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Contents

Adamczyk M., Moczulski W.: <i>Intelligent walking minirobot operating autonomously in unknown environment</i>	11
Adamska K.: <i>Description of SGA population with the use of continuous H^1 “brightness” distribution</i>	13
Bartelmus W., Zimroz R.: <i>Application of self-organised network for supporting condition evaluation of gearboxes</i>	15
Bartkowiak A., Cebrat S. Mackiewicz P.: <i>Probabilistic PCA and neural networks in search of representative features for some yeast genome data</i>	17
Bartyś M., Kościelny J. M., Rzepiejewski P.: <i>Fuzzy logic application for fault isolation of actuators</i>	19
Bąchór G., Moczulski W.: <i>Simulator of an intelligent walking minirobot operating autonomously in an unknown environment</i>	21
Bednarski M.: <i>Example of diagnostic model identification with the use of learning Bayesian networks</i>	23
Behroozi R., Katebi D. S.: <i>Using adaptive logic network for classification and testing the success of ART</i>	25
Beluch W., Burczyński T., Kuś W.: <i>Shape optimization of the cracked mechanical structures using boundary element method and distributed evolutionary algorithm</i>	27
Bhavani S. D., Pujari A. K.: <i>Identifying subnetworks of interval algebra network</i>	29
Bielińska E., Sosnowski K.: <i>Computer database system for speaker recognition</i>	31
Budzyńska L., Susmaga R.: <i>Learning the similarity in preference-ordered domains</i>	33
Burczyński T., Długosz A., Kuś W.: <i>Shape optimization of heat radiators using parallel evolutionary algorithms</i>	35
Burczyński T., Orantek P.: <i>Application of artificail neural network in computational sensitivity analysis</i>	37
Burczyński T., Poteralski A., Kuś W., Orantek P.: <i>Two different types on interpolation functions in optimization of 3-D structures using distributed and sequential evolutionary algorithm</i>	39
Burczyński T., Skrobol A.: <i>Approximation of a boundary–value problem using artificial neural networks</i>	41
Burczyński T., Szczepanik M., Kuś W.: <i>Optimization of stiffeners locations in 2-D structures using distributed evolutionary algorithm</i>	43
Cholewa A.: <i>Representation of sequences of events for purposes of inference in technical diagnostics</i>	45
Cholewa W.: <i>Intelligent assistive devices</i>	47
Chrzanowski P.: <i>Example of a diagnostic model based on belief network</i>	49

Ciupke K., Kuciński P.: <i>Virtual human body model for medical applications</i>	51
Czop P., Miękina L.: <i>Diagnostic of electrical motors based on acoustic measurement and with use of parametric modeling</i>	53
Fidali M.: <i>Limitation of feature value space for evaluation of technical state of machinery</i>	55
Frid W., Knochenhauer M.: <i>Development of a Bayesian belief network for a boiling water reactor during fault conditions</i>	57
Galek M.: <i>Expert system to aiding identification of inverse models</i>	59
Gałaszka E., Sokołowski A.: <i>Application of RBF neural network for data integration</i>	61
GhasemZadeh M., Klotz V., Meinel Ch.: <i>Representation and evaluation of QBFs in Prenex-NNF</i>	63
Goldasz I.: <i>Inverse modeling of piston valve components. Evolutionary approach</i>	65
Górnjak-Zimroz J., Malewski J.: <i>Application of the Kohonen neural network for classification of mining voids</i>	67
Górski R., Fedeliński P.: <i>Evolutionary shape optimisation of reinforced plates</i>	69
Grela W., Burczyński T.: <i>Evolutionary shape optimisation of a turbine blade shank with APDL language</i>	71
Jankowska A., Kornacki S.: <i>Practical aspects of neural models applications in industry</i>	73
Jarosz P., Burczyński T.: <i>Immune algorithm for multi-modal optimization - numerical tests in intelligent searching</i>	75
Kalita P.: <i>Artery wall modelling – a challenge for computer science and mathematics</i>	77
Krok A., Waszczyszyn Z.: <i>Kalman filtering for nueral prediction of response spectra from mining tremors</i> ...	79
Kuś W., Burczyński T.: <i>Parallel artificial immune system in optimization of mechanical structures</i>	81
Lefik M., Wojciechowski M.: <i>Artificial neural network as a numerical form of constitutive relationships for hierarchical composites</i>	83
Ławrynowicz A.: <i>A genetic algorithm for job shop scheduling</i>	85
Martinez-Otzeta J.M., Sierra B., Lazkano E., Astigarraga A.: <i>K nearest neighbor boosting of classification trees</i>	87
Martinez-Otzeta J.M., Sierra B., Lazkano E., Astigarraga A.: <i>Knowledge discovery in chess endgames using algebraic methods</i>	89
Masłowska I.: <i>Web search results clustering - new requirements for clustering techniques</i>	91
Mazur D.: <i>Clustering based on genetics algorithm</i>	93
Moczulski W.: <i>Future challenges of knowledge engineering in technical diagnostics</i>	95

Niederliński A.: <i>A modification of the Stanford Certainty Factor Algebra for uncertain expert systems</i>	97
Nikolaidis S.: <i>Case base similarity: some alternative approaches</i>	99
Ogonowski Z., Plaza K.: <i>Mechanical vibrations damping improvement using higher level AI algorithms for a magnetic levitation system</i>	101
Oleksiak J., Ligęza A.: <i>Hierarchical diagnosis of technical systems on the basis of model and expert knowledge</i>	103
Peters J. F., Ramanna S.: <i>Hierarchical behavioral model of a swarmbot</i>	105
Pokojski J.: <i>Intelligent personal assistant and multi-criteria optimization</i>	107
Przybyło A., Achiche S., Balazinski M., Baron L.: <i>Enhancing fuzzy learning with data mining techniques</i>	109
Przystałka P., Moczulski W.: <i>Application of neural networks for diagnostics of dynamic processes</i>	111
Psiuk K.: <i>Identification of bayesian network as a relations model of state changes propagation</i>	112
Raad A., Sidahmed M., Antoni J.: <i>Indicators of cyclostationarity: theory and application to gear fault diagnostic</i>	115
Rogala T.: <i>General concept of virtual sources identification of diagnostic signals</i>	117
Rutkowski J.: <i>Dictionary approach to fault diagnosis in analog circuits</i>	119
Sidahmed M.: <i>Recent developments in rotating machines fault diagnostics</i>	121
Skarka W.: <i>Capturing knowledge through web services based on scenarios during product development</i>	123
Skarka W.: <i>Object-oriented approach to modeling ontology of knowledge base</i>	125
Skarka W., Urbanek G.: <i>Web service for technical manuals</i>	127
Skołud B., Zientek A.: <i>Constraints identification in multi-project scheduling</i>	129
Skupnik D., Ciupke K.: <i>An application of ant algorithm for diagnosis of technical object</i>	131
Sławik D.: <i>Sensitivity evaluation and sensitive feature selection</i>	133
Słoński M.: <i>Prediction of concrete fatigue durability using Bayesian neural networks</i>	135
Słowiński R., Greco S., Mousseau V.: <i>Multiple-criteria ranking with a set of additive utility functions</i>	137
Sokołowski A., Czyszpak T.: <i>Mamdani versus Takagi-Sugeno fuzzy reasoning for machine diagnostics</i>	139
Stefanowski J.: <i>Various aspects of discovering decision rules from medical data</i>	141

Stefanowski J., Kaczmarek M.: <i>Integrating attribute selection and dynamic voting of sub-classifiers to improve accuracy of bagging classifiers</i>	143
Straszecka E.: <i>Knowledge base tuning in a diagnosis support system</i>	145
Studziński M.: <i>Supporting data mining technology by using Case Base Reasoning</i>	147
Szulim R., Moczulski W.: <i>A method of mining knowledge to aid control of complex industrial processes</i>	149
Tomasik P.: <i>Concept of a system for diagnostics of periodic industrial processes</i>	151
Urbanek G.: <i>Evolutionary identification topographic mappings</i>	153
Urbanek G.: <i>Rough simulator in the inverse models identification</i>	155
Wachla D.: <i>The general concept of a method for discovering the quantitative dynamics</i>	157
Witczak M., Prętki P.: <i>An experimental design strategy for neural networks and its application to fault detection of non-linear systems</i>	159
Wojtusik J.: <i>Distance measures and trajectories clustering</i>	161
Wyczółkowski R.: <i>Application of cellular automata for traffic light testing</i>	163
Wyleżoł M.: <i>Engineering knowledge bases in verification of virtual models shapes</i>	165
Wysogład B.: <i>Entropy-based reduction of feature space used for signal classification</i>	167
Xiong X.: <i>Parametric feedforward neural network with fuzzy inputs configured by genetic algorithm</i>	169
Zdziarek J.: <i>Estabilishing kurtosis of the mixtures of two normal distributions</i>	171
Zieniuk E. Kuźelewski A.: <i>Modelling of potential boundary problems described by Bézier curves using the fuzzy Parametric Integral Equations System</i>	173

Probabilistic PCA and neural networks in search of representative features for some yeast genome data

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1. Introduction, the data and the problem

We consider data characterizing $N = 3300$ yeast genes, each characterized by $d = 13$ variables (traits). The data will be in the following called 'the yeast genome' data. A more detailed description of the data may be found in [1, 2] or [6]. The gathered variables have a quite clear interpretation and some of them are fairly dependent. Attempt to simply omit some of the variables is not working: the eventually omitted variables (by use of the *idep* procedure) can not be explained in a satisfactory manner by the retained variables. None the less, at least some of the recorded variables are linearly interdependent. This may be stated, when analyzing the eigenvalues (of their correlation matrix), exhibited in Figure 1.

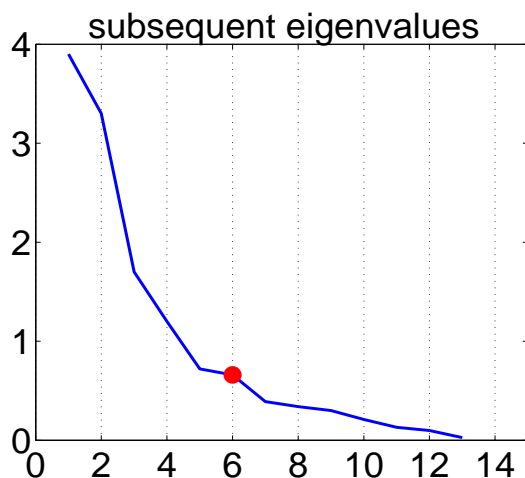


Fig. 1. Scree graph exhibiting eigenvalues of correlation matrix calculated from $N = 3300$ genes. The decay of subsequent eigenvalues is shown. It seems that $h = 6$ is the right number of latent variables. To the right of the 6th eigenvalue – marked by a big filled circle – the decay exhibits a linear pattern, which means that no more common factors can be extracted

Our problem is: Could the observed variables be transformed to a reduced set, containing $h < d$ new, derived features – without losing not too much of total inertia (variance) of the entire set.

We apply for our task 3 methods: (1) traditional principal components, (2) probabilistic principal components, (3) neural networks using multilayer perceptrons in the 13-6-13 layout. It seems, that the data may be explained by $h = 6$ derived latent variables. Thus, in further analysis we were seeking for 6 new, derived features, called also latent variables. We think, we were quite successful: The traditional PCA and the NN models explain, when using 6 factors, about 88% of total variability of the data; however these methods do not provide any generative model of the data. Probabilistic principal components (Bishop, Tipping 1999) permit to find $h = 6$ features, which are able to reproduce 78.53 % of total variance of the data.

This result is interesting for several reasons: (1), it is confirmed, that *principal components* extract too much of total variance of the data set (which means, that they account some random effects as systematic effects). (2), it was interesting to state, that *neural networks* using perceptrons behave similarly as principal components and yield similarly overestimated approximation of hidden factors. This is opposed to the recent paper by Nicole [5], where some doubts were expressed, whether neural networks are suitable for a broad application in biological systems. (3), the *new features (latent variables)*, derived from the observed variables, have a very clear and interesting interpretation: The set of 12 variables (representing 3 legs of the spider-plots [6]) has split into 3 double factors, each factor expressed by 2 latent variables.

In the following we explain briefly the methods and show some results obtained when using the chosen methods.

2. Traditional PCA and Probabilistic PCA

Traditional PCA is well explained in the books by Jolliffe (2002) or Krzanowski (2000). PCA is a purely mathematical technique, working with available data. No underlying generative model of the data is considered. The predictions of the target data are heuristic, based on the data sample on which the predictions were evaluated. The method reproduces the entire data set (or, its covariance matrix), by rank one matrices.

However, the principal components – based only on the gathered data – do not provide any generative model of the data, and no generalization can be done, neither no statistical tests of significance.

A more general approach is by introducing a generative model of the data, which is valid also in the context of neural networks, considered as a tool for data analysis. Nabney [4] writes: "The goal of training a network is to model the underlying generator of the data in order to make the best

possible predictions when new input data is presented. The most general information about the target vector \mathbf{t} for inputs \mathbf{x} is given by the conditional density $p(\mathbf{t}|\mathbf{x})$.

Tipping and Bishop (see, e.g., [7]) have introduced *probabilistic principal components* working with a generative data model. The following basic model is assumed:

$$\mathbf{t} = \mathbf{W}\mathbf{x} + \boldsymbol{\mu} + \boldsymbol{\epsilon} \quad (1)$$

Here \mathbf{t} and \mathbf{x} denote the observational and latent variables, and $\boldsymbol{\epsilon}$ – Gaussian noise $\sigma^2\mathbf{I}$.

The observed values \mathbf{t} in d variables are supposed to be generated by $q < d$ hidden (latent) variables \mathbf{x} distributed normally with isotropic variance.

Under the assumed model [1] the observed vector \mathbf{t} is distributed normally .

$$\mathbf{t} \sim N_d(\boldsymbol{\mu}, \mathbf{W}\mathbf{W}^T + \sigma^2\mathbf{I}). \quad (2)$$

The unknown parameters of the model [2] are: \mathbf{W} and σ^2 . They may be estimated either directly from the log-likelihood or by the EM algorithm. Corresponding formulae may be found in the paper by Tipping and Bishop [7].

3. Multi-layer perceptron

Neural networks have developed a special type of learning (Hebbian learning) to capture the essential characteristics (main directions) of the data. Quite a lot of research was needed to find out, what really the Hebbian learning is yielding.

Generally, artificial neural networks are considered as semi-parametric or non-parametric models for data analysis, see e.g., Gaudart et al. [3], and the references therein. Realization of the method of principal components in the framework of Hebbian learning was the subject of many investigations, (see, e.g., the papers by Oja, Sanger et others). Recently, a critical discussion of the approaches has been published by Nicole [5].

Instead of the traditional Hebbian approach we have formulated the task in terms of approximation of the data. Thus the network has as target the data presented at the input. The number of neurons in the hidden layer was put equal to h , the number of the desired hidden factors (in our case this was $h = 6$).

For our yeast genome data we have used a multi-layer perceptron with 2 hidden layers. Its layout was: 13 – 6 – 13. This means, there were 13 inputs, the first hidden layer with $h = 6$ neurons has being condensing the inputs to 6 derived variables. The derived 6 variables z_1, \dots, z_6 acted as input to the second hidden layer who's task was to reproduce from the z 's the target, which was again the input vector.

The implementation in Netlab puts in the first layer as obligatory the 'tanh' activation function, which makes that all z 's are contained in the interval $(-1,1)$. The second hidden layer has used the 'linear' activation function.

The network needed about 3000 epochs (presentations of the data matrix) to get stabilized parameters.

It was a big surprise to us obtaining, by such a standard and simple tool, results very similar to those, obtained by probabilistic PCA with rotation varimax.

Table 1. Matrix \mathbf{W} expressing 6 latent variables for the yeast genome data. The presented matrix was obtained from rotated matrix $\mathbf{U}\sqrt{(\boldsymbol{\Lambda} - \sigma^2\mathbf{I})}$.

	1.leg	1.leg	3.leg	2.leg	3.leg	2.leg	%
ang1	-.08	.84	.07	-.18	-.21	.14	.81
ang2	.03	-.10	-.08	.83	.13	.17	.76
ang3	.00	-.06	-.85	.06	.11	.02	.74
x1	.72	-.37	-.09	.28	.15	-.28	.84
y1	.58	.67	.06	-.02	-.27	.02	.85
x2	.30	-.17	-.04	.69	.16	-.42	.80
y2	-.21	.08	-.17	.20	.14	.82	.81
x3	-.04	-.27	-.20	.24	.74	-.01	.71
y3	.05	-.04	-.79	.05	.27	.17	.73
lgth	.65	-.01	-.08	-.06	-.14	-.50	.70
rho1	.85	.21	.04	.14	-.16	-.24	.88
rho2	.29	-.10	.09	.21	-.05	-.83	.84
rho3	.15	.12	.24	-.05	-.77	-.19	.73

Table 2. Results from training a perceptron with layout 13-6-13 using the yeast genome data. Weights connecting the hidden layer with neurons of the input layer are shown. All weights were multiplied by 10. To be comparable with results from Table 1, some columns should be permuted.

	3.leg	2.leg	2.leg	1.leg	1.leg	3.leg
ang1	-.10	.03	-.22	-.76	-.26	-.43
ang2	.41	-.32	-.64	.21	-.34	.06
ang3	.96	.04	.37	-.40	-.15	.61
x1	.17	-.11	.06	.43	.51	-.20
y1	.06	.02	-.31	-.37	.31	-.54
x2	.27	-.55	-.24	.07	-.29	-.02
y2	.27	.40	-.44	.26	.05	-.20
x3	-.08	-.16	.32	.20	-.25	-.75
y3	.82	.13	.36	-.26	-.05	.19
lgth	.15	-.13	.24	-.09	.39	.01
rho1	.12	-.05	-.18	-.00	.52	-.40
rho2	-.05	-.55	.20	-.23	-.25	.18
rho3	.12	-.03	-.39	-.11	.22	.92

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