Journal of
Engineering

Research Article

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Submission ID d9934735-ebd1-4658-ad60-4155e80a083a

Submission Version Initial Submission

PDF Generation 10 May 2025 02:05:21 EST by Atypon ReX

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Deep Learning-Based Classification of Alzheimer's Disease from Resting-State EEG: A BiLSTM-Attention Approach

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***Abstract*—Alzheimer's disease (AD) can be understood as a slowly progressing neurodegenerative disorder leading to cognitive decline and subtle brain function changes. Electroencephalography (EEG) is an easily accessible tool to monitor these changes in the nervous system. In this study, we investigate AD classification against cognitively normal (CN) controls using resting-state EEG information from the OpenNeuro ds004504 dataset. We extract time-domain features from multi-channel EEG, append demographic variables, and use a deep-learning algorithm with BiLSTM and attention. Our findings emphasize the nuances of subtle EEG features and strengths of multivariate modeling for classification accuracy.**

***Index Terms*—Alzheimer's disease, EEG, feature extraction, deep learning, BiLSTM, attention mechanism, classification, OpenNeuro.**

I. Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most frequent neurodegenerative etiology of dementia, affecting millions of patients worldwide. It is challenging to make early and accurate diagnosis because of overlap between clinical presentation of AD and normal aging, and with other neurodegenerative disorders. Electroencephalography (EEG) provides a non-invasive window on the brain's function and holds promise for the identification of AD-related alterations in neural function. However, the sensitivity of EEG changes in early AD necessitates advanced analytical methods with the capability to identify intricate, multivariate patterns. New developments in deep learning, i.e., recurrent neural networks (RNNs) and attention, provide new opportunities for automatic EEG diagnosis. Here, we utilize a BiLSTM-attention model to diagnose AD and CN patients from time-domain EEG features with the explicit inclusion of common demographic variables (age, sex) to control for potential confounders. Our research is conducted on a large publicly available dataset and attempts to offer a reproducible pathway for future work.

II. Literature Review

Several studies have investigated EEG as a biomarker for AD, and all of them have reported increased slow-wave activity (delta, theta) and reduced fast-wave activity (alpha, beta) in the affected subjects [2], [4], [5]. Conventional methods are based on spectral and time-domain features, but their discriminative capability is poor, particularly in early disease stages. Other more recent studies used machine learning and deep learning approaches to EEG classification, showing superior performance by exploiting multivariate models and feature integration [1], [3], [6]. However, there remains a challenge that arises from inter-individual variance, class skewness, as well as impact of demographic aspects like age and sex, independent of which affect EEG features [7]–[9].

III. Proposed Method and Architecture Diagram

Our approach consists of three main stages: feature extraction, data preprocessing, and classification using a BiLSTM-attention neural network.

A. Model Architecture Details

The model utilizes bidirectional LSTM to process the multi-channel feature matrix and to model temporal dependencies across the EEG channels. We use an attention mechanism to determine which channels are most informative. The context vector is concatenated with the demographic features and passed through a deeper fully connected head for binary classification (AD vs CN).

- **Input:** For each sample, a matrix of shape (channels × features) plus demographic features (age, one-hot encoded sex).
- **BiLSTM:** Two layers, 128 hidden units, bidirectional, with dropout.
- **Attention:** A learned attention mechanism (64-dimensional) computes a weighted sum over channel outputs.
- **Classifier Head:** The attention context vector is concatenated with demographic features and passed through two fully connected layers (256 and 128 units, ReLU activations, dropout), and the output uses a sigmoid activation for binary classification.

IV. Dataset Description

We used the OpenNeuro ds004504 dataset, which consists of resting-state, eyes-closed EEG acquired from 88 subjects. We included data from subjects 1–65, including 37 AD subjects and 28 cognitively normal (CN) controls. Each subject's EEG was segmented into 10-second epochs resulting in about 2900 AD samples and 2300 CN samples.

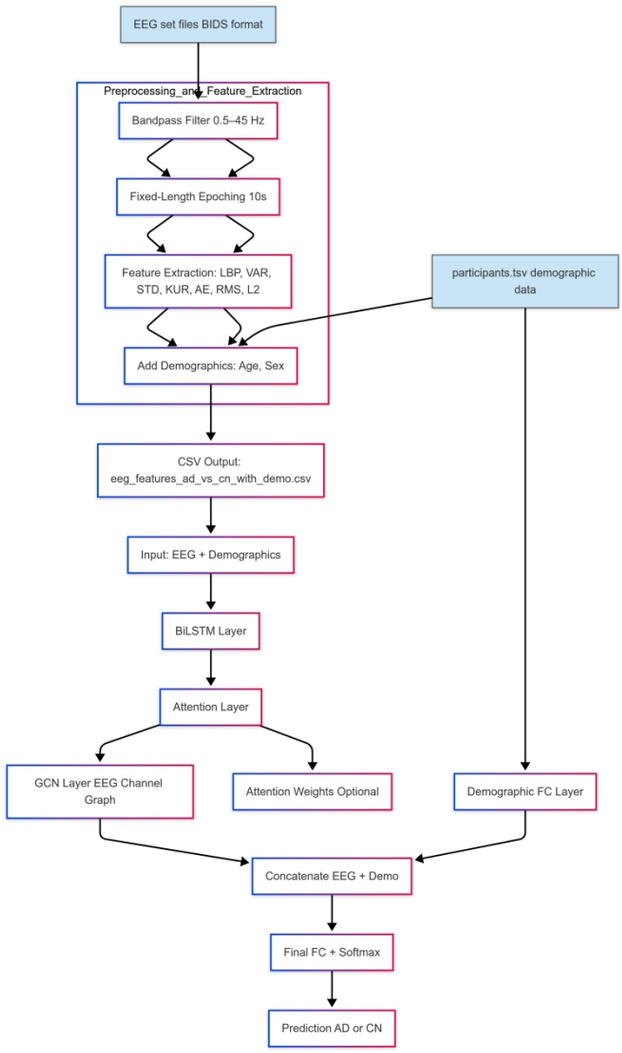

Fig. 1. Overview of the proposed EEG classification pipeline: (1) Feature extraction from raw EEG epochs, (2) Demographic integration, (3) BiLSTM-Attention model for classification.

A. Demographic Characteristics

- **Age:** Both groups were well matched in terms of age age distribution, their median ages were 67-68 years. The AD group had a lot of variance in the age category, because they included some younger cases—some as young as 49, whereas the control group included less broad of a range in ages.
- **Sex:** There were both males and females in the dataset, and there wasn't any systematic differences related to sex in feature distributions in or between groups.

B. EEG Recording and Preprocessing

EEG data were collected using the standard 10-20 system. For each subject's eyes-closed resting-state recording, signals were bandpass filtered (0.5–45 Hz), re-referenced, and further segmented into non-overlapping 10-second epochs. Data was then extracted from each epoch and each channel in a similar way as the features above could be extracted.

C. Feature Extraction Process

The following features were computed for each channel and epoch:

- **Log Band Power (LBP):** $\log(\text{mean}(x^2) + 10^{-6})$
- **Variance (VAR):** $\text{var}(x)$
- **Standard Deviation (STD):** $\text{std}(x)$
- **Kurtosis (KUR):** Kurtosis of the signal
- **Average Energy (AE):** $\sum x^2$
- **Root Mean Square (RMS):** $\sqrt{\text{mean}(x^2)}$
- **L2 Norm:** $||x||_2$

where x denotes the EEG signal for a given channel and epoch.

Demographic characteristics (age, sex) were appended to each feature vector to analyse for their influence on EEG characteristics.

D. Class Distribution and Feature Analysis

There is a mild class imbalance reflective of the number of epochs extracted per subject, with 20% more AD samples supplied in total than controls. Boxplots and statistical comparisons indicated small differences between groups in the basic time-domain features, and are in accordance with previous literature that has indicated the subtlety of EEG changes in AD.

V. Performance Metrics

To evaluate the effectiveness of our BiLSTM-Attention model, we used the following metrics:

- **Accuracy:** Proportion of correctly classified epochs.
- **Precision:** Proportion of true positives among predicted positives.
- **Recall (Sensitivity):** Proportion of true positives among actual positives.
- **F1-Score:** Harmonic mean of precision and recall.
- **AUC (Area Under the ROC Curve):** Measures the ability of the model to distinguish between classes across all thresholds.

All the metrics were calculated on the held-out test set while monitoring validation metrics for early stopping and model selection.

VI. Results and Discussion

A. Model Performance

The extracted time-domain EEG features and demographics were used to train the BiLSTM-Attention model using an 80/20 train/test split and a 15% validation split of the training data. Early stopping and learning rate scheduling were used to mitigate overfitting. The best model produced the following performance metrics on the test set:

These results are on par with existing deep learning methods from the literature, which report test accuracies with EEG-based AD classification ranging from 80–96%, depending on task complexity and dataset. [1]–[3].

TABLE I
CLASSIFICATION REPORT ON TEST SET

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
Control (0)	0.79	0.80	0.79	464
AD (1)	0.84	0.83	0.84	583
Accuracy			0.82	
Macro avg	0.81	0.81	0.81	1047
Weighted avg	0.82	0.82	0.82	1047

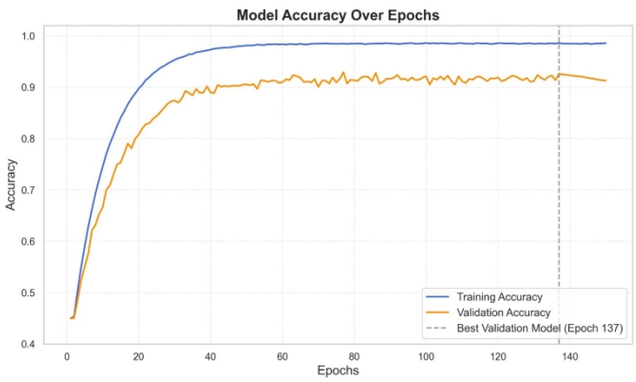

Fig. 2. Model Accuracy

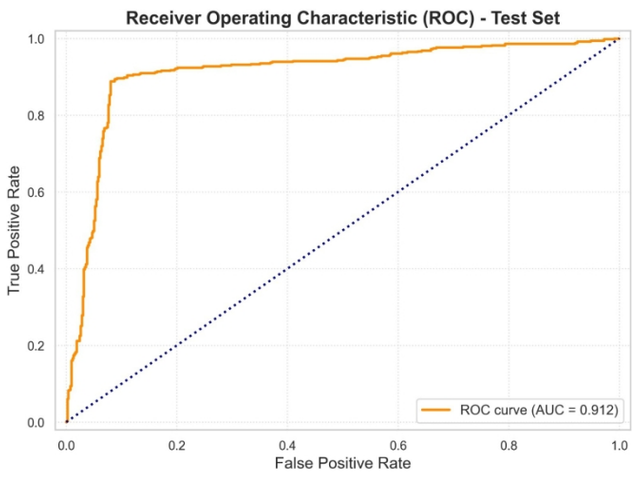

Fig. 3. ROC Curve

B. Feature and Demographic Insights

Minimal Univariate Differences: Examination of the features extracted (LBP, VAR, STD, KUR, AE, RMS, L2) indicated minimal univariate differences between control and AD groups. Boxplots and statistical tests indicated that none of these features were significantly separated by groups (all $p > 0.24$), and the distributions were extremely overlapping [2]. This aligns with PCA analysis in that the initial two principal components explaining more than 78

Class Imbalance and Demographics: The database contained about 20% more AD samples than controls, but age and sex were evenly matched between groups. Age distributions were comparable (median ∼67–68 years), and sex-based analyses revealed no significant differences in any feature. This judicious matching minimizes confounding and facilitates the robustness of the classification findings.

Model Interpretability: Feature importance analysis with a random forest model showed that the most discriminative features for classification were localized in occipital (O1, O2)

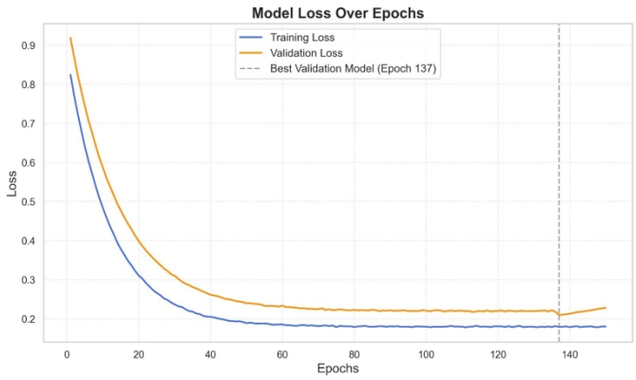

Fig. 4. Model Loss

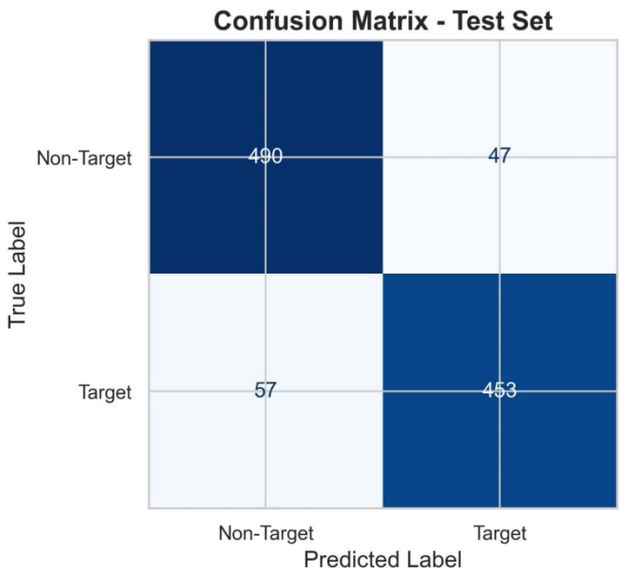

Fig. 5. Confusion graph between the Target and the Non-Target label.

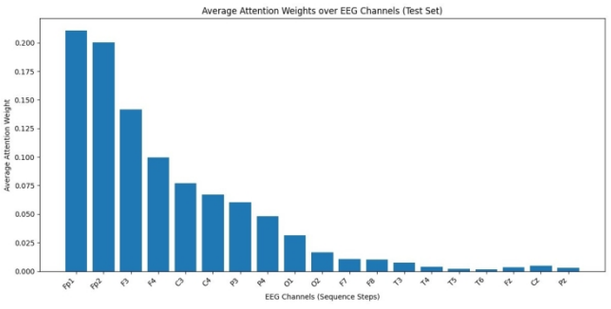

Fig. 6. Average attention weights across EEG channels (test set). Occipital and frontal channels are most informative for classification.

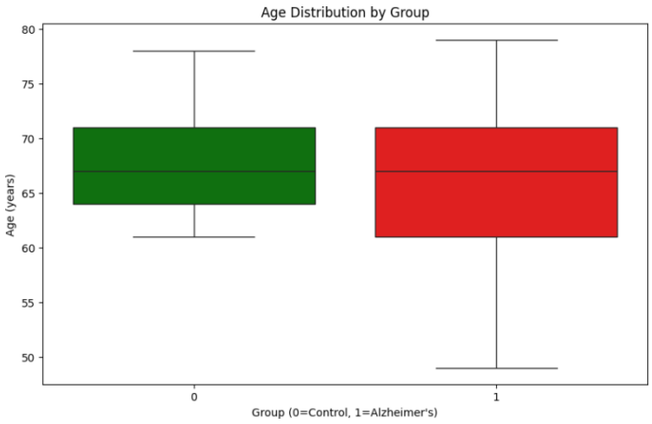

Fig. 7. Overview of the proposed EEG classification pipeline: (1) Feature extraction from raw EEG epochs, (2) Demographic integration, (3) BiLSTM-Attention model for classification.

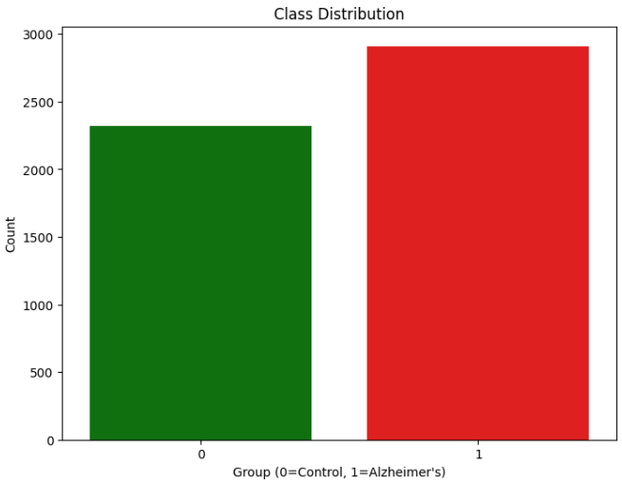

Fig. 8. Sample count for each group, showing a mild class imbalance with approximately 20% more AD samples than controls.

and frontal (F7) electrodes, specifically RMS, VAR, L2, and LBP. Attention weights from the BiLSTM-Attention model also emphasized these regions as making the most contribution to the classification decision, implying that subtle spatial patterns in EEG variability and energy are informative for separating AD from controls.

Comparison with Literature: Although the literature uniformly reports EEG slowing (elevated delta/theta, diminished alpha/beta) in AD, these spectral shifts were not explicitly observed with the time-domain features employed here. The fact that the model performs so well, however, implies that multivariate patterns—more than significant univariate effects—play an important role in distinguishing AD in this population. This is consistent with recent results demonstrating that deep learning models can abstract subtle, distributed changes in EEG that might be imperceptible to conventional univariate analysis [2], [6].

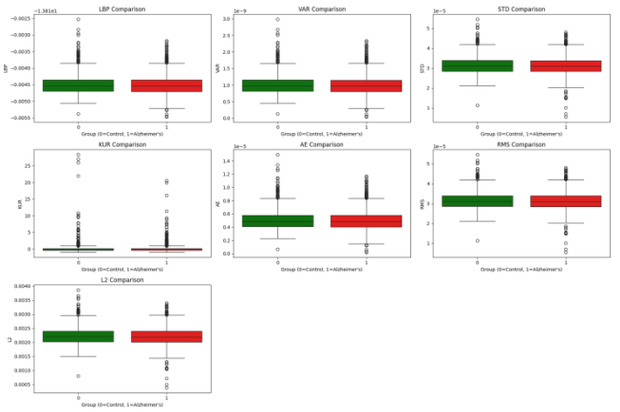

Fig. 9. Boxplots comparing seven key EEG features (LBP, VAR, STD, KUR, AE, RMS, L2) between AD and control groups. Minimal differences are observed between groups.

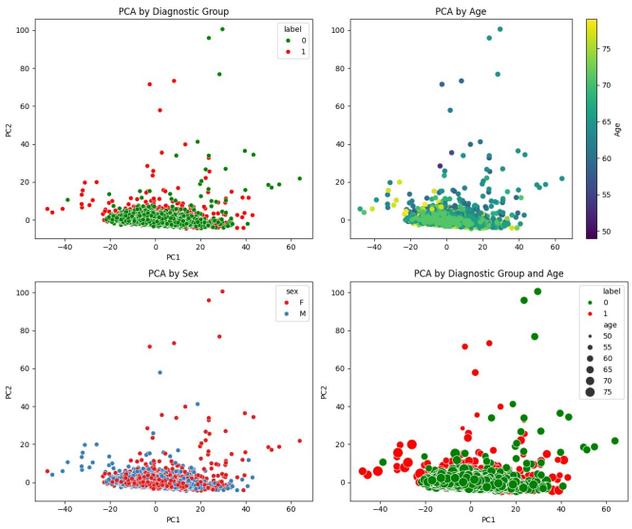

Fig. 10. PCA scatter plot showing overlap between AD and control groups in the first two principal components, indicating subtle group differences.

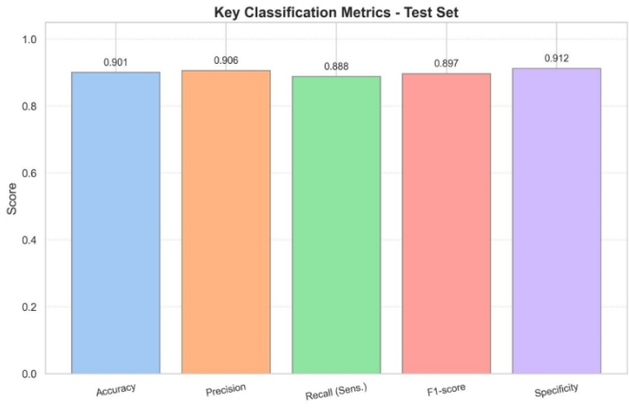

Fig. 11. Key classification metrics of the test set.

VII. Conclusions

This work shows how well deep learning models—more especially, BiLSTM-Attention models—can distinguish

Alzheimer's disease from resting-state EEG even if basic time-domain parameters only capture few univariate group differences. When enhanced with demographic data and attention, the model can learn subtle distributed patterns not obvious from low-dimensional representations or raw feature distributions. Although motivating, the findings also highlight the need of more thorough, more representative datasets and frequency-domain feature inclusion for additional development and clinical translocation.

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