Increasing CS and US longevity increases the learnable trace interval

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Abstract

It has been hypothesized that increasing CS longevity affects performance on trace conditioning. Using a hippocampal model, we find that increasing CS and US longevity increases learnable trace interval. As a matter of fact, over a modest range, maximal learnable trace interval is approximately a linear function of CS/US longevity.

Keywords: Recurrent networks; Sequence learning; Trace conditioning; Learnable trace interval; Hippocampus

1. Introduction

Trace conditioning, devised by Pavlov is a hippocampal-dependent task. In this task, a subject is given a stimulus (called the conditioned stimulus or CS). This stimulus is followed by an interval of no stimulus (called the trace interval). Finally, at the end of the trace interval comes the unconditioned stimulus (UCS or US). The unconditioned stimulus elicits an unconditioned response (UCR). Eventually, if the trace interval is not too long, the subject learns to anticipate the UCS by generating a conditioned response (CR) at an appropriate time.

We have been able to produce models of hippocampal-dependent trace conditioning learning that maps into real time of a training trial. This mapping is based on the measured off-rate time constant of the NMDA-receptor and the time-spanning synaptic modification rule of the model. Taking advantage of this mapping, here we present a new result on trace conditioning that is a quantitative, testable prediction. Specifically, we predict that longer trace intervals can be learned when the longevity of CS and US is increased.

2. The model

The model described here is an extended one of our original hippocampal model of region CA3 [3, 7]. It still uses McCulloch-Pitts neurons that spike or do not spike on any one time-step. The input layer corresponds to a combination of the entorhinal cortex and dentate gyrus (Figure 1a). The CA3 model is a sparsely-interconnected feedback network of typically thousands of neurons where all direct, recurrent connections are excitatory. There is an interneuron mediating feedforward inhibition, and one mediating feedback inhibition. Inhibition is of the divisive form, but activity is only imperfectly controlled because of a delay in the feedback affect which activates these inhibitory neurons.

Region CA3 is modeled as a randomly connected network. Each excitatory neuron randomly connects to approximately $n \cdot c$ other neurons, where n is the number of neurons and c is the connectivity ratio. Given that the output of neuron i at time t is $z_i(t)$, the net internal excitation of neuron j, $y_j(t)$, is given by

$$y_j(t) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_{ij} c_{ij} \phi\left(z_i(t-1)\right)}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_{ij} c_{ij} \phi\left(z_i(t-1)\right) + K_R\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} D_i(t-1) z_i(t-1)\right) + K_0 + K_I \sum_{i=0}^{n} x_i(t)}$$

where w_{ij} represents the weight value between neurons j and i, and c_{ij} is a 0/1 variable indicating connection from neuron j to i. The term $\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_{ij} c_{ij} \phi\left(z_i(t-1)\right)$ represents the excitatory synaptic conductance for the jth neuron. Parameters K_R and K_I are constants that scale the feedback and feedforward inhibitions, respectively. K_0 is a constant that controls the magnitude and stability of activity oscillations and can be considered the rest conductance in a shunting model [12]. Binary, {0, 1}, external input to neuron j at time t is given by $x_j(t)$. The neuron j fires (i.e. $z_j(t) = 1$) if either $x_j(t) = 1$ or if $y_j(t) \geq \theta$ where threshold θ is fixed at one-half. Synaptic failures are included in this present model. The synaptic failure channel of the connection from neuron i to neuron j is represented by the function ϕ [13], where $\phi_i\left(z_j = 0\right) = 0$ and a synaptic failure $\phi_i\left(z_j = 1\right) = 0$, occurs with probability f, and $\phi_i\left(z_j = 1\right) = 1$ with probability (1-f). The failure process is a Bernoulli random variable, which acts independently on each synapse at each time-step. Here the failure rate is 15%.

The model uses a biologically-inspired postsynaptic associative modification rule with time staggering between pre- and postsynaptic activity [2, 5, 6]. For more biological simulations, synaptic modification spans multiple time steps, approximating NMDA-dependent LTP and LTD [1, 11], i.e.

$$w_{ij}(t+1) = w_{ij}(t) + \mu z_j(t)\left(\left(\bar{z}_i(t-1)\right) - w_{ij}(t)\right)$$

where

$$\bar{z}_i(t) = \begin{cases} \bar{z}_i(t-1)\alpha & \text{if } \phi(z_i(t)) = 0 \\ 1 & \text{if } \phi(z_i(t)) = 1 \end{cases}$$

i is input and j is output, and α represents the decay time constant of the NMDA receptor. This decay of activity is exponential, as in all channels, and an e-fold decay in the NMDA receptor has been used in the lab (see section Methods and [4, 10]).

For better control of activity, a rule for modification of interneuron afferent synaptic strength is used [14].

$$D_i(t) = D_i(t-1) + \lambda z_i(t-1)\left[m(t)/n - \text{Desired Activity}\right],$$

where D_i is the weight of excitatory connection from neuron i to the feedback interneuron, λ is the pyramidal-interneuron synaptic modification rate constant, and m(t) is the number of active neurons at time t.

Figure 1 here

3. Methods

The CS and UCS are represented in the model as input patterns presented at specific times to a network during training (e.g. see Figure 2). The trace interval is represented as no external activity. If, during testing, the network successfully anticipates the UCS at the appropriate time (e.g. about 140ms prior to the onset of the UCS for a 500ms trace interval, see [8]), then we say that the network successfully acquired trace conditioning. That is, the network must turn on at least 16 out of 40 neurons prior to US onset. However, turning on US neurons too early (e.g. 100ms after CS offset) is also a failure to learn the trace interval.

In order for a model to accurately capture experimental observations, the behavioral time scale must be mapped onto the network. Time scale is derived from the e-fold

NMDA-receptor off-rate time constant $\tau_A \approx 100$ ms (the amount of time required for the glutamate binding to the NMDA receptor to decay to $1/e$ of its previous value); in terms of the synaptic modification equation we have $\alpha = e^{-\Delta t/\tau_A} = e^{(-20/100)} = 0.8187$, which is used in the simulations for Figure 3. To model a CS pattern duration of T ms (e.g. T=240 ms), the neurons represented the CS are externally activated for approximately $T/\Delta t$ time-steps. That is, the CS is presented for 12 time steps which correspond to 240 ms in real time. That is, each time-step is approximately 20 ms (i.e. $\Delta t = 20ms$).

4. Results

Figure 2 shows the development of neural codes in a simulation with a 100-ms CS, 500-ms trace interval, and 150-ms UCS [9]. Each plot is a cell firing pattern of Neurons 1-210 (211-2048 not shown) across time-steps in a different learning trial during training. Note that at Trial 0, activity is mostly background firing. At Trial 200, the US code occurs earlier, before the US onset.

Figure 3 summarizes the data showing that increasing CS and US longevity enhances the longevity of the learnable trace interval. For example, when the CS is 100 ms and the US is 40 ms, the maximal learnable trace interval is 840 ms. However, when the CS is 240 ms and the US is 100 ms, the network can learn a trace interval of 1220 ms.

Figure 4 shows an example of the outcome of two simulations using the same network. Surprisingly, this simulation (like others) deteriorates in a rapid, nonlinear manner when the trace interval is made successively longer. As illustrated a 1220ms trace interval is learnable but a 1240ms interval is not. That is, the simulation on the left successfully predicts the US on trial 200 but the simulation on the right − with the 20ms longer trace

interval − does not produce an appropriate prediction; it only turns on 2 out of the 40 US neurons prior to the US onset.

Figure 2, 3, & 4 here

5. Conclusion

The model solves the trace conditioning problem with some of the same foibles as have been quantified for eyeblink conditioning in rabbits and produces similar kinds of neural firing [9, 11].

The data presented here predicts that increasing CS/US longevity enhances the learnable trace interval. Thus a minimal biological model of hippocampal function can generate easily testable predictions of animal (and human) learning.

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William B. Levy earned a BA in Psychology from Princeton and a PhD in Psychobiology from the University of California Irvine. He was a Psychology professor at the University of California Riverside from 1974 until 1979 at which point he joined the faculty at the University of Virginia, where he is currently a professor in the Neurological Surgery department and in the Psychology department.

Figure 1 (a) The EC and the DG inputs are collapsed into a single powerful external input class, but (b) most cell firing is driven by recurrent excitation.

Figure 2 The development of neural codes that predicts the UCS in a simulation with a 100-ms CS, 500-ms trace interval, and 150-ms UCS. Each plot is a cell firing pattern of Neurons 1-210 (211-2048 not shown) across time steps in different learning trials. The CS is represented as neurons 1-40 at time steps 1-6; the trace interval is represented as no external input from time steps 7-36; and the US is represented as neurons 41-80 at time steps 37-45. Note that at Trial 0, activity during the trace interval is the result of random recurrent connections, is mostly background firing. At Trial 200, the US code occurs earlier, before the US onset. A big dot represents a cell firing and a smaller dot represents a non-firing cell. Parameters were $n = 2048$, $m_e = 40$, $K_R = 0.055$, $K_I = 0.018$, $K_0 = 0.596$, $\mu = 0.01$, $\alpha = 0.8465$, $\lambda = 0.5$, the initial weights were set at 0.5, and the synaptic failure rate was 15%.

Figure 3 Increasing CS/US longevity increases learnable trace interval. The learnable trace interval is approximately a linear function of the CS/US longevity for the limited range presented here. The correlation coefficient of the linear fit is 0.99. Parameters were $n = 2048$, $me = 40$, $K_R = 0.055$, $K_I = 0.050$, $K_0 = 0.001$, $\mu = 0.01$, $\alpha = 0.8187$, $\lambda = 0.5$, the initial weights were set at 0.45, and the synaptic failure rate was 15% which gives activity approximately 5%. Here the ratio of CS and US is kept as close to 2.5 as possible. This ratio is similar to the ones used in Thompson's lab. That is, the CS and US values are {100 ms, 40 ms}, {140 ms, 60 ms}, {200 ms, 80 ms}, and {240 ms, 100 ms} respectively.

Figure 4 The network learns to predict a trace interval of 1220 ms but fails to learn a trace interval of 1240 ms. Parameters were n = 2048, me = 40, $K_R = 0.055$, $K_I = 0.050$, K0 = 0.001, $\mu = 0.01$, $\alpha = 0.8187$, $\lambda = 0.5$, the initial weights were set at 0.45, and the synaptic failure rate was 15% which gives activity approximately 5%.

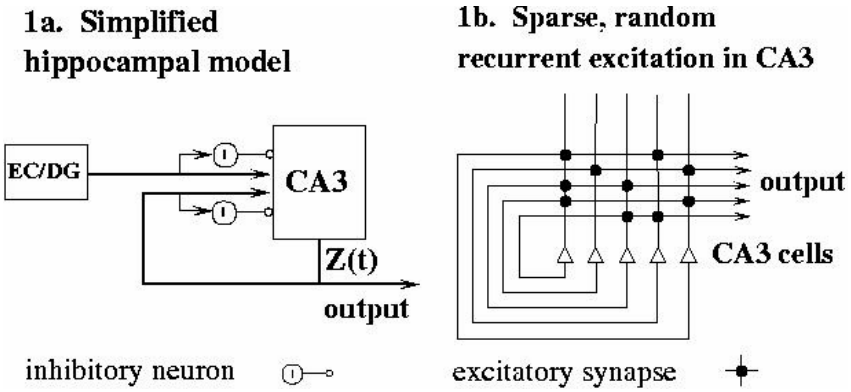

Figure 1

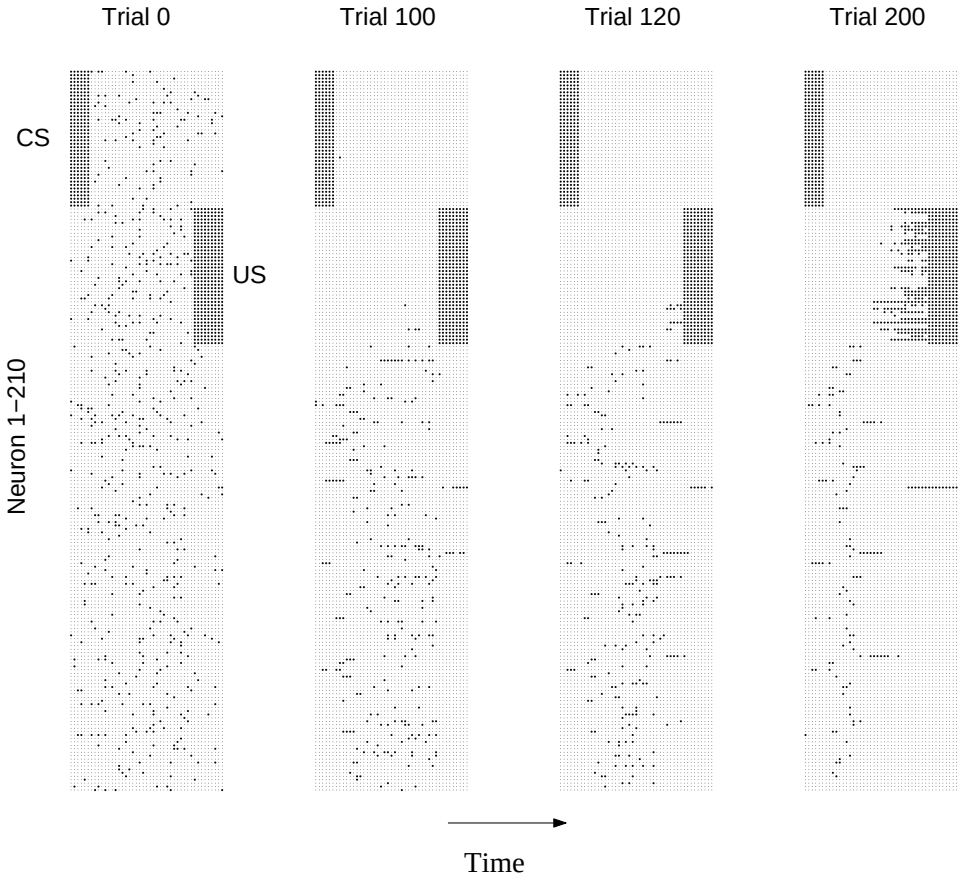

Figure 2

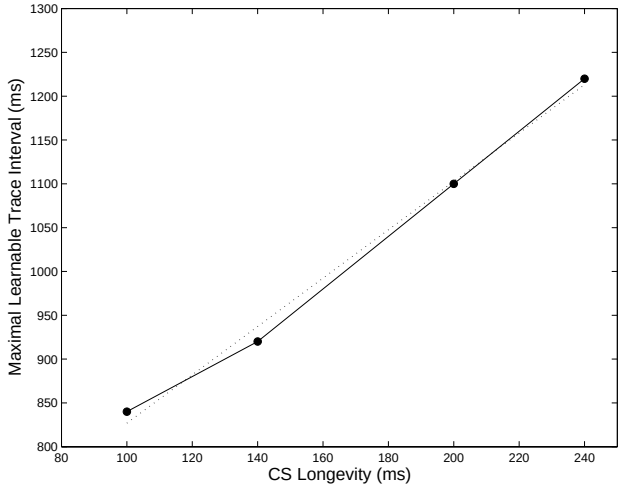

Figure 3

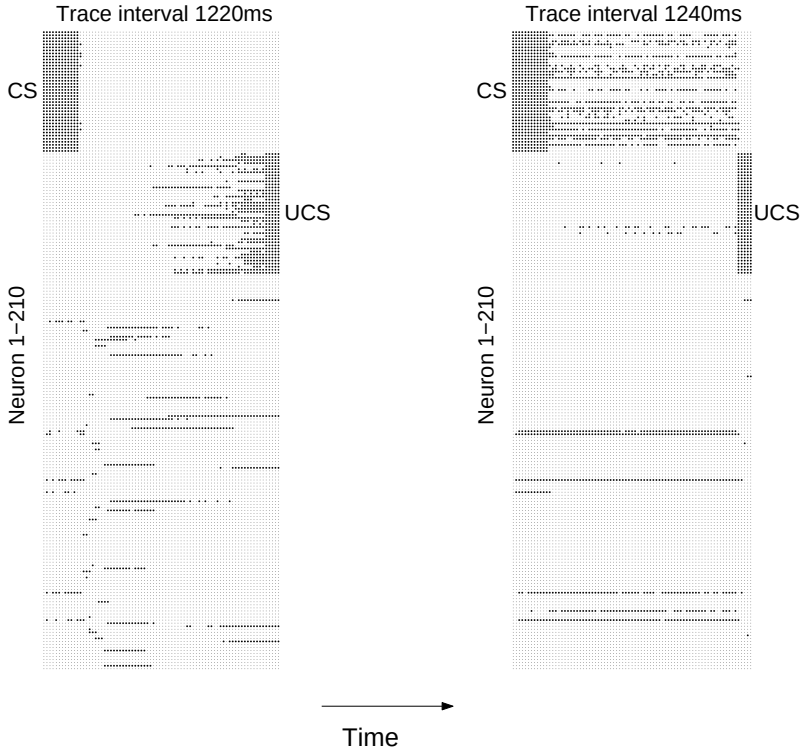

Figure 4