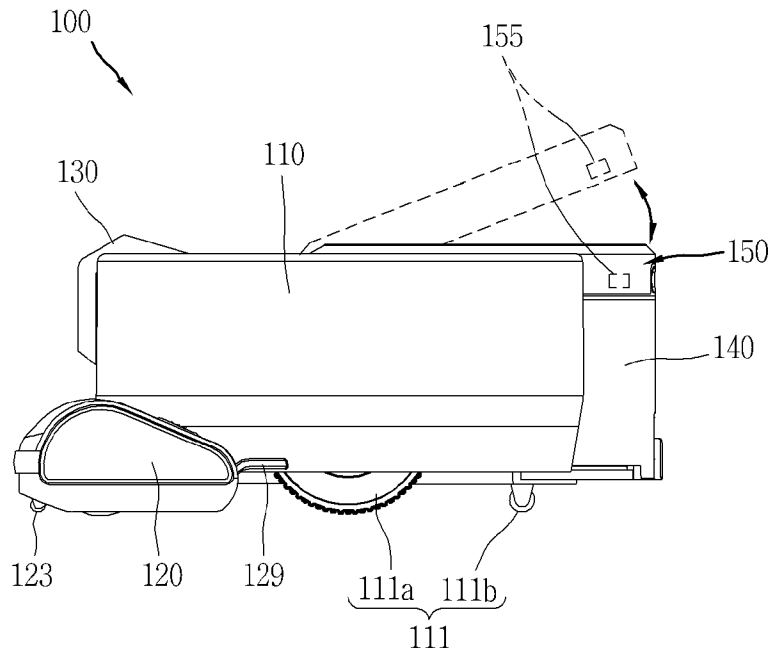
[Fig. 1]



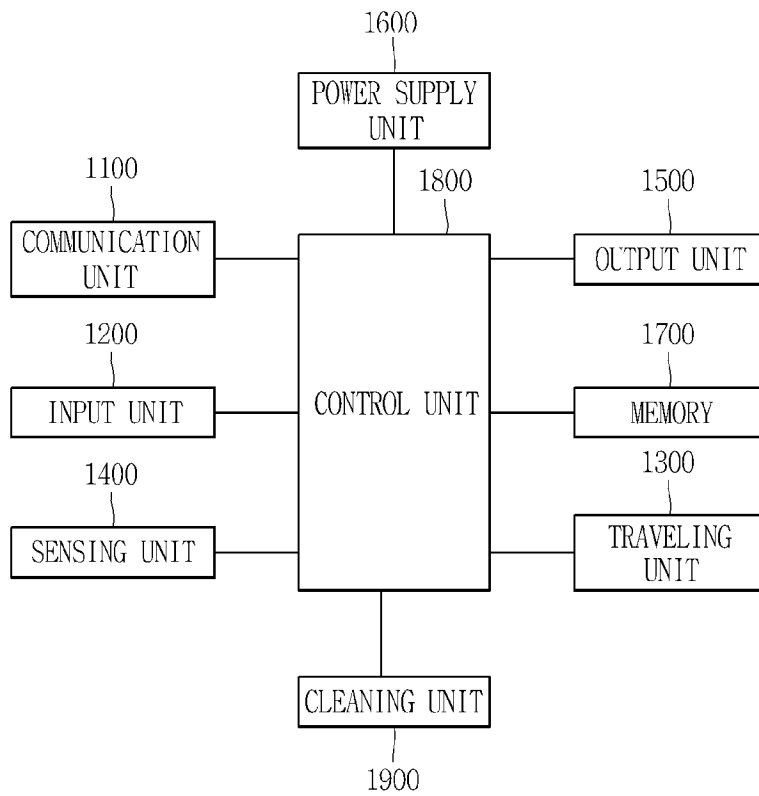
[Fig. 2]



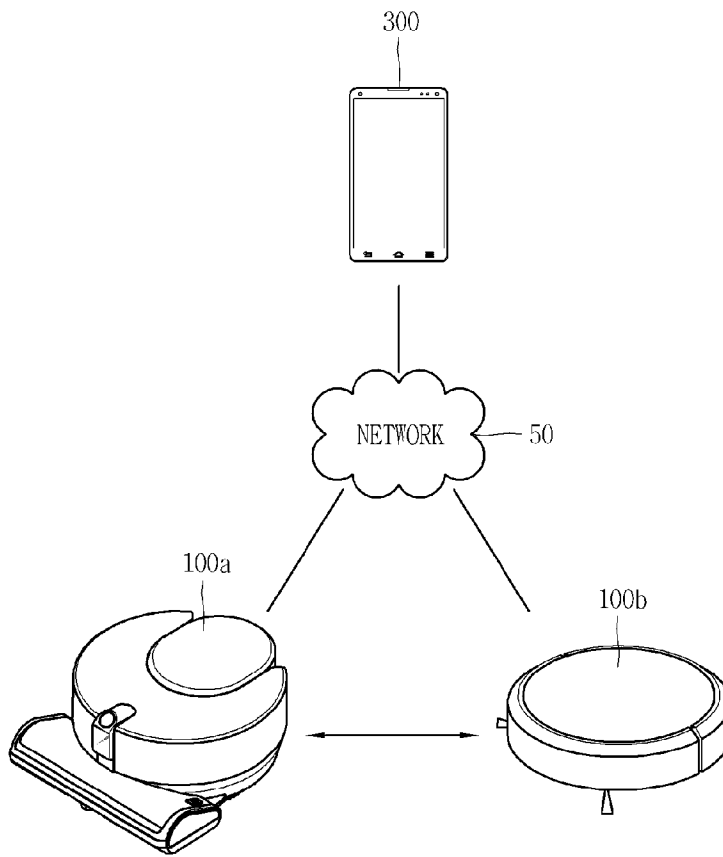
[Fig. 3]



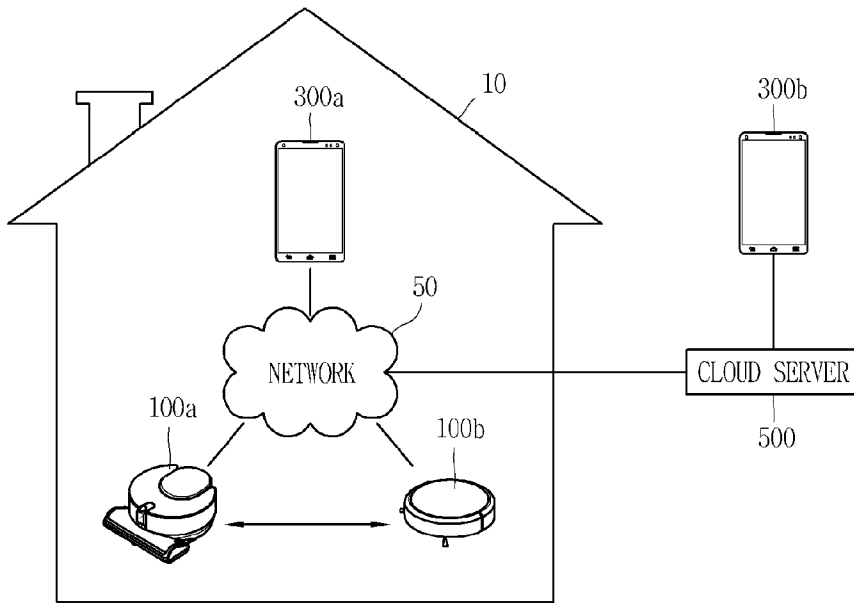
[Fig. 4]



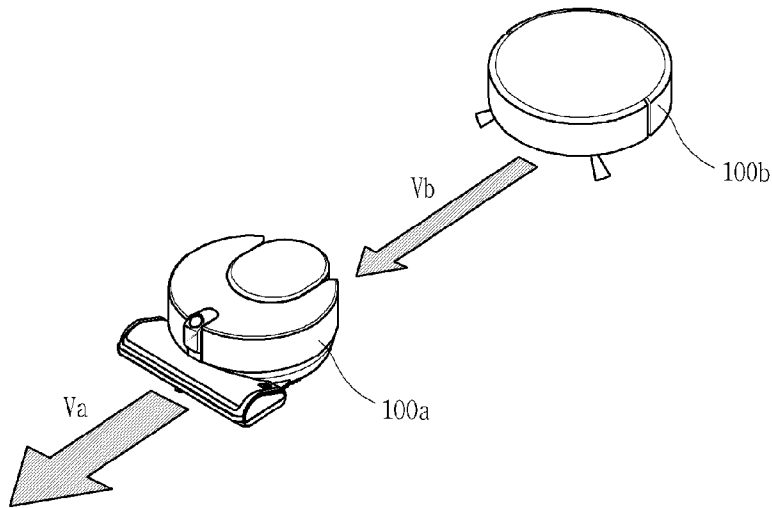
[Fig. 5a]



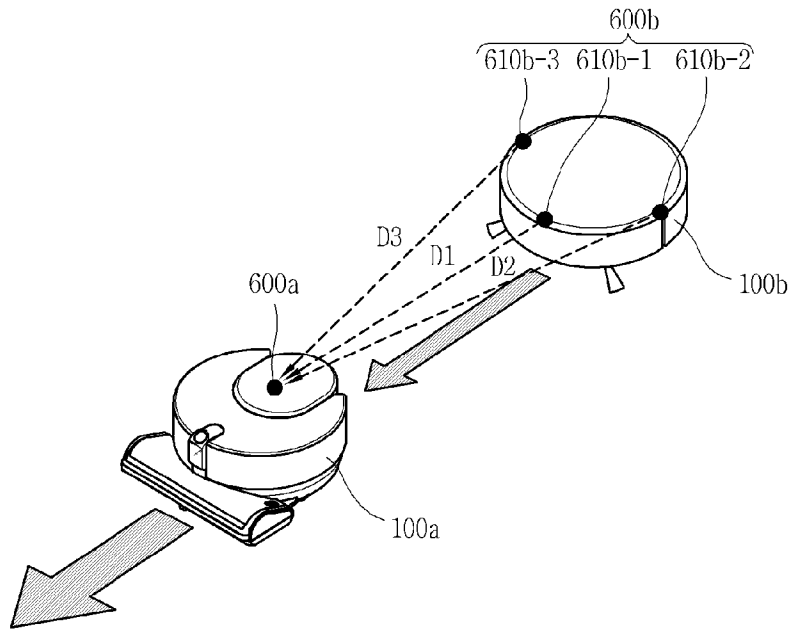
[Fig. 5b]



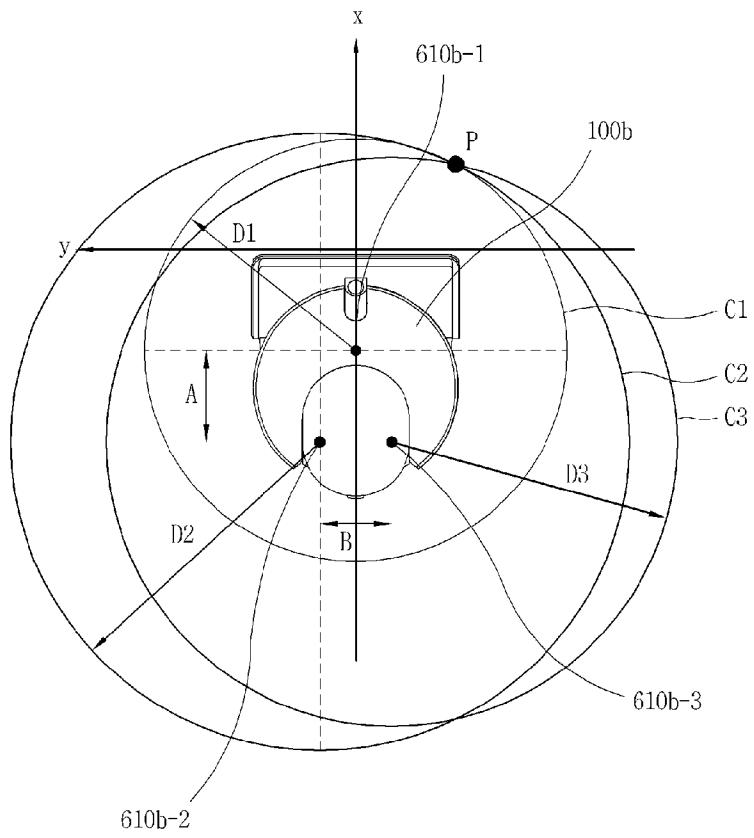
[Fig. 5c]



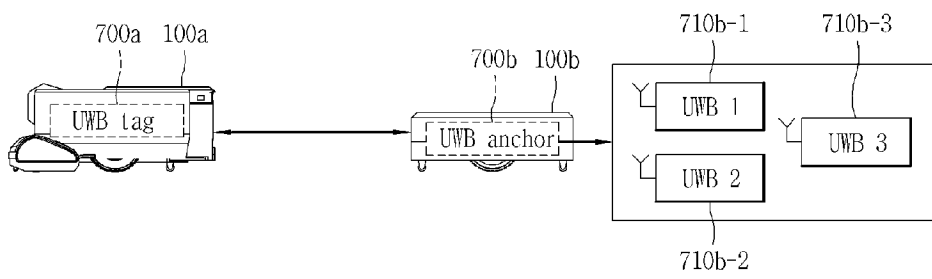
[Fig. 6a]



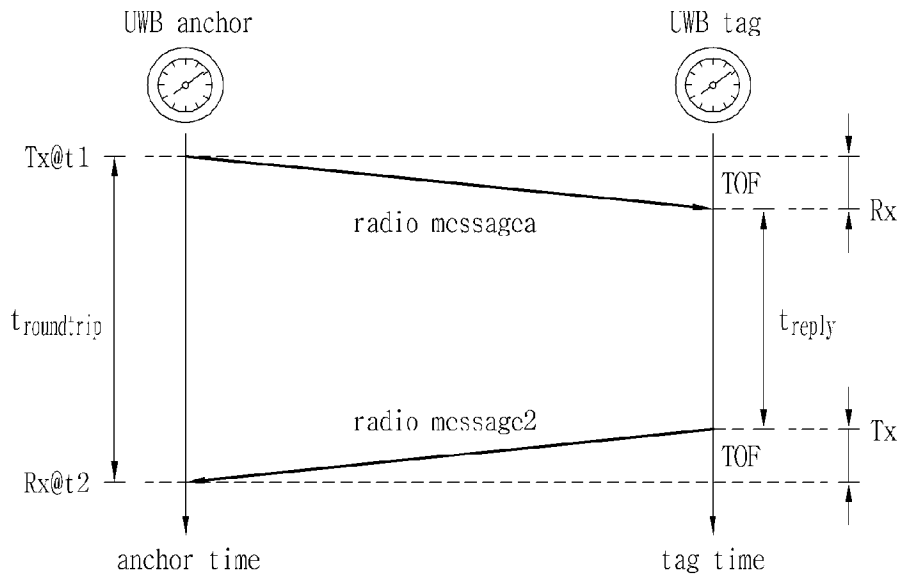
[Fig. 6b]



[Fig. 7a]



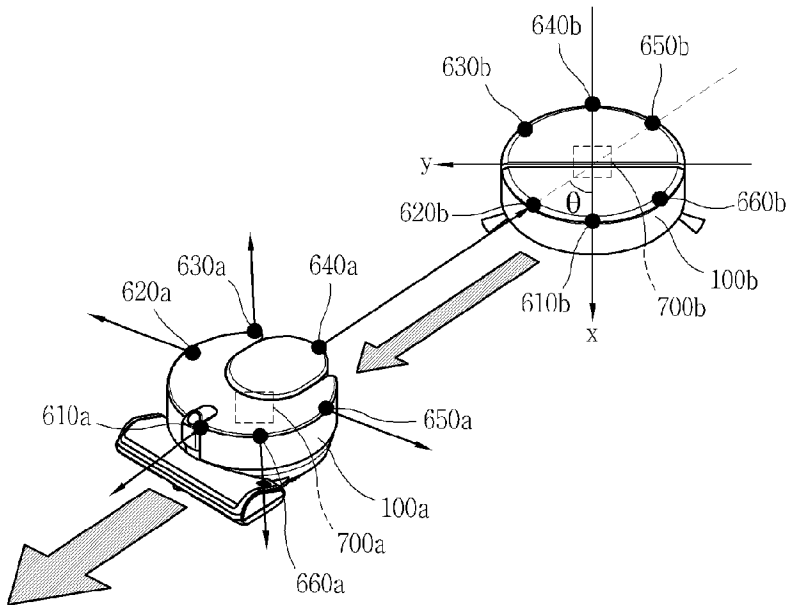
[Fig. 7b]



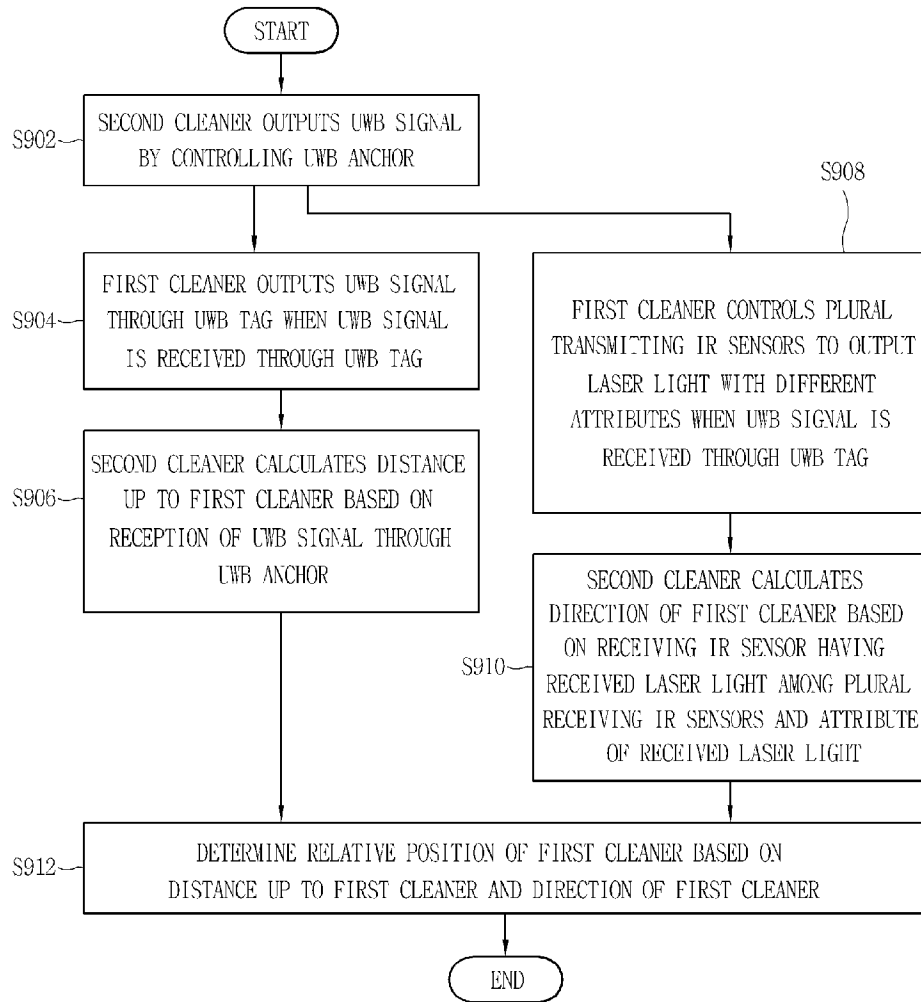
$$TOF = \frac{t_2 - t_1 - t_{reply}}{2}$$

$$Distance = c \times \frac{t_2 - t_1 - t_{reply}}{2}$$

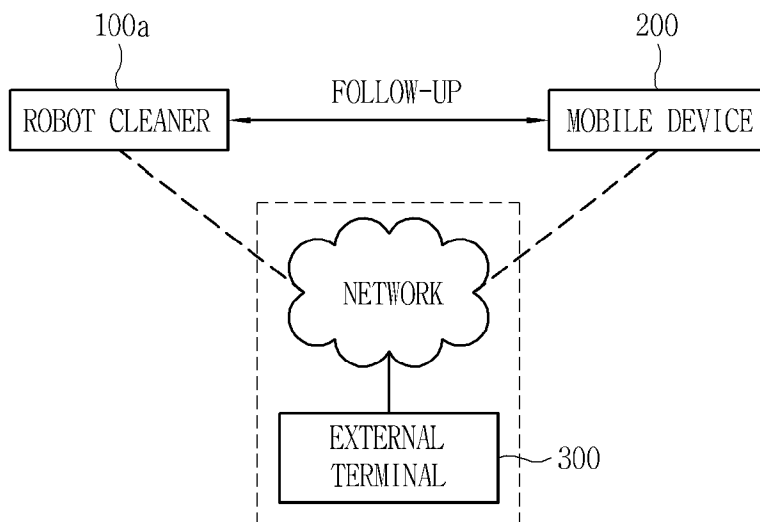
[Fig. 8]



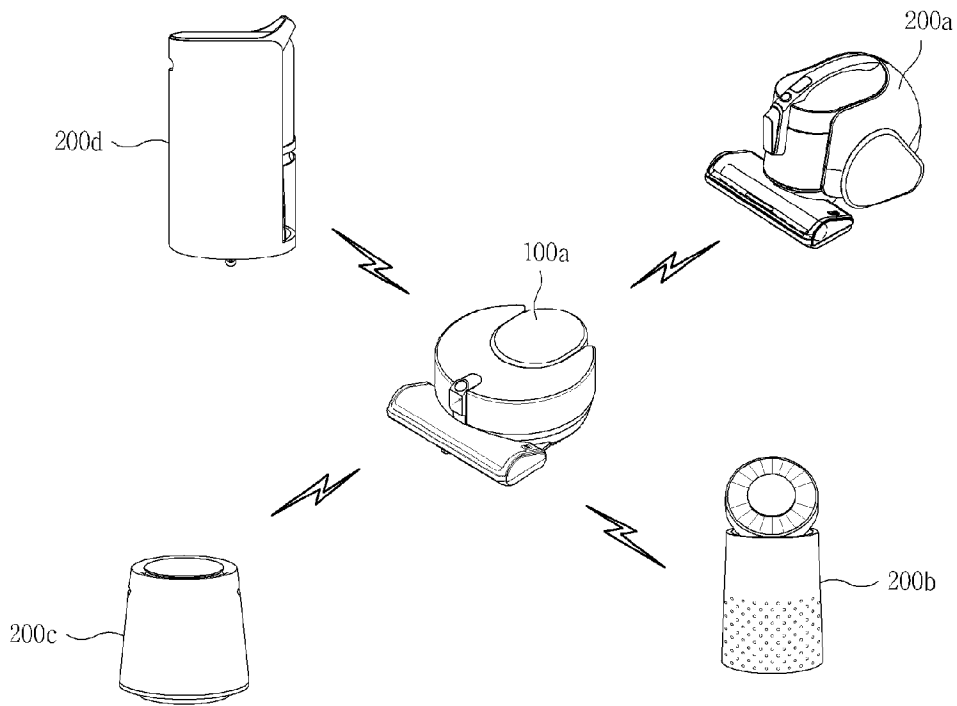
[Fig. 9]



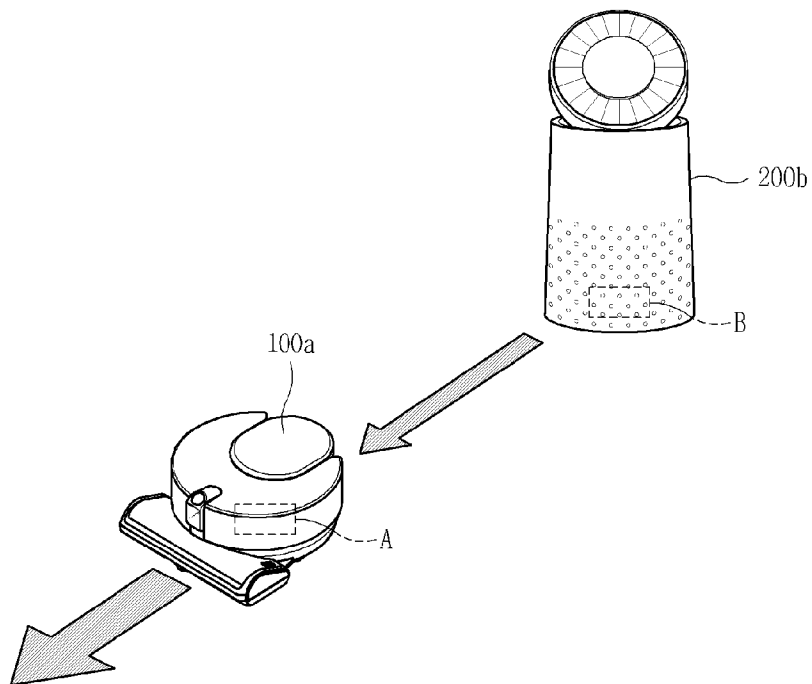
[Fig. 10a]



[Fig. 10b]



[Fig. 10c]



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/KR2019/005317**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER****A47L 9/28(2006.01)i, A47L 11/40(2006.01)i, G06K 19/07(2006.01)i, B25J 11/00(2006.01)i, B25J 9/16(2006.01)i, B25J 19/02(2006.01)i**

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

A47L 9/28; A47L 9/00; B25J 9/16; G01S 5/02; G05D 1/02; A47L 11/40; G06K 19/07; B25J 11/00; B25J 19/02

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Korean utility models and applications for utility models

Japanese utility models and applications for utility models

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

eKOMPASS(KIPO internal) & Keywords: cleaner, robot, mobile robot, optical sensor, receive, transmit, ultra-wideband, tag, anchor, infrared sensor, distance, angle, relative position

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	JP 2005-192609 A (SHARP CORP.) 21 July 2005 See paragraphs [0014], [0017], [0020]-[0039] and figures 1-3, 5.	1-6, 11-12, 18-19
A		7-10, 13-17
Y	KR 10-2018-0039437 A (LG ELECTRONICS INC.) 18 April 2018 See paragraph [0035] and figure 2.	1-6, 11-12, 18-19
A	KR 10-2018-0042546 A (INDUSTRY-ACADEMIC COOPERATION FOUNDATION, CHOSUN UNIVERSITY) 26 April 2018 See claim 1 and figure 1.	1-19
A	KR 10-2015-0047893 A (SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS CO., LTD.) 06 May 2015 See paragraphs [0092]-[0102] and figure 4.	1-19
A	JP 2010-108433 A (TOSHIBA TEC CORP.) 13 May 2010 See paragraphs [0013]-[0023] and figure 1.	1-19

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

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19 August 2019 (19.08.2019)

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/KR2019/005317

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		US 2019-0155276 A1	23/05/2019
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