Proceedings of the 2010 IEEE International Conference on Progress in Informatics and Computing

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**PIC 2010** 

## **Proceedings of the 2010**

# IEEE International Conference on Progress in Informatics and Computing

December 10-12, 2010, Shanghai, China

Editors:

Yinglin Wang Yuan Luo



### Proceedings

# 2010 IEEE International Conference on Progress in Informatics and Computing

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**Compliant PDF Files** 

IEEE Catalog Number: CFP1066J-ART ISBN: 978-1-4244-6789-1

#### **Conference CD-ROM Version**

IEEE Catalog Number: CFP1066J-CDR ISBN: 978-1-4244-6787-7

#### **Print Version**

IEEE Catalog Number: CFP1066J-PRT ISBN: 978-1-4244-6786-0 **Proceedings of the 2010** 

# IEEE International Conference on Progress in Informatics and Computing

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## Invariant Lighting Hand Posture Classification

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Abstract-Hand posture classification is a key problem for many human computer interaction applications. However, this is not a simple problem. In this paper, we propose to decompose the hand posture classification problem into 2 steps. In the first step, we detect skin regions using a very fast algorithm of color segmentation based on thresholding technique. This segmentation is robust to lighting condition thank to a step of color normalization using neural network. In the second step, each skin region will be classified into one of hand posture class using Cascaded Adaboost technique. The contributions of this paper are: (i) By applying a step of color normalization, the posture classification rate is significantly improved under varying lighting condition; (ii) The cascaded Adaboost technique has been studied for the problem of face detection (2 classes). In this paper, it will be studied and evaluated in more detail in a problem of classification of hand postures (multi-classes).

Keywords- Hand posture classification; Cascaced Adaboost; Color normalization; Neural network; Lighting invariance

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Gesture recognition consists to recognizing meaningful expressions of motion of human hand/face/body. Recent years, this topic interests many researchers aiming to provide natural means for human-machine interaction. The applications of gesture recognition are manifold, ranging from sign language through medical rehabilitation to virtual reality.

A general framework for gesture recognition consists of 3 steps [2]. The first step detects regions of interest from image. The second step classifies (hand / body) postures into categories before recognizing dynamic gesture from consecutive postures. This paper focuses on hand gesture recognition particularly hand posture classification. This problem is more difficult than body posture classification because hand has more DoFs than body.

Hand detection step is not always necessary because it can be integrated in the phase of hand posture classification. In this case, the sliding technique is often applied to scan all regions in image and classify them into categories including also nonposture. This technique takes time because all regions of image including background regions will be examined. We favour the approaches doing hand region detection before hand posture classification by one main reason is that if we can detect hand regions rapidly, the time for classification will be reduced.

To detect hands, most of approaches in the literature are based on skin detection [1]. In this objective, color is a very good feature due to its simplicity and its invariance to geometrical transformation of the object as well as scale change. However, while detecting hand, color based skin detection method detects also other regions like face, neck. In addition, this method is not efficient when images are taken under unconstrained lighting conditions.

To classify hand postures, there exists a lot of methods which differ one from another by the type of features used to represent hand posture and the method to learn hand model for classification. The feature types representing hand posture vary from global ones (color histogram, gradient orientation histogram, entire image) [4] to more and less local ones (active contour, ridge and blob, interest point) [6], [5]. The global feature based hand modelling is simple because it does not need to extract features. However, all global features based representations are not robust to occlusion. Local features overcome this drawback but sometime the detection of local feature is very sensitive to environment changes (e.g. lighting, viewpoint).

Once features characterizing hand posture are extracted, learning machine techniques are used for hand posture classification. Among learning techniques, Cascaded Adaboost has been shown to be very efficient to detect frontal face [3]. This technique is then largely applied to detect different types of object including hand posture [5]. The advantages of this technique are it creates a strong classifier from very simple weak ones and during the learning phase, it selects only significant and discriminant features to be considered later, so reduces the computational time for feature extraction. Although these advantages, Adaboost classifier requires a big enough number of training images. In addition, the method gets failed under complex lighting condition.

Lighting condition influences very much on the performance of posture classification. In this paper, we deal with hand posture classification in an unconstrained lighting condition for a real application of humane robot interaction. To be robust to lighting change, we propose to normalize image using Neural network before skin color segmentation and hand posture classification. We will show that this normalization helps to improve significantly the performance of hand posture classification in term of precision as well as recall. The figure 1 shows different steps of our method for hand posture classification.



Fig. 1. Scheme of our hand posture classification method.

978-1-4244-6787-7/10/\$26.00 ©2010 IEEE

The paper is organized as follow. In section II, we explain how to normalize image taken from any lighting condition using neural network technique. In section III, we explain the method for hand posture classification based on haar-like feature and Cascaded Adaboost technique. The experimental results are analysed in section IV before conclusion in the section V.

## II. SKIN COLOR DETECTION INVARIANT TO LIGHTING CONDITION

The first step of hand posture classification is to detect skin pixel from image taken from any condition. In the literature, there exists a lot of approaches that have been proposed to detect skin pixel. These methods differs from the use of color space (e.g. RGB, HSL, Lab, CYrYb) and the way to model skin color distribution (probability distribution, Gaussian mixture model) which decides the technique used for classification (e.g. thresholding, Bayes rules, Neural Network). Although many works have showed that color allows to detect skin pixel with very high precision (98%) for some databases, the precision depends strongly of lighting condition, camera characteristics and human ethnics [8], [1]. Among these elements the one that influences the most on the performance of skin detection is the lighting condition. In a real application like human robot interaction, the robot moves from a room to another, wanders the hall, the lighting can vary from tungsten light to daylight, with shadow or not that makes very difficult the algorithms of hand detection based on color without any pre-processing.

To face the problem of lighting change, two approaches have been proposed. The first approach aims to update the model of skin distribution during time [10]. Following this way, the detection result obtained from the previous instant will be used to update the pre-built model. If the result at this step is not correct, the update will get false. The second approach is to normalize each image independently. More specifically, it transforms image taken from an illumination condition to a canonical illumination at which the segmentation of skin and non-skin pixels is the best. In this category, neural network technique seems to be convenient because it does not require any knowledge about scene [9]. We propose to follow the second approach to deal with lighting problem.

#### A. Color normalization based on neural network

We inspired the idea based on neural network for normalizing image. The neural network comprises 3 layers. The number of layers is chosen based on the work of [9]. In this paper, we would like to investigate how the number of neurons in the hidden layer influences the performance of color normalization and the computational time.

- The input layer has 3 nodes corresponding to the 3 values of color to be normalized.
- The hidden layer comprises N nodes that links the input and output layer. The number of nodes at the hidden layer is chosen by experience.

- The output layer has 3 nodes corresponding to the 3 output values (3 color channels), which are results of normalization.
- The transfer function is sigmoid
- $f(x) = \beta * (1 e^{-\alpha x})/(1 + e^{-\alpha x})$  with  $\alpha = 0.01, \beta = 0.05$ .

The algorithm consists of 2 steps: learning and normalizing. Learning phase is an iterative process. At each iteration, the input is the triplet (R, G, B) at a certain lighting condition and the desired output will be the triplet of the same point taken at canonical illumination. The network computes the output corresponding to the input and compares this output with the desired output. The error will be used to regulate weights of the network. The training phase will be stopped when the error smaller than a threshold. In our experiment, this threshold is set to 0.0001. Once the network has been trained, it can be used to normalize any image.

#### B. Skin segmentation based on thresholding technique

Once image is normalized, the skin segmentation can be done fastly with threshold technique. In our work, by experience, we choose the most convenient thresholds that a skin pixel must satisfy: (R > G)AND(R > B)AND(R >95)AND(G > 40)AND(B > 20)

#### **III. HAND POSTURE CLASSIFICATION**

To classify hand posture, we propose to use classical method of Viola *et al.* [3]. The method models object by a set of Haarlike features and then Adaboost classifier technique is used for classification. This method is applied successfully in case of face detection. We would like to study in more detail how this method could be applied in hand posture classification problem and show how the lighting normalization helps to enhance the performance of the method.

#### A. Haar-like feature extraction

To model hand posture, Haar-like features is used. Haarlike feature is composed from "black and white" rectangular feature characterized by a corner, size (width, height) and orientation ( $0^0$  or  $45^0$ ) and a value. The value is the difference between the sum of all "white" pixel values and the sum of all "black" pixel values. These values are computed in a very fast manner using integral image technique.

#### B. Cascaded Adaboost Classifier

Although the technique of integral image allows a very fast computation of Haar-like feature, the number of features computed for one image is very big. This number is much bigger than the size of the image - overcomplete problem. For example with the image of size 22x22, the number of features is about 100000. If we represent an image by a very big number of features like this, the searching for correspondence will be not efficient. In addition, among extracted Haar-like features, it is not true that all features are significant and discriminant for posture classification.

The Adaboost algorithm has more advantage than other learning machine techniques is that by learning a strong classifier, it discards lots of non-significant features for hand detection. Therefore, at classification phase, only a little number of features (7-35 in our experiment) will be detected it reduces the computational time. The figure 2 shows examples of Haar-features kept after Adaboost algorithm.



Fig. 2. Examples of Haar like features for 3 types of postures.

If we integrate Adaboost in a cascaded architecture, it will speech up still the classification because the cascade rejects all candidates which are not hand posture rapidly. A candidate will be classified into a category if it passes all layers of the cascade.

The Adaboost algorithm is resumed as follow:

- Given n example features  $(x_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), ..., (x_n, y_n)$ , where  $y_i \in [0, 1]$  for negative and positive examples.
- Choose min\_detection\_rate and max\_false\_alarm\_rate
- Initialize weight  $w_{1,i} = 1/2m, 1/2l$  for  $y_i = 0, 1$  and m, l are the number of negative and positive examples respectively.
- while the false\_alarme\_rate < max\_false\_alarme\_rate and detection\_rate > min\_detection\_rate, do:
  - 1) Initialize the number of significant features T = 0;
  - 2) Normalize the weights

$$w_{t,i} = \frac{w_{t,i}}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} w_{t,i}}$$

 $w_{t,i}$  is a probability distribution

- 3) For each feature, j, train a classifier  $h_j$  which is restricted to using a single feature. The error is evaluated with respect to  $w_t, \epsilon_j = \sum_i w_i |h_j(x_j) y_i|$
- 4) Choose the classifier  $h_t$  with the lowest error  $\epsilon_t$
- 5) T = T + 1
- 6) Update the weights:  $w_{t+1,i} = w_{t,i}\beta_t^{1-e_i}$  where  $e_i = 0$  if example  $x_i$  is classified correctly,  $e_i = 1$  otherwise and  $\beta_t = \frac{\epsilon_t}{1-\epsilon_i}$
- otherwise and  $\hat{\beta}_t = \frac{\epsilon_t}{1-\epsilon_t}$ 7) Compute  $F_t(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{T} \alpha_t h_t(x)$  for all negative and positive examples.
- The final strong classifier is  $h(x) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } F_t(x) \ge threshold \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$

Note that in this algorithm, the number of features to be selected is not chosen by hand before but T is found based on the max false alarm and min detection rate.

To reject as soon as possible all negative examples, the architecture cascade will be used. If the classifier has K stages,  $f_i, d_i$  are max false alarm rate and min detection rate respectively of the stage *i*, the false alarm rate and detection rate of whole cascade will be

$$F = \sum_{i=1}^{K} f_i, D = \sum_{i=1}^{K} d_i$$

In reality, each stage can have different max false alarm and min detection rate. The next stage has the smaller false alarm rate and bigger min detection rate than the previous ones. However, the number of features to be learnt will be bigger (T will be increased in the next stage.) The bigger the number of features is, the bigger the computation time is. In practice, for simplifying, we set  $f_i$  and  $d_i$  to the same value respectively. In this case,  $F = f_i^K$ , and  $D = d_i^K$ 

The cascaded Adaboost classification algorithm will be explained as follow:

- Determiner  $f_i, d_i$  and the number of stages K
- Compute false alarm desired for the whole classifier  $F_{Target}$
- F = 1, i = 0, P, N are positive and negative examples respectively
- While  $F > F_{Target}$ 
  - 1) From P + N examples train the Adaboost classifier  $H_i$  with min detection rate d and max alarm rate f
  - 2) Add  $H_i$  into the cascade
  - 3) Compute false alarm for the stage i

$$F_i = \frac{k}{n}$$

with n the number of negative examples and k is the number of negative that is not correctly classified

- 4) Take negative examples that have misclassified as input for the next iteration
- 5)  $F = F_i * F$
- 6) i = i + 1

We found that the negative examples of the next stage will the negative examples that have been misclassified at the previous stage. Therefore, the next stage will take more difficult examples for classifying.

#### IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

In this section, we will evaluate two things: i) how the color normalization is good, meaning how the normalized image approaches the canonical one; ii) how this normalization helps the Cascaded Adaboost algorithm to classify hand postures.

#### A. Evaluation of color normalization using neural network

1) Data preparation for training: To learn the neural network, a dataset was built. We take images containing skin from 2 subjects at different lighting conditions: canonical lighting, redlight, daylight, lowlight. When taking images, we must keep immobile camera and hand, only lighting is changed. For learning, we need to segment skin pixels from all training images. Skin pixel at the same position will be used as input and output of the network. The number of images for learning is 320 (80 images x 4 lighting conditions). 2) Results of color normalization: We evaluate the color normalization algorithm by comparing the average value R, G, B on skin regions of the normalized image with the ones of canonical image (image taken at canonical lighting condition). We also investigate how the number of nodes at the hidden layer influences the performance of the normalization algorithm.

To test the algorithm of color normalization based on neural network technique, we use 50 test images. These images are taken at daylight, redlight and lowlight. The figure 3 shows the results obtained from normalization algorithm. By appearance, we see that the normalized images appear quite similar to the images taken at canonical illumination. This is validated by quantitative evaluation. We compute the mean value on each channel of skin regions for each testing image. The figure 4 shows these values R, G, B for 50 images before, after normalizing, comparing with canonical image. We observe that after normalization phase, R, G, B approach near canonical lighting condition. This result is very encouraging because it assures that image is normalized correctly on skin region. Therefore, the hand detection based skin will be invariant to lighting condition.



Fig. 3. Results of color normalization using neural network

One can notice also that the number of nodes at hidden layer influence slightly on the performance of the normalization (figure 4). We so choose N = 8 for the next experiment of hand posture classification.

#### B. Results of posture classification using color segmentation

4 types of postures have been considered (figure 5), each encodes a command to control the robot in an application of human-robot interaction. We learn each cascaded Adaboost classifier for one posture. The number of training images for each class (from left to right): 1) 1080 positive images, 1530 negative images; 2) 1000 positive images, 1500 negative images; 3) 1000 positive images, 1500 negative images; 4) 516 positive images and 1000 negative images. Image size is of 640x480.



Fig. 4. Comparison of normalization performance in case of N = 8 and N = 20. Redline: before normalization. Blue line: Canonical condition. Greenline: N = 8. MagentaLine: N = 20.



Fig. 5. 4 types of posture considered in this paper.

After normalizing image, we realize a skin segmentation to keep only candidate regions for passing the cascaded Adaboost. The number of classifiers to be learnt will equal the number of postures to be classified. In this paper, we would like to investigate the help of normalization step for hand posture classification. For testing we used 550 images of hand or non-hand taken at different lighting conditions. The figure 6 compares the performance of our system with Viola and Jones's method. We found that with the step of normalization and skin color segmentation, the performance is improved because alot of false detections is discarded at skin segmentation. In addition, thank to normalization step, our method can handle complex lighting condition that Viola John method can not (see figure 7). However, some regions detected as non-skin regions reduces our recall (the fourth posture).

Posture	Measure	Viola Jones [3]	Our method
Re Pre	Recall	81.00%	80.60%
	Precision	99.02%	100%
	Recall	89.60%	90.00%
	Precision	100%	100%
1	Recall	88.37%	98.57%
	Precision	96.22%	99.38%
	Recall	93.64%	90.00%
	Precision	80.93%	100%
Average	Recall	88.15%	<mark>89.99</mark> %
	Precision	94.04%	99.84%

Fig. 6. Comparison of performance of our method and Viola et al. method [3].



Fig. 7. Comparison of our method with Viola et al. method [3].

#### V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORKS

This paper represents a method for hand posture recognition that is more robust to lighting w.r.t classical methods. Our method is composed of two phases: skin color segmentation and cascaded Adaboost based classification. We have shown that with the help of color normalization, the skin segmentation could be very fast and robust under varying lighting conditions. Once the segmentation is done, the hand posture recognition is performed only on skin regions, that discards almost false detections so improves the recall and mostly the precision of the method. For now, the normalization takes most of time because each pixel will be passed to the neural network. In the future, we would like to group neighbour pixels to pass the network in order to reduce computational time at normalization phase. In addition, we will then evaluate our method in a real application of human-robot interaction.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research leading to this paper was supported by the National Project DTDL.2009G42 "Study, design and develop smart robots to exploit multimedia information", under grant 422009GHDDTDL. We would like to thank the project and people involved in this project, mostly Dong Van Thai, for his help to prepare data.

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