

Decoding of Multichannel EEG Activity from the Visual Cortex in Response to Pseudorandom Binary Sequences of Visual Stimuli

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Received 9 January 2011; accepted 17 February 2011

ABSTRACT: Electroencephalography (EEG) signals have been an attractive choice to build noninvasive brain computer interfaces (BCIs) for nearly three decades. Depending on the stimuli, there are different responses which one could get from EEG signals. One of them is the P300 response which is a visually evoked response that has been widely studied. Steady state visually evoked potential (SSVEP) is the response to an oscillating stimulus with fixed frequency, which is detectable from the visual cortex. However, there exists some work on using an m-sequence with different lags as the control sequence of the flickering stimuli. In this study, we used several m-sequences instead of one with the intent of increasing the number of possible command options in a BCI setting. We also tested two different classifiers to decide between the m-sequences and study the performance of multi channel classifiers versus single channel classifiers. The study is done over two different flickering frequencies, 15 and 30 Hz to investigate the effect of flickering frequency on the accuracy of the classification methods. Our study shows that the EEG channels are correlated, and although all the channels contain some useful information, but combining them with a multi channel classifier based on the assumption of having conditional independence will not improve the classification accuracy. In addition, we were able to get reasonably good results using the 30 Hz flickering frequency comparing with 15 Hz flickering frequency that will give us the ability of having a shorter training and decision making time. © 2011 Wiley Periodicals, Inc. *Int J Imaging Syst Technol* 21, 139–147, 2011; Published online in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com). DOI 10.1002/ima.20288

Key words: steady state visual evoked potential; brain computer interface; m-sequence

I. INTRODUCTION

Brain computer interfaces (BCIs) establish a communication channel between the brain and the external world and allows the subject to communicate and control devices without the need to move a

muscle, using brain signals only. So the immediate beneficiaries of this technology will be individuals with mild to severe disabilities (e.g., locked-in individuals) whose mobility are very limited or cannot move at all. Healthy individuals can also use a BCI to interface with computers and devices or to improve their performance in some tasks. For example, an individual can potentially use hands to manipulate one device while simultaneously using a BCI system to control another application. Over the recent decades there have been increasingly intense attempts to build a practical and easy to use BCI system [see for instance Sutter's work (Sutter, 1984) among many others from that decade and before]. Today's BCI systems use a variety of electrophysiological signals to determine the intent of the user. Slow cortical potentials, P300 potentials, mu or beta rhythms recorded from the scalp, and cortical neuronal activity recorded by implanted electrodes are examples of such signals (Wolpaw, 2002). Depending on how the BCI system captures signals from the brain, these systems are categorized into three groups: invasive, partially invasive, and noninvasive. In an invasive BCI, microelectrode arrays are inserted into the brain to measure neuronal spike activity and local field potentials. In a partially invasive BCI, the electrocorticogram arrays are placed under the skull, but on the surface of the brain. In noninvasive BCI, on the other hand, the electrodes are only in electrical contact with the scalp using a conductive paste or gel. Among all the BCI methods, those based on electroencephalography (EEG) are most attractive because of their noninvasive nature enabling a wide range of applications benefiting diverse populations.

P300 and steady state visually evoked potentials (SSVEPs) are the two major responses from the brain, which could be detected using EEG signals.* There has been substantial amount of research on the P300 response of the brain to flashing stimuli (Pfurtscheller, 2000; Wolpaw, 2002; Pfurtscheller, 2010). P300-Speller system and its variations (Pfurtscheller, 2000; Wolpaw, 2002; Treder, 2010) and P300 cursor movement control (Gao, 2007) are examples

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Grant sponsors: Supported by NSF under grants ECCS0929576, ECCS0934506, IIS0934509, IIS0914808, and BCS1027724 and NIH grant 1R01DC009834-01.

*Motor imagery induced cortical activity is the third popularly exploited brain signal in EEG-based BCI design.

of such P300 based BCI systems. Different methods of stimulating the brain to produce a P300 response has also been studied (Horki, 2010). In general, certain conditions should hold for a system to produce a P300 response: events must be presented randomly, a separation rule must exist to separate the events into two categories, one category of events must be presented infrequently, and finally the subject's response must be based on a pre-defined rule (Farwell, 1988; Donchin, 2000).

SSVEP refers to the response of the visual cortex induced by periodically flickering visual stimuli such as checkerboards consisting of two patterns with opposite colors (Pfurtscheller, 2000; Allison, 2008). Other stimulation methods have also been studied (Danhua, 2010), but checkerboards remain the more common choice and they are known to exhibit EEG signals that are more consistent across subjects than block flickering stimuli. SSVEP response is mainly observable for stimulus frequencies in the interval of 3 to 75 Hz (Herrmann, 2001). In this method, the subject needs to focus his gaze on the stimulus of interest to produce the strongest SSVEP response (Sutter, 1992). Focusing on the stimulus causes oscillations in the visual cortex matched with the frequency of the flickering stimulus and its harmonics. These oscillations could be quantitatively studied by observing the power density spectrum of the EEG signals from the electrodes placed on the visual cortex (Cheng, 2002; Mast, 1991; Horki, 2010). Gao et al. (Gao, 2002; Ortner, 2010; Gao, 2010) have studied this phenomenon to build BCI systems with numerous options. However, because the response contains the second, third, fourth, and maybe higher harmonics of the stimuli, it is difficult to find a set of distinct frequencies for which the leakage of power from harmonics due to system nonlinearity and signal sampling insufficiency do not overlap (Muller, 2005). Mukesh proposed double stimulation to produce more options and was able to achieve six options by using three different frequencies (Mukesh, 2006). Jia also proposed a method of mixed frequency and phase coding, which provides more options from each frequency (Jia, 2010). However, the number of choices for stimulus frequencies is very limited.

Among all BCI systems, the ones based on SSVEP are probably the easiest to develop and most reliable. As a result, SSVEP methods are receiving more attention these days (Danhua, 2010). Despite the advantages of SSVEP, successful application of this method involves certain complications, such as the limited number of choices for the frequencies and keeping the subjects focused throughout the experiment as they get experience fatigue because of the flickering checkerboards (or other patterns). To solve the problem with limited number of choices for frequencies, Sutter proposed a method to build an SSVEP BCI using m-sequences (Golomb, 1967) as the control sequence for pattern flickering instead of just flickering checkerboards with constant frequencies (Sutter, 1984, 1992). Different phase offsets of one m-sequence are nearly orthogonal to each other by design. This property is used to enhance linear classification performance. The classifier is built by templates which are obtained during a training session. A template represents the average response of the subject to a stimulus. During the test phase, the classifier calculates the correlation between the EEG signal and templates corresponding to different offsets of the m-sequence. The template with the highest correlation will be chosen. This is basically a matched filter signal detector. Gao et al. recently tried to recreate this procedure (Gao, 2009) but were not able to achieve the same throughput. Yun proposed a similar approach using coded VEP to increase the number of choices for stimulus (Yun, 2010). In Sutter's approach, the number of options

for stimuli increases to nearly equal to the number of variations (offsets) of the m-sequence. However, as the number of choices increases, the length of the m-sequence should increase too. Using a longer m-sequence, however, increases the time that is needed to calculate the correlation and to classify the desired option. Although there have been a lot of work on SSVEP BCI systems, still there are many open considerations in designing an SSVEP-based intent classifier. Some of these complications are the length of the training session, the total time needed to make a reliable decision, the performance of the classifier, and of course, the overall cost of the system (Gao, 2009).

Combinations of SSVEP and P300 methods have also been proposed in literature (Dornhege, 2003; Gert, 2010). Leeb proposed a system combining EEG and EMG (Leeb, 2010). Allison proposed a method of combining EEG with event-related desynchronization (ERD) (Allison, 2010). Using multiple methods with the option of turning on and off one method may help to increase the number of choices for the stimuli, and the accuracy of the measurements, but it increases the training time and the complexity of the overall system.

In this paper, we study the idea of using multiple m-sequences as the control sequences of stimuli flickering activity. The motivation behind using multiple m-sequences instead of shifted versions of one m-sequence is to eventually eliminate the need for perfect synchronization of the display and the EEG signal trace for classification purposes. The classifiers which use shifted versions of one m-sequence need perfect synchronization to discriminate between different offsets of the m-sequence (Sutter, 1984; Sutter, 1992). In this study, we still assume that the timing information is available so that a basic template matching classifier can be used. We will use two classifiers: (1) a basic template matching classifier using the best channel and (2) a naïve Bayesian fusion classifier which has the ability of using one or multiple channels to make the final decision. The goal behind using the Bayesian fusion classifier is to extract information from the channels with low accuracy, and combine with the information from better channels to improve the overall accuracy. The fusion is naïve in the sense that it assumes contributions from each channel are statistically independent; future work will explore more advanced and accurate graphical models for statistical channel connectivity. We also studied the effect of two different flickering frequencies on the accuracy of classification. If the classification turns out to be at least equally successful, we can simply use the higher frequency of flickering the m-sequences, which in our case corresponds to a doubling of the bandwidth of the BCI system at no cost. In addition to faster classification in test mode, higher flickering frequency has the advantage of yielding a shorter training session.

II. METHODS

A. Data Acquisition. As the visual stimulus, we use two inverted checkerboard patterns with $1.75 \text{ cm} \times 1.75 \text{ cm}$ black-white blocks centered on the screen covering a $14 \text{ cm} \times 14 \text{ cm}$ area. The subject is seated such that the checkerboard is approximately centered in the field-of-view and the eye to screen distance is approximately 60 cm away, leading to an approximate visual angle of 20° . Figure 1 parts a and b show different patterns of a checkerboard according to a "0" or a "1" bit in the m-sequence and part c shows a sample m-sequence of length 31. The subjects are not restricted to maintain the visual or viewing angle during data acquisition. The binary sequence that is presented on the screen was also measured and

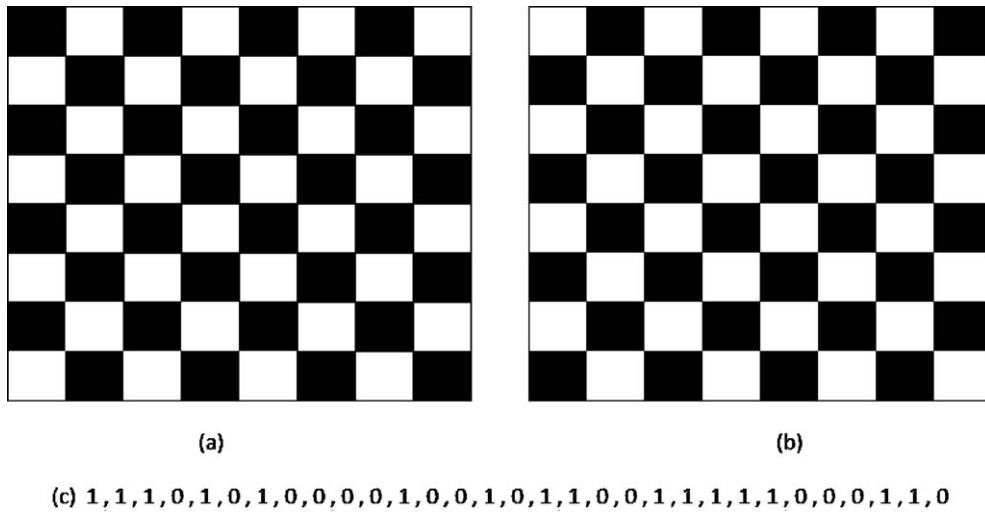


Figure 1. (a) Checkerboard pattern according to "1" bit, (b) checkerboard pattern according to a "0" bit, and (c) a sample m-sequence of length 31 bit.

recorded using an optical sensor synchronously with the EEG using a g.USBamp and g.TRIGbox acquisition system from G.tec (Graz, Austria). The two inverted versions of the checkerboard are arbitrarily assigned the bit labels 0 and 1, and the appropriate checkerboard was sent to the screen using the Matlab psychophysics toolbox in the first possible monitor refresh cycle consistent with the desired flickering frequency (measured in hertz or bits per second).

As monitor refresh rate is set to 60 Hz, our frequency selections for bit presentation rate are guided by this limitation and we try 15 and 30 Hz bit rates to ensure that visual stimulus transitions occur precisely at the intended times.

For this study, the m-sequence set consists of four elements, each one with 31-bits. The sequences are selected from among all 31-length m-sequences to approximately minimize the pair wise

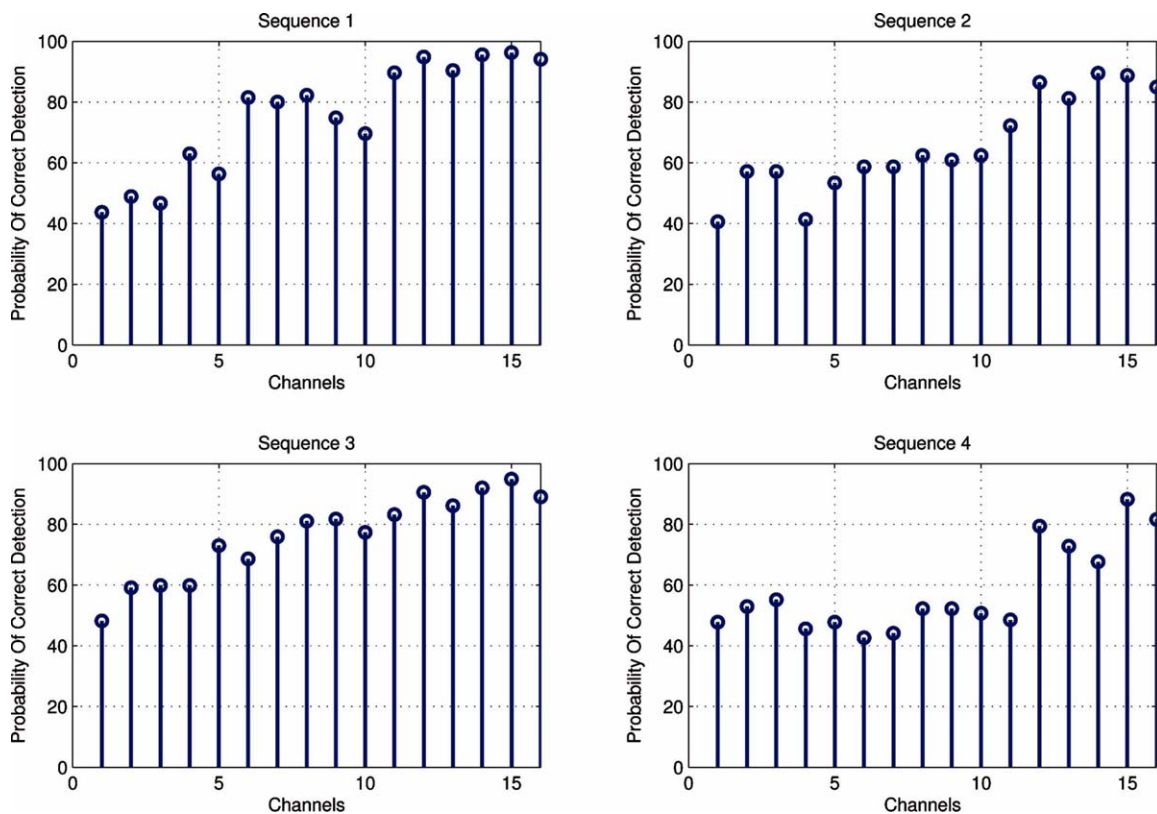


Figure 2. Template matching performance in percent for 15 Hz flickering frequency. [Color figure can be viewed in the online issue, which is available at wileyonlinelibrary.com.]

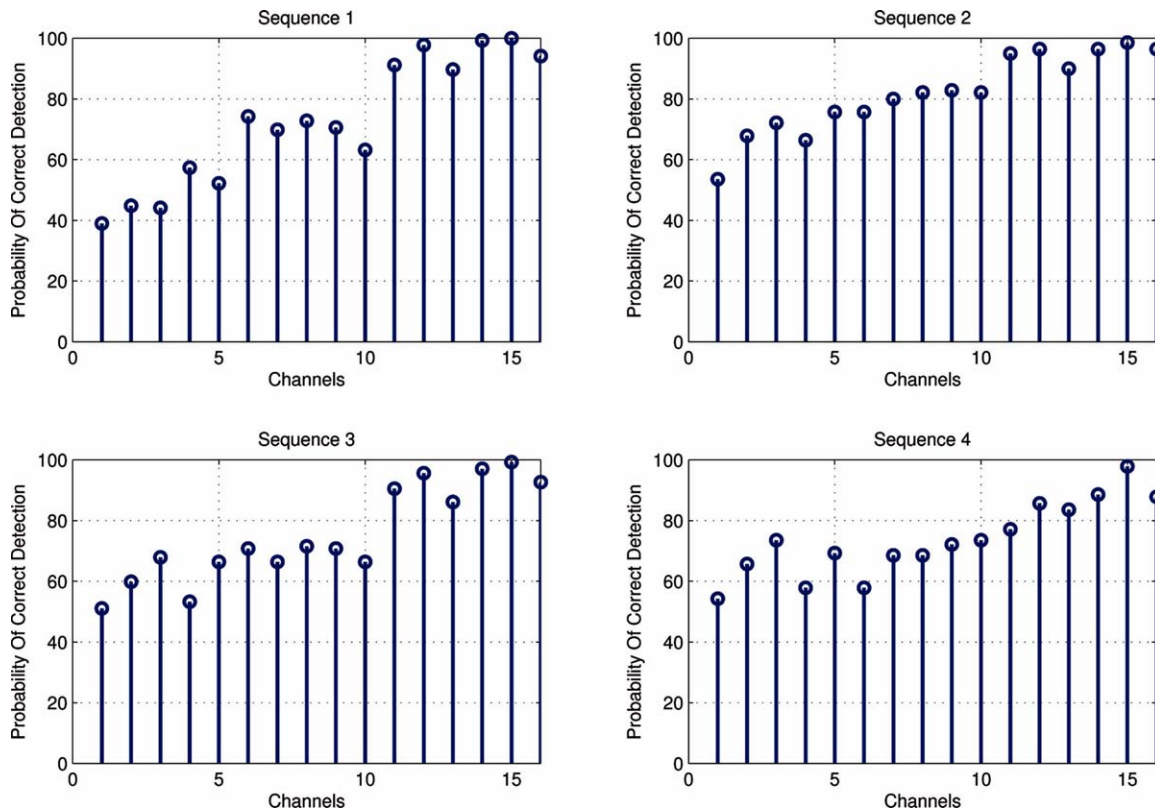


Figure 3. Template matching performance in percent for 30 Hz flickering frequency. [Color figure can be viewed in the online issue, which is available at wileyonlinelibrary.com.]

cross correlations. During an experimental session, for each trial, one of the four sequences is selected randomly in an independent identically distributed fashion according to a uniform probability distribution. The session consisted of 80 trials and each trial contained 12 periods of the designated m-sequence. For a given session, the bit presentation rates were fixed at either 15 or 30 Hz. Each trial begins with a 1 second fixation period during which the subject is instructed to focus the gaze on the + sign at the center of the screen in preparation for the upcoming trial. Between consecutive trials (each of which approximately lasts 25 seconds or 13 seconds), the subject can rest as much as needed and initiates the next trial with a button press at will.

EEG signals, along with the optical sensor data, are captured from the scalp using active g.Butterfly electrodes using a g.Gam-mabox and a g.USBamp by G.tec. A nonabrasive conductive gel is used to provide conductivity between the scalp and the electrodes. Because the goal is to detect modulated P100 signals from the visual cortex, EEG sites were selected to have a higher spatial density around the visual cortex. The channel numbers 16 to 1 in decreasing orders refer to sites O2, Oz, O1, PO4, POz, PO3, P4, P2, Pz, P1, P3, Cp2, Cp1, C4, Cz, and C3, respectively.

There were five subjects participating in this study. Each of them had two sessions, one with the m-sequences presented at the frequency of 15 Hz and the other one with the presentation frequency of 30 Hz. The subjects were all healthy with normal eye sight from 22 to 28 years old.

B. Classification Methods. In this study, we used two different classifiers. The first one is single channel template matching classifier which uses the best channel to make the final decision based on the

correlation of the EEG from that channel with the template response at that channel for the four different m-sequences. The second classifier uses a naive Bayesian fusion method with the assumption of channels being independent. This classifier is able to make the final decision based on the results of a single channel or multiple channels.

A.1. Template Matching Single Channel Classifier. This is a correlation based classifier. Each EEG trace to be evaluated receives four scores for four m-sequences and the sequence with the maximum score is chosen as the shown sequence. The scores for each channel are the correlations between the EEG signal from each channel and the m-sequence response templates for the corresponding channel. The templates are built using the training data collected at the beginning of each session separately using the sample mean of the EEG signal for each channel in response to one period of the appropriate sequence, which leads to four templates for each channel in this case. We will use the name *template order* to refer to the number of response periods used to built the template; in other words, if we build a template using the EEG signal in response to presentation of one sequence for 10 periods then the order of that template is 10. To build the template, the EEG signals are aligned according to the start of the presentation of each sequence period using the optical sensor, and they are split in parts whose length is equal to the length of the presentation of one sequence for one period. Clearly, templates with higher order will be smother and less noisy (noise power inversely proportional to the template order), but they will need a longer training session. We used sample averaging to obtain the maximum likelihood templates under the assumption of Gaussian measurement and background noise. The decision for channel c is $d^c = \operatorname{argmax}_i p_i^c$ where p_i^c is the correlation score between the t_i^c template for the i^{th} m-sequence for

Table I. Template classifier performance in percent for 15Hz flickering of checkerboards

Channel Placement	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
C3	36.5	84.5	55.5	7.39
CZ	44.75	63.75	53	7.13
C4	38.5	83.75	55.75	6.20
CP1	39.5	56.25	47.25	11.67
CP2	23.5	57.25	43	6.27
P3	19	84.25	51.25	10.16
P1	22.75	67	45	10.15
PZ	47.75	79.75	64.25	10.21
P2	40	99	63.75	6.30
P4	36.75	68	53.25	5.64
PO3	39.75	73.25	52.5	12.28
POZ	48	87.75	66	10.15
PO4	44.75	82.5	58.5	7.34
O1	50.75	99.25	77	10.48
OZ	48	95	73.25	3.96
O2	25	89	65	6.0

Table II. Template classifier performance in percent for 30 Hz flickering of checkerboards

Channel Placement	Min	Max	Mean	Std
C3	33	82	55.75	9.31
CZ	36.75	69.25	55.5	10.73
C4	38	87.75	61.25	10.09
CP1	34	61.25	50.5	8.73
CP2	32.75	65.75	48.75	8.65
P3	31	83.5	56	10.56
P1	37	71	54.25	8.00
PZ	42	86.25	65.25	7.50
P2	41	96.75	66.5	6.47
P4	40	72.25	60.5	7.67
PO3	41.75	88.25	59	9.29
POZ	51	94	67.25	8.13
PO4	41	87.25	61	6.92
O1	52.25	96.75	77.25	6.32
OZ	55.75	99	74.75	1.71
O2	37.25	92.75	67.75	7.40

channel c and the \mathbf{y}^c the windowed EEG signal for that channel time-locked to period onset, given by $\rho_i^c = \mathbf{y}^{cT} \mathbf{t}_i^c$.

A.2. Naïve Bayesian Fusion Single Channel Classifier. The motivation to use a Bayesian fusion classifier is to complement the best channel by leveraging useful information from other EEG channels, in order to increase the accuracy of the BCI classifier. Independence of the channels is the key assumption behind this method, hence the descriptor *naïve*. The naïve Bayesian fusion classifier uses the same scores from the template matching classifier described above; this allows for a simple linear dimension reduction in the overall feature vector though certainly this aspect could be improved and will be investigated in future work. For the training data correlation scores for each channel and m-sequence pair, a Gaussian Kernel density estimate (GKDE) is obtained. The bandwidth parameter for the Gaussian kernel is calculated using the Silverman rule of thumb specified below. During the test session, after receiving all scores for channel and m-sequence pairs for the new

EEG trace under consideration, using the estimated GKDEs, a new probabilistic score for each correlation score is obtained. Using the channel-score conditional independence assumption (given the m-sequence) and taking the logarithm of the likelihood to obtain log-likelihood, the overall decision is obtained based on conditional a posteriori likelihood calculations; these are the summation of the logarithm of the individual channel/m-sequence probabilities. The sequence that has the highest a posteriori likelihood (assuming uniform priors for m-sequences) will be the winner. The decision criterion is $d^c = \arg\max_i p(\mathbf{l}|\rho_i^1, \dots, \rho_i^C)$, where C is the number of channels, ρ_i^c is the correlation score for channel c , and template for sequence l defined as given above in the template matching. The GKDE for the probabilistic distribution of these correlation scores obtained using training set data is given by $p(\rho_i^c|i) = \frac{1}{N^i} \sum_{s=1}^{N^i} \mathbf{G}_{\sigma_i^c}(\rho_i^c - \rho_{i,s}^c)$, where $\rho_{i,s}^c = \mathbf{y}_s^{cT} \mathbf{t}_i^c$. Under the assumption of conditional independence of the channels given the sequence, the decision d_c will be simplified as

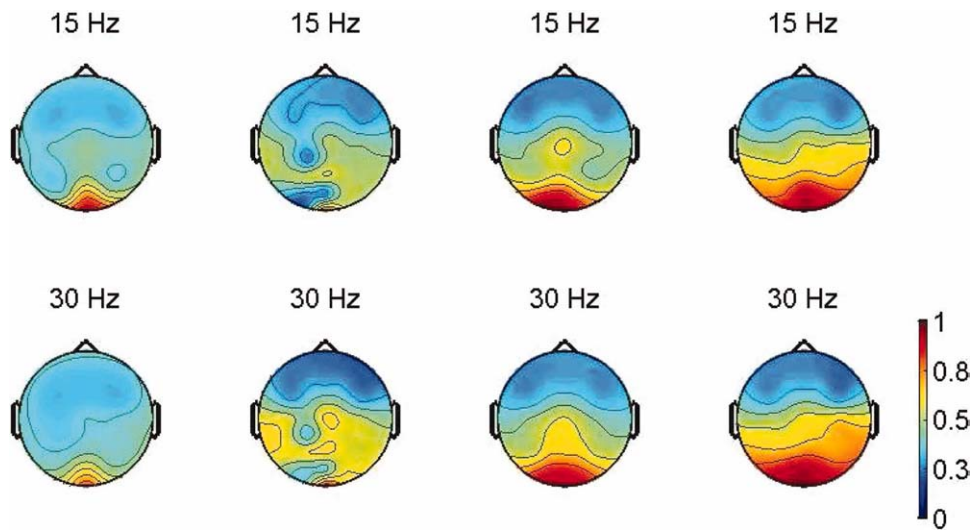


Figure 4. Probability of correct decision among 4 m-sequences as a spatial scalp distribution at 15 and 30 Hz flickering frequencies for subjects 1 to 4 from left to right. [Color figure can be viewed in the online issue, which is available at wileyonlinelibrary.com.]

Table III. Confusion matrices for all 16 channels at 15 Hz flickering frequency

		Template										Template							
		Sequence 1		Sequence 2		Sequence 3		Sequence 4				Sequence 1		Sequence 2		Sequence 3		Sequence 4	
		mean	(std.)	mean	(std.)	mean	(std.)	mean	(std.)			mean	(std.)	mean	(std.)	mean	(std.)	mean	(std.)
Sequence	1	37.16	7.04	22.22	4.01	21.66	8.20	18.97	5.76	Sequence	1	45.23	3.70	20.56	4.30	19.68	4.22	14.53	0.86
	2	16.19	2.16	49.95	5.19	18.03	3.80	15.82	5.51		2	14.13	4.16	57.61	6.12	16.00	3.38	12.26	1.17
	3	19.37	4.99	16.33	3.85	47.46	5.78	16.84	1.92		3	15.91	4.46	8.89	5.12	56.16	6.48	19.05	2.48
	4	19.08	2.64	20.60	5.38	21.62	3.43	38.69	8.35		4	15.60	5.83	13.62	6.19	19.83	2.78	50.96	13.37
Sequence	1	44.67	6.32	19.45	8.83	21.38	8.98	14.50	3.07	Sequence	1	44.58	13.31	17.42	6.93	16.91	12.18	21.09	13.60
	2	19.67	5.16	48.24	10.27	17.07	4.77	15.02	6.61		2	21.40	13.68	42.53	18.95	14.93	10.02	21.13	14.36
	3	19.25	5.30	11.05	2.87	51.16	9.61	18.54	5.50		3	22.28	6.95	12.46	5.68	41.51	27.99	23.74	16.76
	4	19.42	6.06	16.51	0.76	18.54	1.95	45.54	7.81		4	21.36	9.87	16.94	6.67	17.13	11.83	44.57	9.52
Sequence	1	46.92	9.05	20.53	8.29	19.70	9.72	12.85	2.62	Sequence	1	52.37	25.60	15.55	10.20	20.16	12.27	11.92	4.66
	2	18.76	5.89	51.16	4.55	17.28	5.63	12.80	2.92		2	16.55	3.57	54.83	11.61	16.76	5.17	11.85	5.55
	3	17.80	7.71	10.19	3.05	54.61	13.60	17.41	3.01		3	17.54	2.62	16.19	9.39	51.89	12.39	14.37	5.07
	4	19.83	2.58	16.70	5.07	18.85	5.73	44.62	5.24		4	15.77	3.14	19.88	7.20	20.53	5.62	43.82	10.46
Sequence	1	56.94	21.67	12.81	8.03	18.14	12.21	12.11	4.18	Sequence	1	58.78	21.41	12.62	8.26	17.22	10.94	11.38	4.01
	2	12.86	5.77	58.16	9.37	18.23	3.64	10.75	3.62		2	12.27	0.93	60.99	4.51	17.46	2.67	9.29	2.17
	3	17.56	2.95	13.59	8.29	56.65	14.08	12.20	3.90		3	16.47	5.25	9.67	5.72	63.34	12.42	10.52	2.88
	4	14.14	5.32	14.55	6.40	21.84	2.56	49.47	10.74		4	14.14	2.06	15.08	6.20	19.47	2.84	51.32	10.82
Sequence	1	55.25	16.47	15.01	7.78	18.56	7.69	11.18	5.98	Sequence	1	52.85	14.86	16.31	7.06	18.04	6.76	12.81	8.06
	2	15.03	2.41	54.89	7.44	18.01	2.93	12.07	5.09		2	18.36	4.93	51.94	11.61	19.32	3.56	10.38	6.46
	3	15.51	5.41	12.08	6.59	57.09	17.42	15.32	6.88		3	17.19	5.98	13.53	5.81	50.25	19.22	19.03	8.42
	4	15.58	3.66	17.43	5.53	17.98	1.87	49.02	7.14		4	20.36	4.58	17.41	3.83	16.49	3.58	45.74	8.11
Sequence	1	61.06	31.26	8.77	8.42	12.81	15.23	17.36	17.60	Sequence	1	67.65	25.70	5.29	7.43	12.45	13.24	14.61	18.34
	2	17.68	16.74	57.78	33.03	8.61	7.13	15.94	18.48		2	11.87	18.86	68.68	35.83	4.82	2.58	14.63	18.53
	3	16.40	8.33	10.46	9.57	54.15	37.11	19.00	21.10		3	13.67	10.94	7.30	6.80	62.04	40.04	16.98	22.61
	4	14.80	14.14	15.66	8.07	13.16	11.09	56.37	19.77		4	11.34	15.49	10.17	10.98	5.28	3.98	73.22	22.63
Sequence	1	65.22	20.03	9.15	7.25	14.65	10.89	10.98	6.09	Sequence	1	73.16	29.46	5.47	7.57	7.31	10.70	14.05	19.29
	2	10.74	6.68	71.06	11.66	9.30	1.61	8.89	4.54		2	12.06	18.93	72.34	38.99	2.43	1.87	13.17	19.86
	3	16.39	8.20	9.47	6.68	61.37	18.41	12.76	7.87		3	12.04	12.78	5.32	8.70	66.75	44.18	15.89	23.04
	4	10.15	7.66	12.64	6.30	15.38	3.81	61.84	13.59		4	11.34	15.69	10.56	11.05	6.40	7.00	71.69	24.58
Sequence	1	94.33	5.30	1.09	1.40	2.75	1.61	1.82	2.42	Sequence	1	80.80	15.28	4.01	7.09	10.06	5.87	5.12	4.16
	2	2.97	4.99	94.06	9.03	1.85	2.80	1.12	1.28		2	5.92	8.05	83.32	16.59	5.40	2.68	5.36	6.49
	3	4.45	2.18	2.10	4.20	90.07	8.48	3.38	3.97		3	13.23	6.58	5.44	5.91	73.52	16.90	7.81	5.53
	4	2.61	4.74	2.97	3.23	6.11	6.62	88.32	14.38		4	7.43	9.56	6.44	3.49	12.86	5.85	73.28	17.62

$$d_c = \operatorname{argmax}_i \sum_{c=1}^C \log p(y_c^i | i) = \operatorname{argmax}_i \sum_{c=1}^C \log \left(\frac{1}{N^i} \sum_{s=1}^{N^i} G_{\sigma_i^2}(\rho_i^c - \rho_{i,s}^c) \right)$$

where ρ_i^c is the new correlation score from the test data and $\rho_{i,s}^c$ is the correlation score from the training data sample s for channel c and m -sequence i .

In this GKDE model, the bandwidth parameter is calculated using Silverman's rule of thumb (Silverman, 1986)

$$\sigma_i^2 = \frac{1}{n} \operatorname{tr} \left(\operatorname{Cov}(\{\rho_{i,s}^c\}) \right) \left(\frac{4}{(2n+1)N^i} \right)^{\frac{2}{n+4}}$$

where $n = 1$ is the dimension of the data, set to unity in this case. The covariance also reduces to standard deviation due to the unit dimension of correlation score data.

This classifier could use one or multiple channels up to the total EEG channels. By adding more channels that contains some information to the Bayesian fusion classifier, the overall results would improve as long as the assumption of having individual conditionally independent channels holds. In the cases where the channels have some correlation, adding more channels with the independence assumption may decrease overall classification accuracy, especially if these correlated channels are poor performers themselves.

III. RESULTS

In this study, we used templates of order 60 for all the subjects; however, the needed template order to achieve a certain accuracy differs from subject to subject, and our best subject was able to achieve the accuracy of more than 95% with

Table IV. Confusion matrices for all 16 channels at 30 Hz flickering frequency

		Template								Template							
		Sequence 1		Sequence 2		Sequence 3		Sequence 4		Sequence 1		Sequence 2		Sequence 3		Sequence 4	
		Mean	(std.)	Mean	(std.)	Mean	(std.)	Mean	(std.)	Mean	(std.)	Mean	(std.)	Mean	(std.)	Mean	(std.)
		Channel 1								Channel 2							
Sequence	1	37.19	5.70	24.69	3.01	21.09	4.63	17.03	5.28	Sequence	1	42.98	8.33	19.77	2.35	23.45	5.56
	2	12.80	5.16	54.55	9.99	15.50	5.75	17.15	2.46		2	9.93	8.00	62.29	13.85	12.80	2.85
	3	20.69	10.45	16.17	5.49	50.81	9.78	12.33	3.38		3	13.36	10.84	14.17	3.16	61.75	15.46
	4	16.92	9.23	24.92	9.33	17.61	5.27	40.55	14.36		4	15.63	4.81	19.45	11.13	15.83	4.84
		Channel 3								Channel 4							
Sequence	1	44.26	4.04	19.60	5.92	21.11	6.30	15.03	4.70	Sequence	1	49.22	11.74	16.34	3.27	19.25	7.88
	2	14.41	9.54	57.98	13.93	10.82	2.90	16.79	6.02		2	22.31	22.41	47.55	23.41	14.80	3.46
	3	18.42	13.64	13.46	4.52	52.87	14.29	15.25	2.36		3	25.28	9.24	14.00	0.98	48.19	9.21
	4	20.93	9.74	18.04	6.29	17.31	7.97	43.72	20.17		4	24.25	15.35	19.81	6.94	16.55	5.48
		Channel 5								Channel 6							
Sequence	1	47.58	4.12	15.54	7.31	20.19	4.41	16.69	4.45	Sequence	1	52.44	16.40	16.62	7.67	16.30	6.59
	2	13.35	7.61	59.58	14.72	11.19	2.40	15.87	6.49		2	14.43	8.71	61.20	14.15	11.55	4.42
	3	17.33	12.36	12.91	2.91	59.05	15.20	10.71	1.93		3	17.35	10.17	11.61	3.51	61.26	16.32
	4	18.00	7.09	17.30	6.42	15.84	7.44	48.86	15.92		4	17.63	9.29	17.44	3.74	19.83	4.32
		Channel 7								Channel 8							
Sequence	1	54.93	12.78	15.92	5.18	17.22	6.98	11.93	4.87	Sequence	1	58.37	12.59	13.00	5.82	15.44	5.45
	2	13.90	9.01	63.91	18.40	10.10	6.40	12.09	3.21		2	12.82	8.97	64.62	18.89	9.56	7.12
	3	15.02	9.93	11.81	1.10	64.28	11.03	8.89	1.81		3	13.91	10.60	11.09	2.74	65.56	10.48
	4	16.55	8.76	13.63	4.63	15.64	6.62	54.18	17.79		4	17.08	6.52	13.83	5.59	13.63	6.67
		Channel 9								Channel 10							
Sequence	1	60.16	9.77	12.99	8.19	13.81	5.17	13.04	5.73	Sequence	1	52.89	7.07	17.53	9.72	14.73	3.91
	2	14.63	8.68	63.90	18.01	7.57	3.23	13.89	7.49		2	17.69	10.12	57.06	20.08	9.37	3.34
	3	18.07	12.30	10.54	1.44	60.13	13.70	11.27	3.59		3	18.45	9.69	11.08	3.15	56.30	13.01
	4	19.09	7.42	12.74	2.76	14.02	6.85	54.15	14.90		4	17.45	5.90	10.75	3.98	16.76	7.54
		Channel 11								Channel 12							
Sequence	1	68.06	19.58	8.86	6.95	14.79	10.55	8.28	5.87	Sequence	1	73.89	19.19	6.84	4.72	10.43	10.82
	2	20.87	22.69	65.02	32.86	8.69	8.04	5.43	3.39		2	21.95	22.88	65.22	31.54	7.60	6.75
	3	17.40	15.35	7.83	4.36	68.39	23.09	6.38	4.72		3	15.07	14.73	7.11	7.31	72.73	24.58
	4	19.90	16.31	10.55	6.72	16.19	7.46	53.36	27.57		4	17.55	17.01	6.04	7.28	13.29	4.99
		Channel 13								Channel 14							
Sequence	1	72.02	14.49	9.01	6.38	7.78	4.16	11.19	8.36	Sequence	1	76.62	22.30	4.50	3.98	10.62	10.30
	2	12.99	10.22	69.86	20.80	8.31	3.76	8.84	7.26		2	19.61	24.23	68.28	33.06	7.59	8.20
	3	14.44	13.10	6.19	4.26	68.82	20.21	10.55	6.01		3	13.26	15.55	4.55	4.19	77.62	25.24
	4	12.18	6.51	9.11	7.19	15.85	6.42	62.86	18.07		4	16.46	18.94	6.00	5.45	8.00	3.76
		Channel 15								Channel 16							
Sequence	1	89.73	10.09	1.08	1.73	4.70	7.12	4.49	4.49	Sequence	1	79.62	12.40	4.88	1.86	7.22	5.86
	2	4.34	4.82	90.78	8.76	3.26	2.98	1.62	1.36		2	11.20	11.73	77.78	18.59	5.78	4.12
	3	4.49	6.65	1.63	1.92	90.77	10.35	3.10	4.51		3	12.81	14.14	3.84	4.90	74.42	23.70
	4	2.73	2.54	1.63	1.91	5.47	3.19	90.16	7.19		4	6.74	3.00	6.00	5.22	10.02	3.02

templates of order 20. Also we did not include the results of our fifth subject in the analysis, because the subject reported after the session that he was not actively paying attention to the flickering checkerboards and occasionally visualizing other thoughts. Consequently, his data analysis results shows 40% accuracy in classification of four m-sequences. This is an experiment which shows that although the SSVEP response is in visual cortex and is expected to be strongly influenced by the external stimulus, internal thoughts and visualization processes can inhibit and reduce the effect of the external visual stimulus leading to poor BCI performance.

The results from the template matching classifier show that the Oz channel, which is placed right on the center of the occipital lobe where the visual cortex is located, has the maximum accuracy among the 16 scalp locations used. As it was expected, the channels located farther from this site, hence the visual cortex, contain less information about the visual stimulus and yield lower accuracy.

Figure 2 shows the test classification accuracy for each channel on the individual m-sequences with chance level of 25% using the template matching classifier and the flickering frequency of 15 Hz for one of the subjects. Figure 3 shows the same for 30 Hz flickering frequency. Table I shows the performance results in (%) for the template classifier for different channels averaged over subjects and four m-sequences in the session with 15 Hz flickering frequency. Table II shows the same results from the template matching classifier for the 30 Hz flickering frequency. We have visualized the overall template classifier accuracy for each channel as a scalp distribution in Figure 4. This figure clearly shows that probability of correct decision increases as the EEG acquisition is made closer to the occipital areas. This is more explicitly observed by investigating the confusion matrices of the template classifiers for each channel. Table III shows the mean performance in percentage and the standard deviation of the confusion matrix entries across subjects for different channels for the session with 15 Hz flickering frequency.

Table IV shows the mean performance in percent and the standard deviation of the confusion matrices for the session with 30 Hz flickering frequency. From channels 14, 15, and 16, which correspond to the best-performing O-sites, we see that sequence 4 is most confused with another and sequence 1 receives most erroneous decision labels from other sequences. Our m-sequence selections attempted to maintain a maximum correlation coefficient of 0.3 between pairs, and this result indicates the importance of sequence design in SSVEP and code-VEP based BCI configurations. It is also interesting that the accuracy of the template classifier is consistently higher for the 30 Hz flickering rate than 15 Hz. This is encouraging as faster bit presentation allows for increased decision speed (hence bandwidth) and these results demonstrate that it also helps improve performance for this particular classifier.

We now investigate the performance of the naïve Bayesian fusion approach. Figure 5 shows the accuracy of the overall classification accuracy across four m-sequences using the naïve Bayesian fusion of best-m channels (best-m for each m taking values 1 to 16 are obtained using brute force combinatorial search to provide the best possible results). Figure 6 shows the same performance results for 30 Hz flickering frequency. These results clearly demonstrate that the naïve Bayesian fusion approach is not effectively combining information from different channels; this can be attributed to the likely fact that EEG signals; therefore correlation scores extracted from them via template projections are correlated with each other especially between neighboring and nearby sites. As a result the accuracy of this classifier begins with the same accuracy of the previous classifier and goes down as the number of channels included in the fusion increases. Consequently, a Bayesian fusion approach such as the one attempted here must use graphical models that allow for higher order connectivity between features from different sites.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE WORK

Looking at the accuracy results from both classifiers the overall performance is better for flickering frequency of 30 Hz. Also, the subjects notified us about being subjectively more comfortable with the experimental paradigm for which the flickering frequency was 30

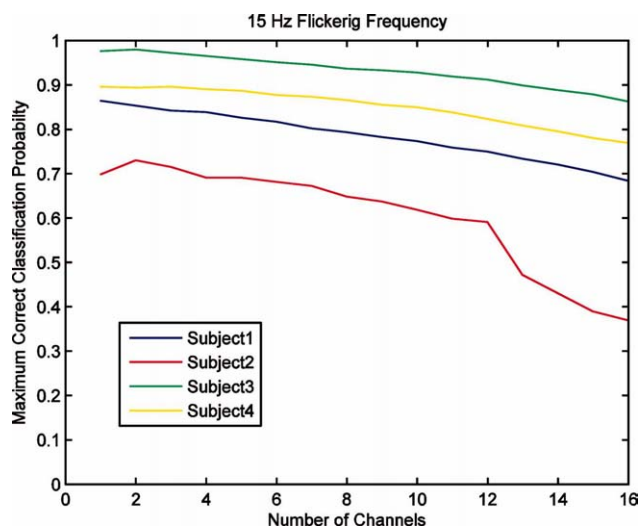


Figure 5. Classification accuracy of naïve Bayesian fusion of best-m channels for m from 1 to 16 at 15Hz flickering rate. [Color figure can be viewed in the online issue, which is available at wileyonlinelibrary.com.]

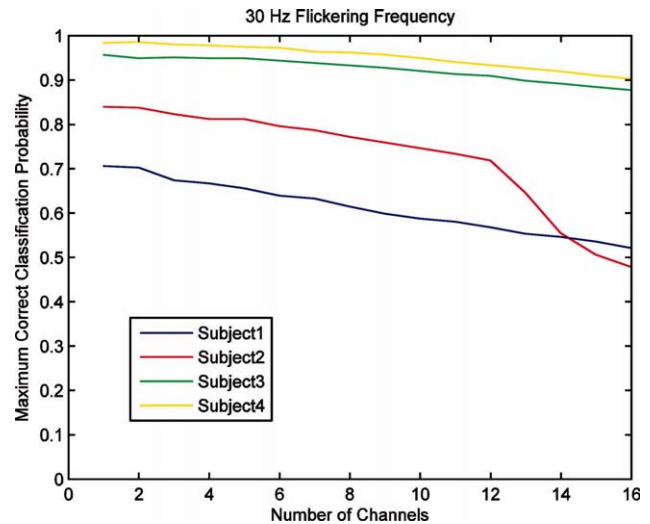


Figure 6. Classification accuracy of naïve Bayesian fusion of best-m channels for m from 1 to 16 at 30Hz flickering rate. [Color figure can be viewed in the online issue, which is available at wileyonlinelibrary.com.]

Hz. Another benefit of using higher bit presentation frequency is shorter BCI decision time. To make a decision, the classifiers based on templates wait for one period of a sequence to be shown; considering the sequence length of 31 bits in our examples, this takes roughly 1 s at 30 Hz and 2 s at 15 Hz. For this reason, besides test mode decision time, training data collection duration is also shorter for the 30 Hz case, which is a great advantage for practical BCIs.

Although the performance of the classifiers differ from one subject to the other, both of the classifiers was able to classify with good accuracy using the best channel (Oz). The performance results for naïve Bayesian fusion show that the performance decreases as the number of channels used in the classifier increases. Our attempt to use naïve Bayesian fusion classifier to use the information from the other channels was not successful, which shows that the key assumption of correlation scores for channels being conditionally independent is very likely not true. As future work we will pursue several enhancements: (1) use graphical models to take into account the higher order correlations between EEG sites to extract the information from neighbor channels, (2) replace template based linear dimension reduction with an information theoretic nonlinear feature projection mechanism to extract the most relevant and discriminative information from each channel's signal, (3) develop a methodology to design improved stimulus control sequences that will enhance discriminability of EEG responses, (4) utilize a better statistical signal model that allows for nonstationarities in EEG signal statistics by allowing period to period variability in the visual cortex response, using hierarchical Bayesian models such as mixed effects approaches, and (5) learning artifact models during the training session and rejecting or reducing them during classification.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The opinions presented here are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the funding agencies.

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