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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
NAKAGAWA(10) **Pub. No.: US 2011/0299814 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 8, 2011**(54) **DUPLEX OPTICAL CONNECTOR UNIT****Publication Classification**(76) Inventor: **Masaya NAKAGAWA**, Kyoto-shi
(JP)(51) **Int. Cl.**
G02B 6/36 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **385/78**(21) Appl. No.: **13/116,287**(57) **ABSTRACT**(22) Filed: **May 26, 2011**

Provided is a duplex optical connector unit, in which locking levers extending obliquely upward toward a proximal end side and including interlocking portions engaging with an optical adapter are provided on top surfaces of housings of optical connectors, and an operation lever extending obliquely upward toward a leading end side and including a pressing part located above the locking levers is provided in a top surface of a main body portion of a boot.

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

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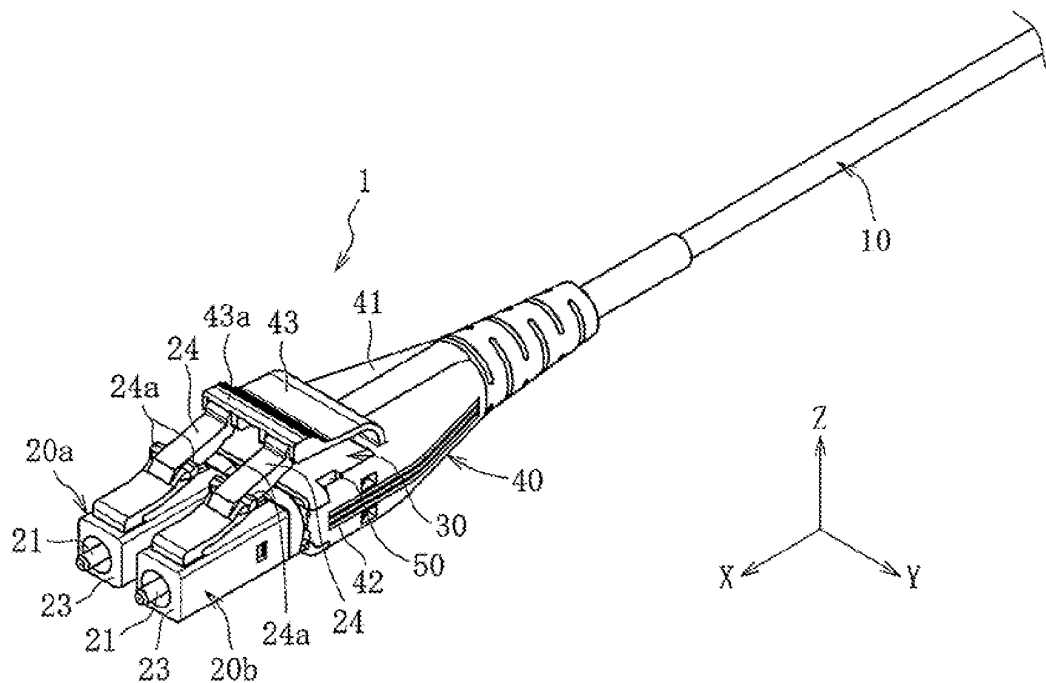


Fig. 1

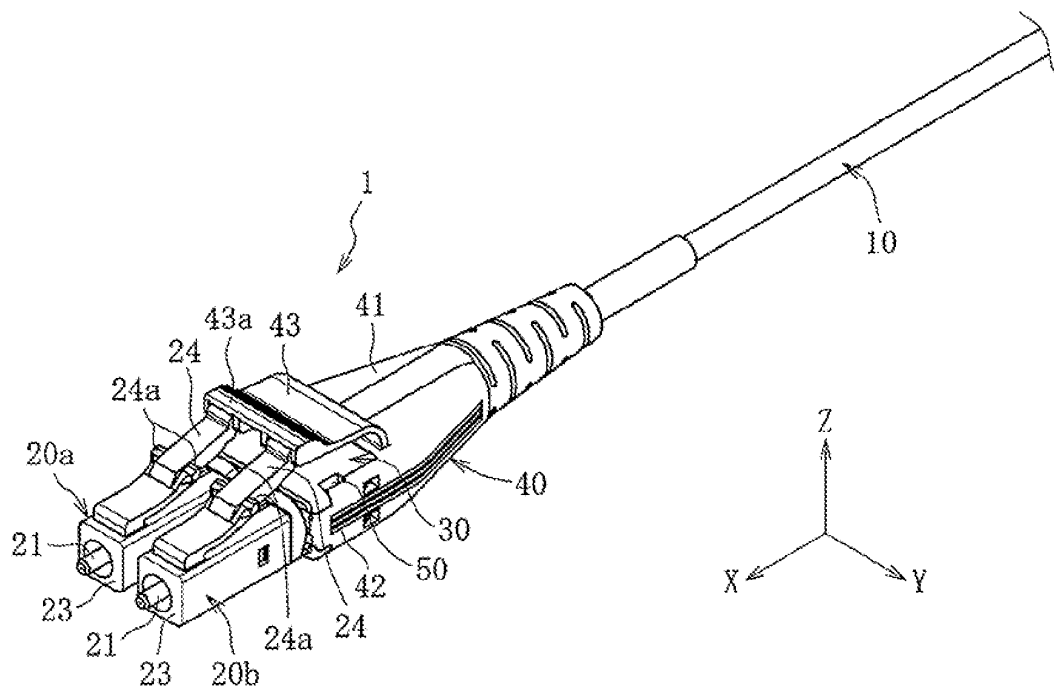


Fig. 2

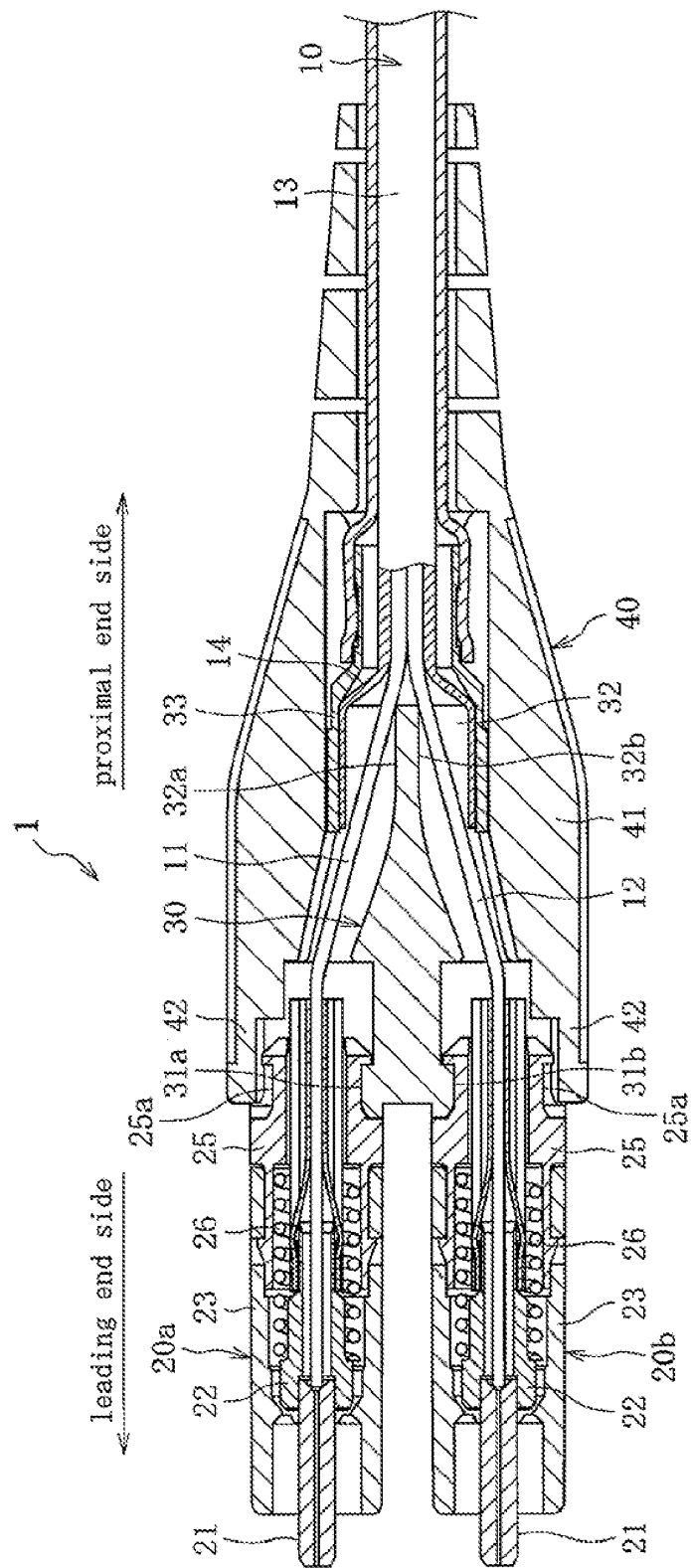


Fig. 3A

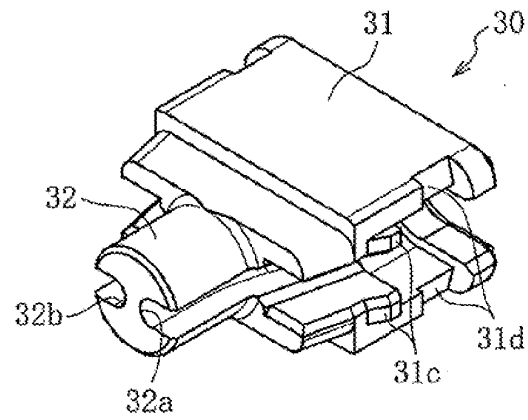


Fig. 3B

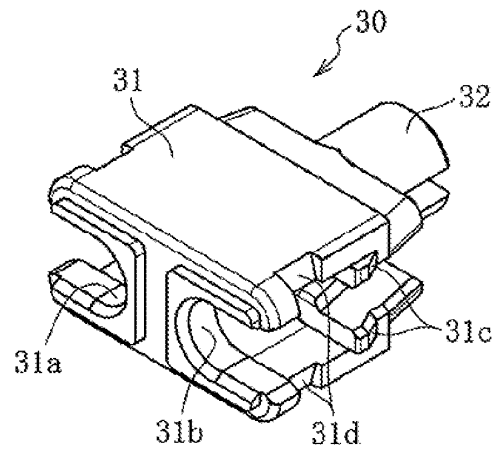


Fig. 3C

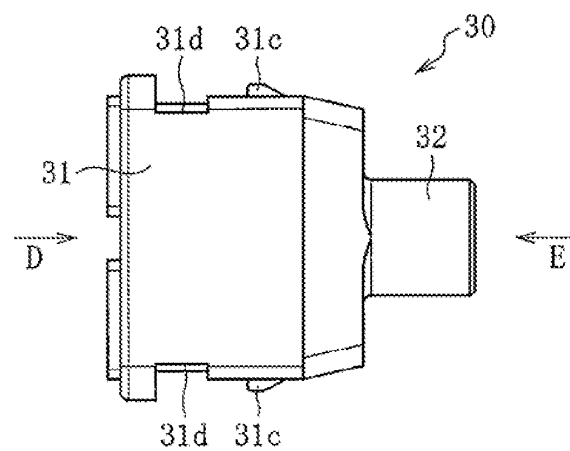


Fig. 3D

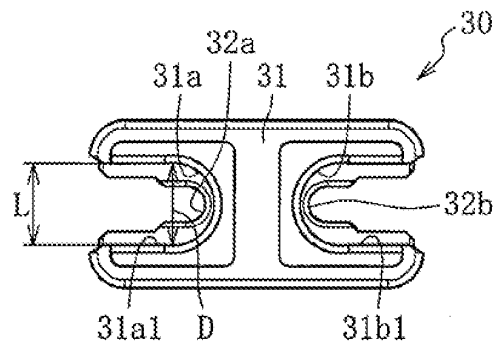


Fig. 3E

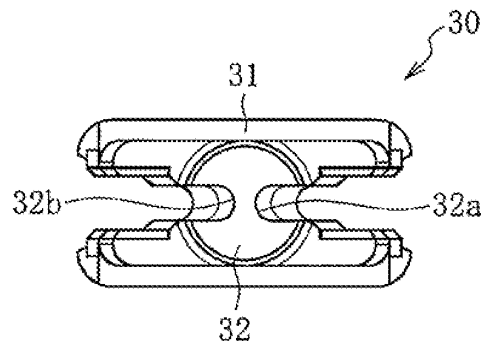


Fig. 3F

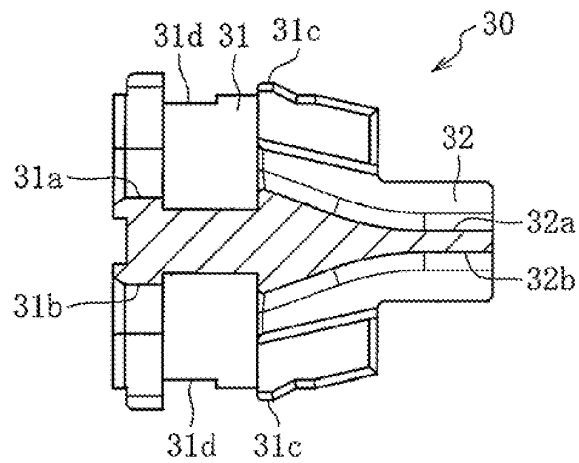


Fig. 4A

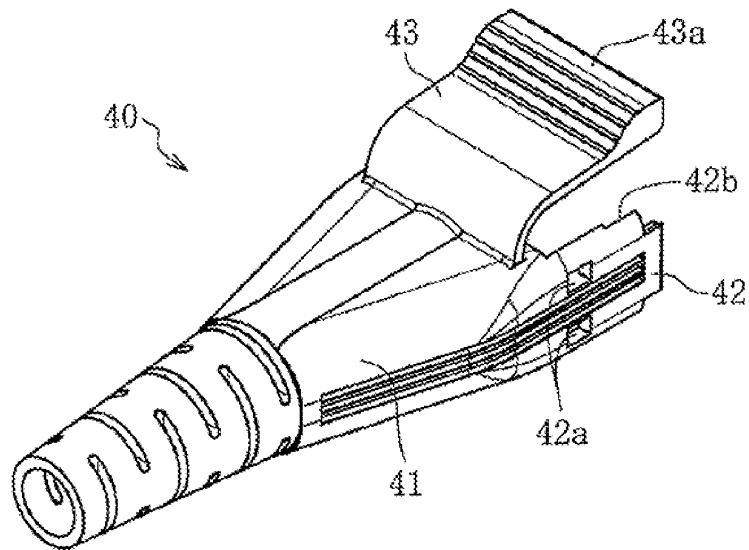


Fig. 4B

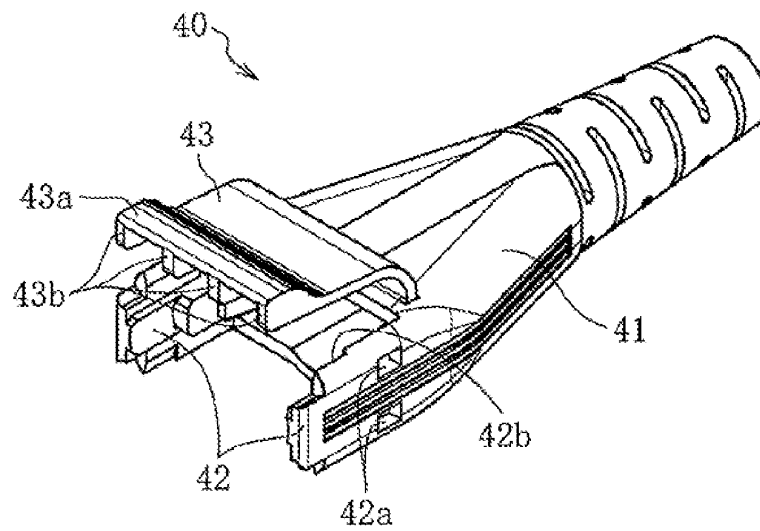


Fig. 4C

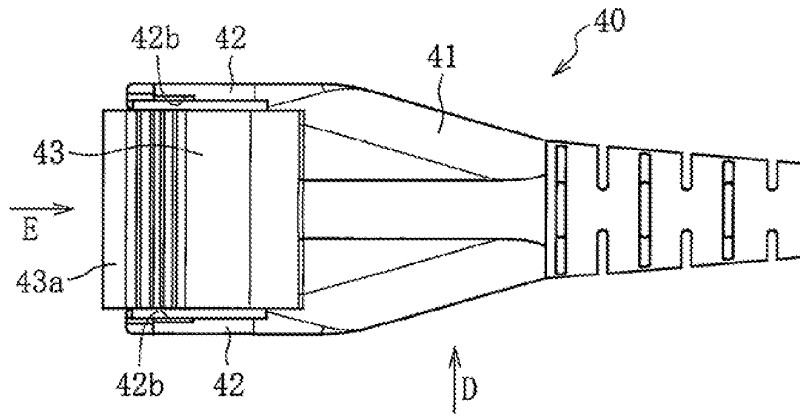


Fig. 4D

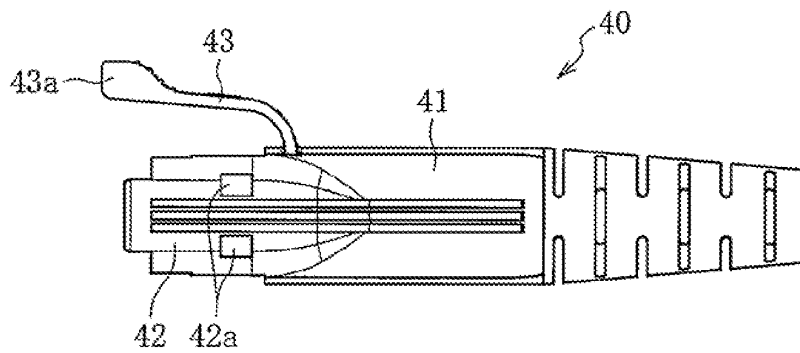


Fig. 4E

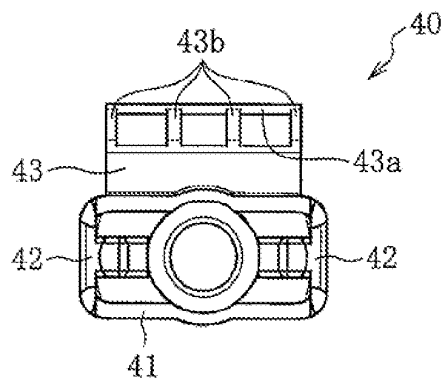


Fig. 5

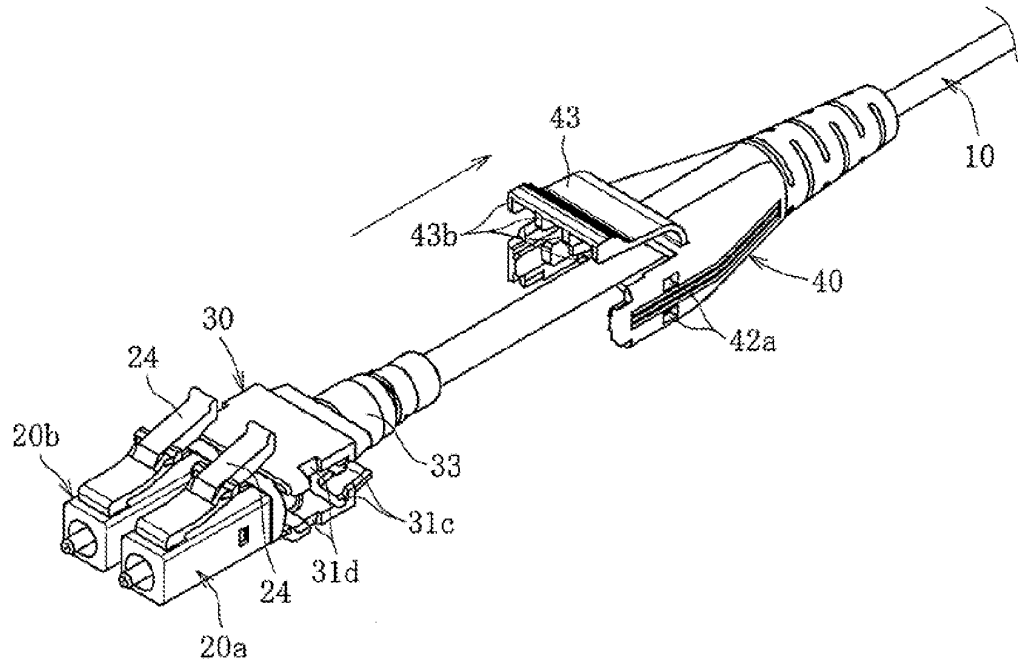


Fig. 6

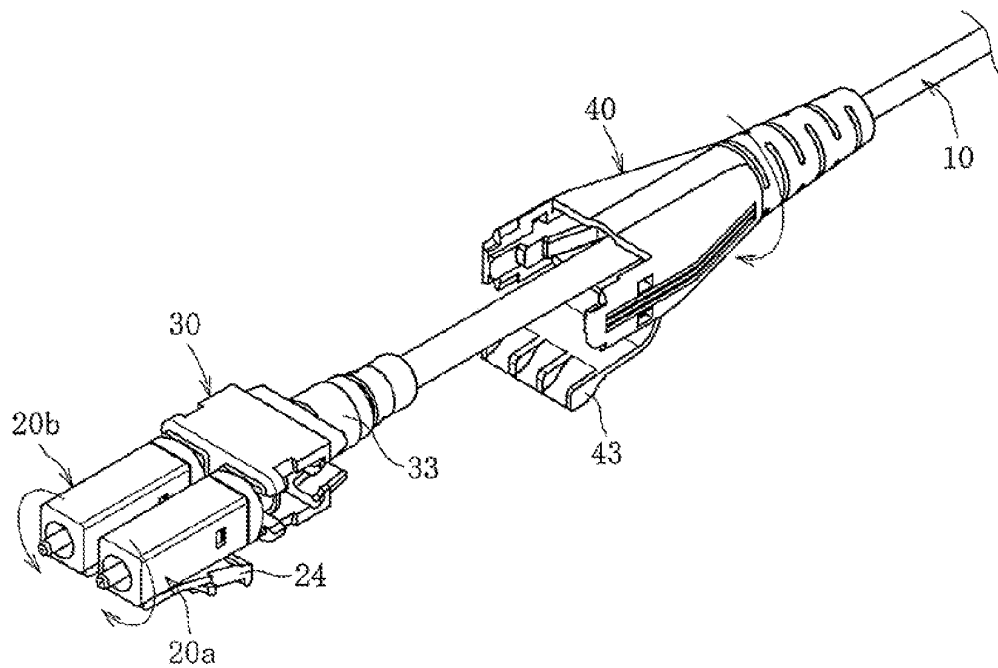


Fig. 7

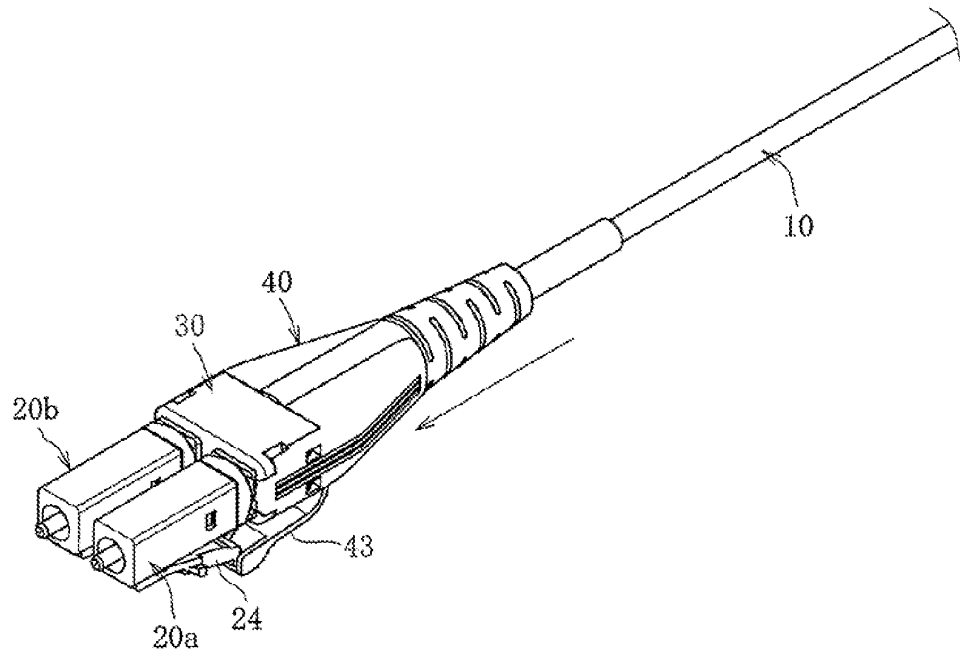


Fig. 8

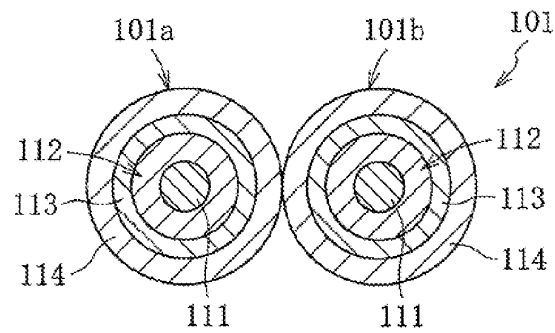


Fig. 9

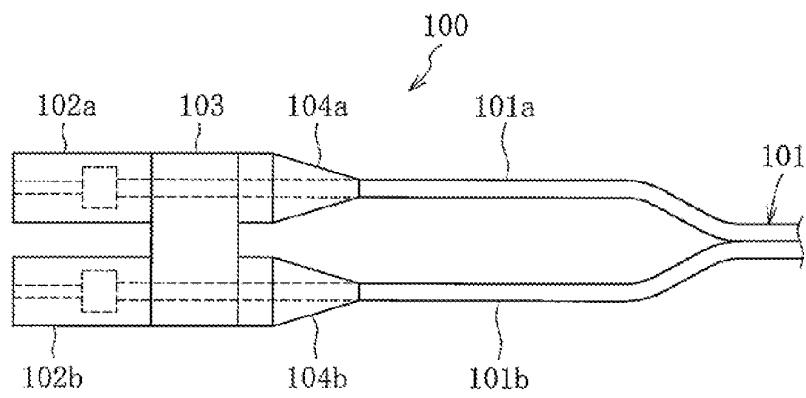


Fig. 10

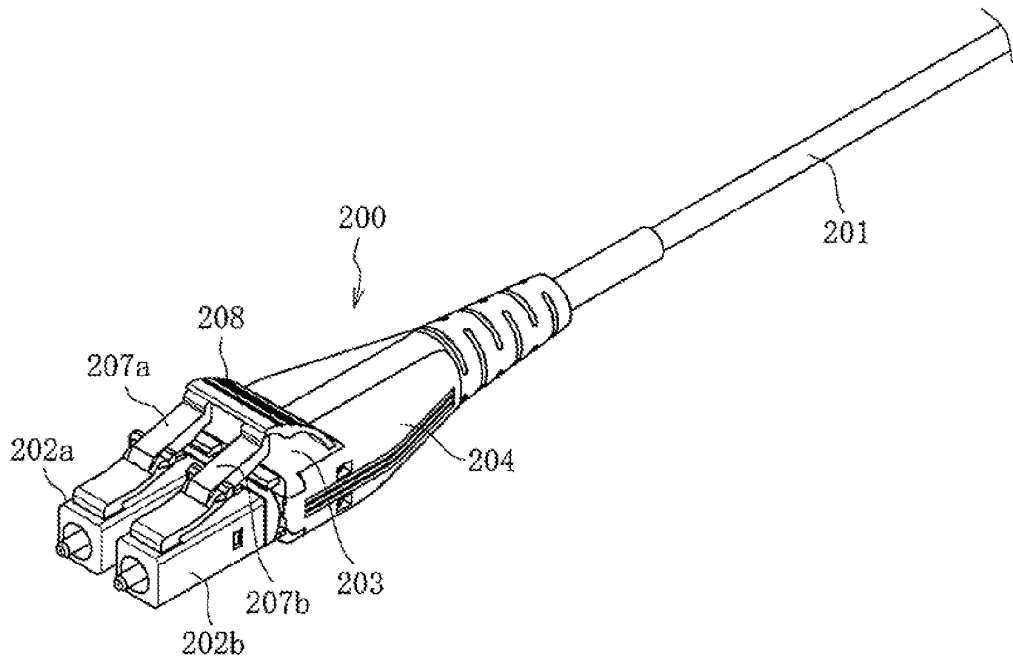


Fig. 11

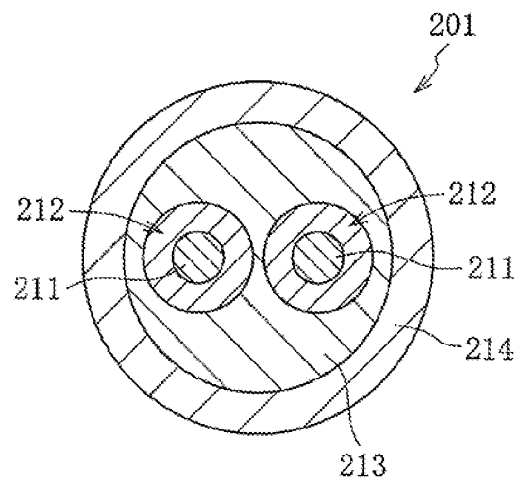


Fig. 12A

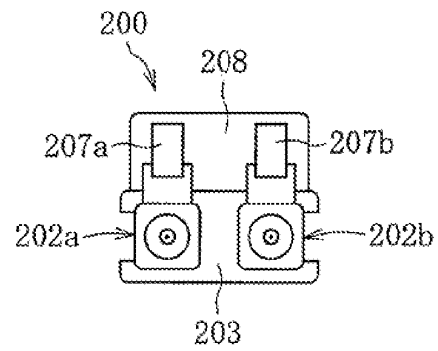


Fig. 12B

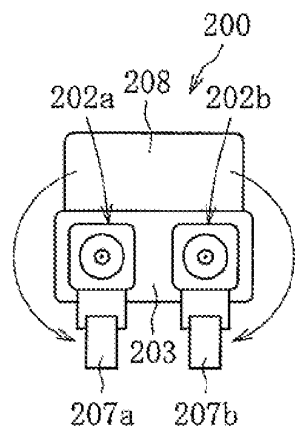
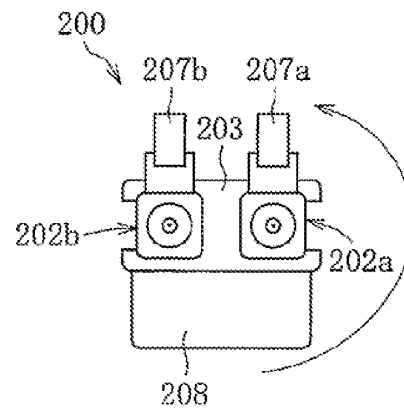


Fig. 12C



DUPLEX OPTICAL CONNECTOR UNIT

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to an optical connector, and more particularly, to a duplex optical connector unit for bidirectional communication including a pair of optical connectors.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] An optical connector is fixed to a leading end of an optical fiber, and is used for connecting the optical fiber to another optical fiber or an optical communication module via an optical adapter or an optical receptacle. A duplex optical connector unit for bidirectional communication including an input optical connector and an output optical connector (hereinafter, also simply referred to as "optical connector unit") is known as a kind of optical connector (for example, see Patent Literature 1).

[0003] As a cable for bidirectional communication, for example, as illustrated in FIG. 8, there is known a duplex cable **101** having a spectacles-like cross-sectional shape, which is formed by integrally joining two optical fiber cables **101a**, **101b**. The optical fiber cables **101a**, **101b** each include a bare fiber **112** incorporating an optical fiber **111**, and a reinforcement fiber **113** and a covering tube **114** covering an outer periphery of the bare fiber **112**. An optical connector unit **100** to be connected to the duplex cable **101** having a spectacles-like cross-sectional shape includes, for example, as illustrated in FIG. 9, a pair of optical connectors **102a**, **102b** fixed to leading ends of the pair of optical fiber cables **101a**, **101b**, a holder **103** for holding the pair of optical connectors **102a**, **102b**, and boots **104a**, **104b** for protecting the pair of optical fiber cables **101a**, **101b** extending from the holder **103**.

[0004] Such an optical connector unit **100** has a problem in that the duplex cable **101** bifurcates to the two optical fiber cables **101a**, **101b**, and hence the optical connector unit **100** takes a large mounting space. Further, the two boots **104a**, **104b** need to be provided for protecting the two bifurcated optical fiber cables **101a**, **101b**, resulting in increase in size of the unit, a large number of components, and increase in assembly man-hours and cost.

[0005] Further, when the optical connector unit **100** is mounted to the optical adapter, the optical connector unit **100** needs to be rotated so as to fit to a mounting portion of the optical adapter. At this time, a twist occurs in the duplex cable **101**. However, the duplex cable **101** has a flat spectacles-like cross-sectional shape as illustrated in FIG. 8, and hence it is difficult to smoothly twist the duplex cable **101** particularly when the duplex cable **101** is curved. As a result, the optical connector unit **100** resists rotation, which leads to poor mounting workability. Further, when the optical connector unit is connected to each of a plurality of connection terminals provided in an appliance, a plurality of cables extending from the optical connector unit are arranged by tying the plurality of cables together. However, it is difficult to tie the duplex cables **101** together due to its spectacles-like cross-sectional shape, and thus the arrangement of the wiring is difficult. Moreover, not only is it difficult to rotate one duplex cable **101** having a spectacles-like cross-sectional shape, but also it becomes more difficult to rotate the plurality of duplex cables **101** tied together because the cables interfere with each other, which leads to poor wiring workability.

[0006] Then, in Patent Literature 2, the inventor of the present invention proposed an optical connector unit **200** as illustrated in FIG. 10. The optical connector unit **200** has a structure to which a duplex cable **201** having a substantially circular cross-sectional shape can be fixed, the duplex cable **201** being formed by providing a pair of optical fibers inside one covering tube. As illustrated in FIG. 11, the duplex cable **201** includes two bare fibers **212** incorporating optical fibers **211**, a covering tube **214** covering outer peripheries of the bare fibers **212**, and a reinforcement fiber **213** filled between the covering tube **214** and the bare fibers **212**. As illustrated in FIG. 10, the optical connector unit **200** includes a pair of optical connectors **202a**, **202b**, a holder **203** for holding the pair of optical connector **202a**, **202b**, and a boot **204** fitted to the holder **203**. The dual cable **201** is fixed to the holder **203**, and the pair of optical fibers bifurcate inside the holder **203** so as to be connected to the optical connectors **202a**, **202b**.

[0007] According to the optical connector unit **200**, the two bifurcated optical fiber cables are not exposed to the outside, and hence space saving is achieved. Further, one boot **204** is enough, and hence the unit can be downsized compared to the optical connector unit **100** as illustrated in FIG. 9 and the number of components can be reduced. Moreover, it is easy to tie the duplex cable **201** due to its substantially circular cross-sectional shape, and thus the arrangement of the wiring is easy. Further, even a curved cable or a plurality of cables tied together can be smoothly twisted. Thus, the optical connector unit **200** is rotated more easily, which facilitates wiring work.

Citation List

- [0008]** Patent Literature 1: JP 2000-315821 A
- [0009]** Patent Literature 2: JP 2005-189288 A

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

Technical Problem

[0010] In the optical connector unit as described above, an input optical connector and an output optical connector are mounted to an input mounting portion and an output mounting portion of an optical adapter (or optical receptacle, the same shall apply hereinafter), respectively. Therefore, in assembling the optical connector unit, when the input optical connector and the output optical connector are reversely assembled by mistake, both the optical connectors are not adapted to the mounting portions of the optical adapter. The optical connector unit thus assembled is not usable, and hence the optical connector unit together with a duplex cable fixed thereto becomes useless.

[0011] Further, for example, in the case of the optical connector unit to be mounted to the optical adapter provided as an optical connection terminal of an electronic device, even if the optical connector unit to be connected from outside of the electronic device is correctly assembled, when the input optical connector and the output optical connector are reversely mounted to the mounting portions inside the optical adapter, it is impossible to correctly connect an optical fiber. In this case, it is possible to deal with this situation by opening a casing of the electronic device and exchanging the positions of the optical connectors inside the casing. However, work of opening the casing of the electronic device is troublesome, and hence it is desired to complete the exchange of the positions of the optical connectors on the optical connector unit side to be connected from outside of the electronic device if circumstances allow.

[0012] The above-mentioned trouble can be eliminated by exchanging the positions of a pair of optical connectors. For example, when the entire optical connector unit is reversed upside down, that is, when the optical connector unit is rotated 180 degrees about an optical axis direction (direction in which the optical fiber extends), the positions of the input optical connector and the output optical connector can be exchanged. However, for example, as illustrated in FIG. 10, in the case of the optical connectors 202a, 202b which are provided with locking levers 207a, 207b, when the optical connector unit is reversed upside down, the locking levers 207a, 207b face downward, with the result that the optical connectors cannot be mounted to the optical adapter.

[0013] Alternatively, it is conceivable that the positions of the optical connectors 202a, 202b are exchanged by steps as illustrated in FIGS. 12A to 12C. More specifically, the pair of optical connectors 202a, 202b which include the locking levers 207a, 207b facing upward (see FIG. 12A) are each reversed upside down relative to a holder 203 (see FIG. 12B), and then the entire optical connector unit 200 is reversed upside down (see FIG. 12C). However, the holder 203 of the optical connector unit 200 is provided with an operation lever 208 for pressing the locking levers 207a, 207b from above (see FIG. 10). Therefore, when the optical connectors 202a, 202b are each reversed upside down relative to the holder 203 as illustrated in FIG. 12B, the locking levers 207a, 207b and the operation lever 208 are disposed vertically on opposite sides, resulting in a defective assembly.

[0014] An object to be achieved by the present invention is to provide an optical connector unit which includes the locking levers and the operation lever and enables the pair of optical connectors to be easily exchanged in position.

Solution to Problem

[0015] In order to achieve the above-mentioned object, the present invention provides a duplex optical connector unit, which is fixed to a leading end of a duplex cable including a pair of optical fibers therein, including: a pair of optical connectors, each of which includes a ferrule provided to a leading end of each of the pair of optical fibers, a housing for holding the ferrule, and a locking lever extending obliquely upward from a top surface of the housing toward a proximal end side, the pair of optical connectors each being provided at the leading end of each of the pair of optical fibers; a holder, which includes connector fixing portions for fixing the pair of optical connectors, and a cable fixing portion for fixing the duplex cable; and a boot, which includes a main body portion fitted to the holder and covering an outer periphery of the duplex cable, an operation lever extending obliquely upward from a top surface of the main body portion toward a leading end side, and a pressing part provided in the operation lever and located above the locking lever.

[0016] Note that, in the description of the optical connector unit, a direction in which the optical fiber of each of the optical connectors is referred to as an “optical axis direction” (X direction of FIG. 1), a direction in which the pair of optical connectors are aligned in parallel is referred to as a “width direction” (Y direction of FIG. 1), and a direction orthogonal to the width direction and the optical axis direction is referred to as an “up-down direction” (Z direction of FIG. 1). However, those directions are defined for convenience of description, and not intended to limit an aspect of usage of the optical connector unit.

[0017] In this way, in the optical connector unit of the present invention, the locking lever extending obliquely upward toward the proximal end side is provided in the top surface of the housing of each of the optical connectors, and the operation lever extending obliquely upward toward the leading end side and including the pressing part located above the locking lever is provided on the top surface of the main body portion of the boot. According to the optical connector unit, the pair of optical connectors can be easily exchanged in position. More specifically, the boot is detached from the holder (see FIG. 5), the optical connectors are each reversed upside down relative to the holder while the boot is reversed upside down relative to the holder (see FIG. 6), and then the boot is placed back over the holder (see FIG. 7), thereby being capable of exchanging the positions of the pair of optical connectors under a state in which the locking levers and the operation lever are in the same orientation.

[0018] In the optical connector unit as described above, the pair of optical connectors are in a state in which the locking levers are in the same orientation (upward orientation). However, when the optical connectors are rotated relative to the holder, orientations of the pair of locking levers may be displaced and the optical connector unit may not be able to be mounted to the optical adapter. For example, if the holder includes a rotation restricting portion for restricting rotation of the optical connectors, it is possible to keep the locking levers in the same orientation. However, in this case, when reversing the pair of optical connectors upside down relative to the holder as described above, each of the optical connectors needs to be once detached from the holder. Work of detaching the optical connectors from the holder in this way is troublesome and may cause the damages of the optical fibers during the detaching work.

[0019] Thus, if the boot includes a rotation restricting portion for restricting the rotation of the optical connectors relative to the holder, it is unnecessary to provide the rotation restricting portion on the holder. As a result, the optical connectors can be rotated relative to the holder by detaching the boot from the holder and disengaging the rotation restricting portion and the locking levers (see FIG. 5). Therefore, the optical connectors each can be easily reversed upside down while being mounted in the holder. For example, the operation lever may include interlocking portions which engage with the locking lever on both sides in the width direction, and the interlocking portions may function as the rotation restricting portion.

Advantageous Effects of Invention

[0020] As described above, in contrast to an operation lever which has been provided in a holder in a conventional product, according to the present invention, the operation lever is provided in a boot, thereby being capable of easily exchanging positions of a pair of optical connectors. As a result, even when the pair of optical connectors are reversely mounted by mistake during assembly, the optical connectors can be exchanged back into correct positions in use, and hence the optical connector unit and a duplex cable can be used without waste.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0021] FIG. 1A perspective view illustrating an optical connector unit according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] FIG. 2 A cross-sectional view illustrating the optical connector unit.

[0023] FIG. 3A A perspective view illustrating a holder of the optical connector unit.

[0024] FIG. 3B A perspective view illustrating the holder.

[0025] FIG. 3C A plan view illustrating the holder.

[0026] FIG. 3D A side view illustrating the holder seen from the direction D of FIG. 3C.

[0027] FIG. 3E A side view illustrating the holder seen from the direction E of FIG. 3C.

[0028] FIG. 3F A cross-sectional view illustrating the holder.

[0029] FIG. 4A A perspective view illustrating a boot of the optical connector unit.

[0030] FIG. 4B A perspective view illustrating the boot.

[0031] FIG. 4C A plan view illustrating the boot.

[0032] FIG. 4D A side view illustrating the boot seen from the direction D of the FIG. 4C.

[0033] FIG. 4E A side view illustrating the boot seen from the direction E of the FIG. 4C.

[0034] FIG. 5 A perspective view illustrating a step of exchanging a pair of optical connectors of the optical connector unit (a state in which the boot is detached).

[0035] FIG. 6 A perspective view illustrating a step of exchanging the pair of optical connectors of the optical connector unit (a state in which the optical connectors and the boot are reversed upside down).

[0036] FIG. 7 A perspective view illustrating a step of exchanging the pair of optical connectors of the optical connector unit (a state in which the boot is refitted).

[0037] FIG. 8 A cross-sectional view illustrating a duplex cable having a spectacles-like cross-sectional shape.

[0038] FIG. 9 A plan view schematically illustrating a conventional optical connector unit.

[0039] FIG. 10 A perspective view illustrating a conventional optical connector unit.

[0040] FIG. 11 Across-sectional view illustrating a duplex cable having a substantially circular cross-sectional shape.

[0041] FIG. 12A A side view (front view) illustrating the optical connector unit of FIG. 10.

[0042] FIG. 12B A side view (front view) illustrating the pair of optical connectors of FIG. 12A, each of which is reversed upside down.

[0043] FIG. 12C Aside view (front view) illustrating the entire optical connector unit of the FIG. 12B reversed upside down.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENT

[0044] Hereinafter, an embodiment of the present invention is described with reference to the drawings.

[0045] As illustrated in FIG. 1, an optical connector unit 1 according to the embodiment of the present invention is fixed to a leading end of a duplex cable 10. The duplex cable 10 includes a pair of optical fibers therein. In this embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 2, the duplex cable 10 includes a pair of bare fibers 11, 12 incorporating the optical fibers, a covering tube 13 which covers outer peripheries of the pair of bare fibers 11, 12 so as to hold them together, and a reinforcement fiber 14 filled between the bare fibers 11, 12 and the covering tube 13. The duplex cable 10 has a substantially circular cross-sectional shape, similarly to the duplex cable 201 illustrated in FIG. 11.

[0046] The optical connector unit 1 is mounted into a mounting hole of an optical adapter (not shown). The optical

connector unit 1 mainly includes an input optical connector 20a, an output optical connector 20b, a holder 30, and a boot 40. Note that, in the illustrated example, a right-left direction of FIG. 2 is referred to as an “optical axis direction”, an up-down direction of FIG. 2 is referred to as a “width direction”, and a direction orthogonal to the drawing sheet of FIG. 2 is referred to as an “up-down direction”. Further, an optical adapter side in the optical axis direction (left side of FIG. 2) is referred to as a leading end side, and the opposite side thereof (right side of FIG. 2) is referred to as a proximal end side.

[0047] The optical connectors 20a, 20b are both an LC type connector and fixed to the leading ends of the bare fibers 11, 12, respectively (see FIG. 2). The input optical connector 20a and the output optical connector 20b have a similar configuration. The optical connectors 20a, 20b each include a ferrule 21 fixed to the leading end of the bare fiber 11 or 12, a flange part 22 fixed at a proximal end portion of the ferrule 21, a housing 23 holding the ferrule 21 within its inner periphery, a locking lever 24 provided in a top surface of the housing 23, and a cap 25 provided in a proximal end portion of the housing 23.

[0048] The ferrule 21 includes an insertion hole formed therein, for inserting the optical fiber (not shown) of the bare fiber 11 or 12. A spring 26 is mounted in a compressed state in the optical axis direction between the flange part 22 and the cap 25. The spring 26 applies an elastic force to bias the ferrule 21 to the leading end side. The cap 25 includes an annular groove 25a formed in its outer peripheral surface.

[0049] As illustrated in FIG. 1, the housing 23 has a substantially rectangular parallelepiped shape, and includes a through-hole formed therein in the optical axis direction. The ferrule 21, the flange part 22, the spring 26, and the bare fiber 11 or 12 are contained in the through-hole.

[0050] The locking lever 24 extends obliquely upward from the top surface of the housing 23 toward the proximal end side and is elastic in the up-down direction. In this embodiment, the locking lever 24 and the housing 23 are integrally molded. The locking lever 24 includes an interlocking portion 24a in its middle portion. The interlocking portion 24a is engaged, in the optical axis direction, with a locking groove (not shown) provided in the optical adapter, to thereby prevent the optical connector 20a or 20b from coming off the optical adapter.

[0051] As illustrated in FIGS. 3A and 3B, the holder 30 includes, a main body portion 31 and a cable fixing portion 32 protruding from the main body portion 31 toward the proximal end side. The holder 30 has a symmetrical shape in the up-down direction and the right-left direction. The main body portion 31 has a substantially rectangular shape in plan view, and is provided with connector fixing portions 31a, 31b for fixing the optical connectors 20a, 20b (see FIGS. 3B and 3D). The connector fixing portions 31a, 31b have an arcuate shape, and are open on their outer sides in the width direction in side surfaces of the main body portion 31. The annular grooves 25a of the caps 25 of the optical connectors 20a, 20b are fitted to the connector fixing portions 31a, 31b (see FIG. 2). The connector fixing portions 31a, 31b have openings 31a1, 31b1, which have a dimension L in the up-down direction (see FIG. 3D) set to be slightly smaller than an outer diameter of the annular grooves 25a. Further, the connector fixing portions 31a, 31b have an inner diameter D which is set to be slightly larger than the outer diameter of the annular grooves 25a.

[0052] The optical connectors 20a, 20b are fitted to the holder 30 as follows. First, the annular grooves 25a of the optical connectors 20a, 20b are pressed into the openings

31a1, 31b1 from the outside in the width direction, to thereby elastically expand the openings **31a1, 31b1** up and down. When the annular grooves **25a** reach the connector fixing portions **31a, 31b**, the openings **31a1, 31b1** elastically recover their original shapes to complete the fitting. At this time, the annular grooves **25a** and the connector fixing portions **31a, 31b** are engaged with each other in the optical axis direction, to thereby cause the optical connectors **20a, 20b** to be positioned in the optical axis direction relative to the holder **30**. Further, the optical connectors **20a, 20b** are positioned in the width direction relative to the holder **30** due to the fact that the openings **31a1, 31b1** of the connector fixing portions **31a, 31b** have the dimension D in the up-down direction which is slightly smaller than the outer diameter of the annular grooves **25a**. Further, the optical connectors **20a, 20b** are allowed to rotate relative to the holder **30** due to the fact that the connector fixing portions **31a, 31b** have the inner diameter D which is slightly larger than the outer diameter of the annular grooves **25a**.

[0053] The main body portion **31** is provided with protrusions **31c** on both side surfaces in the width direction, and recessed portions **31d** are formed on the leading end side of the protrusions **31c** (see FIGS. 3A to 3C). In the illustrated example, on each side surface of the main body portion **31**, there are provided a pair of protrusions **31c, 31c** and a pair of recessed portions **31d, 31d** spaced apart from each other in the up-down direction.

[0054] The cable fixing portion **32** has a substantially cylindrical shape, and includes guide grooves **32a, 32b** formed on its both sides in the width direction, for guiding the bare fibers **11, 12** (see FIGS. 3A and 3E). The guide grooves **32a, 32b** are curved outward in the width direction so as to extend away from each other toward the leading end side and extend into the main body portion (see FIG. 3F).

[0055] As illustrated in FIG. 2, the bare fibers **11, 12** are respectively contained in the guide grooves **32a, 32b** formed in the cable fixing portion **32** of the holder **30**. The outer periphery of the cable fixing portion **32** is covered by the reinforcement fiber **14**. A caulking member **33** is placed over the outer periphery of the cable fixing portion **32** and the reinforcement fiber **14**, and the outer periphery of the caulking member **33** is fixedly caulked, thereby fixing the duplex cable **10** to the holder **30**. In this way, the reinforcement fiber **14** of the duplex cable **10** is fixed to the cable fixing portion **32** of the holder **30**. Thus, even when the duplex cable **10** is subjected to a tension, the tension can be borne by the reinforcement fiber **14** and the caulking member **33**, and hence it is possible to avoid a risk of the tension acting directly on the bare fibers **11, 12** to cause damages of the optical fibers.

[0056] The boot **40** is formed of a flexible material (for example, elastomer). As illustrated in FIGS. 4A and 4B, the boot **40** integrally includes, a tubular main body portion **41** which narrows toward the proximal end side, a pair of fixing portions **42** which extend from both ends in the width direction of a leading end portion of the main body portion **41**, and an operation lever **43** which is provided in a top surface of the main body portion **41**. As illustrated in FIG. 2, the main body portion **41** covers the outer periphery of the duplex cable **10** extending from the cable fixing portion **32** of the holder **30** to the proximal end side. The elastic force of the boot **40** prevents the duplex cable **10** from being sharply folded in the vicinity of the proximal end portion of the cable fixing portion **32**, and hence it is possible to prevent the damages of the optical fibers in the bare fibers **11, 12**.

[0057] The fixing portions **42** each include fitting holes **42a** formed therein, for fitting the protrusions **31c** of the main body portion **31** of the holder **30** (see FIGS. 4A, 4B, and 4D). Further, the fixing portions **42** each include a cutout **42b** formed therein on the leading end side of the fitting holes **42a** (see FIG. 4C). When the boot **40** is placed over the holder **30**, the protrusions **31c** of the holder **30** are fitted into the fitting holes **42a** of the boot **40**, and the protrusions **31** and the fitting holes **42a** engage with each other in the optical axis direction. Therefore, the holder **30** is prevented from coming off the boot **40**. Further, the cutouts **42b** of the boot **40** and the recessed portions **31d** of the holder **30** cooperatively form gaps **50** (see FIG. 1). The protrusions **31c** and the fitting holes **42a** can be disengaged from each other by inserting a jig or the like (not shown) in the gaps **50** so as to elastically deform the fixing portions **42** of the boot **40** outward in the width direction. Therefore, it is possible to easily separate the boot **40** and the holder **30** from each other.

[0058] As illustrated in FIG. 4D, the operation lever **43** extends obliquely upward from the top surface of the main body portion **41** toward the leading end side. The operation lever **43** includes a leading end portion which is provided above proximal end portions of the locking levers **24, 24** of the pair of optical connectors **20a, 20b** (see FIG. 1). The leading end portion functions as a pressing part **43a** for downwardly pressing the pair of locking levers **24, 24**. When the operation lever **43** is downwardly pressed to be elastically deformed, the pressing part **43a** of the operation lever **43** downwardly presses the proximal end portions of the pair of locking levers **24, 24** altogether, to thereby elastically deform the locking levers **24, 24**. This causes the interlocking portions **24a, 24a** of the locking levers **24, 24** to be disengaged from the locking groove of the optical adapter (not shown), with the result that the optical connector unit **1** can be detached from the optical adapter. Note that, the boot **40** may have a mark, a letter, and the like on its surface (for example, on a top surface of the operation lever **42**) for explicitly indicating which one of the pair of optical connectors **20a, 20b** is used for input and which one is used for output.

[0059] The boot **40** is provided with a rotation restricting portion for restricting rotation of the optical connectors **20a, 20b** relative to the holder **30**. In this embodiment, the operation lever **43** is provided with interlocking portions **43b** which engage with the locking levers **24** in the width direction, and the interlocking portions **42b** function as the rotation restricting portion. Specifically, as illustrated in FIGS. 4B and 4E, there are provided a plurality of (in the illustrated example, four) interlocking portions **43b** downwardly protruding from the leading end portion (pressing part **43a**) of the operation lever **43**. The proximal end portion of the locking lever **24** is fitted between a pair of interlocking portions **43b, 43b** in the width direction. The interlocking portions **43b** and the locking lever **24** engage with each other in a rotational direction, to thereby restrict the rotation of the locking lever **24**, resulting in restriction of the rotation of each of the optical connectors **20a, 20b** relative to the holder **30**.

[0060] In the optical connector unit **1** having the configuration described above, the optical connectors **20a, 20b** can be easily exchanged. Hereinafter, specific steps of exchanging the optical connectors **20a, 20b** are described with reference to FIGS. 5 to 7.

[0061] In the optical connector unit into which the pair of optical connectors **20a, 20b** are reversely assembled relative to the correct positions (see FIG. 1), first, as illustrated in FIG.

5, the boot 40 is detached from the holder 30. Specifically, the jig or the like is inserted into the gaps 50 (see FIG. 1), which are formed between the boot 40 and the holder 30, so as to elastically deform the fixing portions 42 of the boot 40 outward in the width direction, thereby causing the protrusions 31c of the holder 30 and the fitting holes 42a of the boot 40 to be disengaged from each other. In this state, the boot 40 is retracted to the proximal end side (see an arrow of FIG. 5), thereby separating the boot 40 and the holder 30 from each other. As a result, the interlocking portions 43b of the operation lever 43 of the boot 40 and the locking levers 24, 24 of the optical connectors 20a, 20b are disengaged from each other, and hence the optical connectors 20a, 20b become rotatable relative to the holder 30.

[0062] Next, as illustrated in FIG. 6, the optical connectors 20a, 20b each are rotated relative to the holder 30 so as to be reversed upside down. Along with this, the boot 40 is rotated relative to the holder 30 so as to be reversed upside down. Note that, instead of rotating the optical connectors 20a, 20b under a state in which the optical connectors 20a, 20b are fitted to the holder 30 as described above, the optical connectors 20a, 20b may be once detached from the holder 30 and reversed upside down, and then fitted back to the holder 30. However, in this case, detaching and fitting the optical connectors 20a, 20b is troublesome and there is a fear of the damages of the optical fibers during the detaching and fitting work. Thus, it is preferred that the optical connectors 20a, 20b be rotated under a state in which the optical connectors 20a, 20b are fitted to the holder 30 as described above.

[0063] In this state, as illustrated in FIG. 7, the boot 40 is placed over the holder 30, and the protrusions 31c of the holder 30 are fitted into the fitting holes 42a of the boot 40. Then, the entire optical connector unit 1 is reversed upside down, thereby enabling the optical connectors 20a, 20b to be located in the correct positions (see FIG. 1).

[0064] Note that, in the exchanging work of the optical connectors 20a, 20b described above, the holder 30 is reversed upside down after the exchanging work. In this embodiment, the holder 30 has a vertically symmetrical shape, and hence the optical connector unit 1 has the same shape before and after the exchanging work. Thus, the optical connector unit 1 after the exchanging work can be fitted to the optical adapter without any problem.

[0065] The present invention is not limited to the above-mentioned embodiment. For example, in the above-mentioned embodiment, the operation lever 43 is provided with the rotation restricting portion (interlocking portions 43b) for restricting the rotation of the optical connectors 20a, 20b relative to the holder 30, but the present invention is not limited thereto. For example, the fixing portions 42 of the boot 40 may be extended to the leading end side so as to be held in contact with side surfaces on the outside in the width direction of the optical connectors 20a, 20b, thereby restricting the rotation of the optical connectors 20a, 20b.

[0066] Alternatively, the holder 30 may be provided with a rotation restricting portion. In this case, even under a state in which the boot 40 is detached from the holder 30, the optical connectors 20a, 20b cannot be rotated. Therefore, the optical connectors 20a, 20b need to be reversed upside down relative to the holder 30 (see FIGS. 5 and 6) under a state in which the optical connectors 20a, 20b are detached from the connector fixing portions 31a, 31b of the holder 30. In contrast to this, in the above-mentioned embodiment, the boot 40 is provided with the rotation restricting portion. Thus, the optical connec-

tors 20a, 20b can preferably be reversed upside down under a state in which the optical connectors 20a, 20b are fitted to the holder 30.

[0067] Further, in the above-mentioned embodiment, the duplex cable 10 having a substantially circular cross-sectional shape (see FIG. 11) is employed. However, this is not restrictive and a duplex cable having, for example, a spectacles-like cross-sectional shape (see FIG. 8) may be employed. As described above, the duplex cable having a substantially circular cross-sectional shape is preferred because the cable can be twisted more smoothly and the optical connector unit 1 can be rotated and fitted to the optical adapter more easily.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

- [0068] 1 optical connector unit duplex cable
 - [0069] 11, 12 bare fiber
 - [0070] 20a (input) optical connector
 - [0071] 20b (output) optical connector
 - [0072] 21 ferrule
 - [0073] 22 flange part
 - [0074] 30 housing
 - [0075] 24 locking lever
 - [0076] 25 cap
 - [0077] 30 holder
 - [0078] 31 main body portion
 - [0079] 31a, 31b connector fixing portion
 - [0080] 32 cable fixing portion
 - [0081] 32a, 32b guide groove
 - [0082] 40 boot
 - [0083] 41 main body portion
 - [0084] 42 fixing portion
 - [0085] 43 operation lever
 - [0086] 43a pressing part
 - [0087] 43b interlocking portion (rotation restricting portion)
 - [0088] 50 gap
1. A duplex optical connector unit, which is fixed to a leading end of a duplex cable including a pair of optical fibers therein, comprising:
 - a pair of optical connectors, each of which includes a ferrule provided to a leading end of each of the pair of optical fibers, a housing for holding the ferrule, and a locking lever extending obliquely upward from a top surface of the housing toward a proximal end side, the pair of optical connectors each being provided at the leading end of each of the pair of optical fibers;
 - a holder, which includes connector fixing portions for fixing the pair of optical connectors, and a cable fixing portion for fixing the duplex cable; and
 - a boot, which includes a main body portion fitted to the holder and covering an outer periphery of the duplex cable, an operation lever extending obliquely upward from a top surface of the main body portion toward a leading end side, and a pressing part provided in the operation lever and located above the locking lever.
 2. A duplex optical connector unit according to claim 1, wherein the boot includes a rotation restricting portion for restricting rotation of the pair of optical connectors relative to the holder.
 3. A duplex optical connector unit according to claim 2, wherein the operation lever includes interlocking portions which engage with the locking lever on both sides in a width direction, the interlocking portions functioning as the rotation restricting portion.

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