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Decoding of upper limb movement by fractal analysis of Electroencephalogram (EEG) signal

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Abstract

Analysis of human movements is an important category of research in biomedical engineering, especially for the rehabilitation purpose. The movement of limbs is investigated usually by analyzing the movement signals. Less efforts have been made to investigate how neural that correlate to the movements, are represented in the human brain. In this research, for the first time we decode the limb movements by fractal analysis of Electroencephalogram (EEG) signals. We investigated how the complexity of EEG signal changes in different limb movements in motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI) sessions. The result of our analysis showed that the EEG signal experiences greatest level of complexity in elbow flexion and hand-close movements in motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI) sessions respectively. On the other hand, the lowest level of complexity of EEG signal belongs to hand-open and rest condition in motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI) sessions respectively. Employing fractal theory in analysis of bio signals is not limited to EEG signal, and can be further investigated in other types of human's bio signals in different conditions. The result of these investigations can vastly been employed for the rehabilitation purpose.

Keyword: Limb movement, Fractal analysis, Electroencephalogram (EEG) signals, Complexity, Rehabilitation.

28 Introduction

29 Investigating about human limb movements is a major research topic in rehabilitation science. In this
30 way, scientists have employed different techniques to analyze limb movements. The reported works on
31 analysis of human movements using functional principal component analysis (fPCA) [1], correlation
32 analysis and regression modeling [2], kinematic analysis and statistical regression [3-4], fractal analysis [5],
33 multiscale entropy analysis [6] and wavelet analysis [7] are noteworthy to be mentioned. Since human
34 movements are organized by the brain, an interesting category of works belongs to relating the human
35 movements to the brain activity. Similarly, some scientists works on this area. The works on fMRI analysis
36 of the brain in patients with phantom limb pain [8], EEG signal analysis in goal-directed movement intention
37 [9], detection of the intention to move upper limbs by analysis of EEG signal [10], decoding of hand direction
38 movements by EEG and MEG analysis [11] are noteworthy to be mentioned.

39 Fractal theory can be used to study the scaling properties of the EEG signal. A fractal object is a set
40 that shows a self-similar pattern at every scale [12]. How the similarity is divided between different segments
41 of object can be quantified using scaling exponent. Fractals can be simple or complex, which are presented
42 with integer or non-integer values [13]. In general, the fractal dimension should satisfy the Szpilrajn
43 inequality [14]:

$$44 \quad \aleph \geq D_T \quad (1)$$

45 Where \aleph and D_T are fractal dimension and topological dimension respectively. The amount of
46 complexity of a pattern can be indexed by fractal dimension. During years, scientists have employed fractal
47 theory to analyze different time series and patterns in engineering and science. There are plenty of works
48 reported in literature about the application fractal theory in biomedical engineering. The works that
49 employed fractal theory for analysis of DNA [15-18], eye movement [19-20], face [21], heart rate [22],
50 respiration signal [23-24], spider brain signal [25-26] and animal movement behavior in foraging [27] are
51 noteworthy to be mentioned. Similarly, scientists have employed fractal analysis to investigate about non-
52 linear structure of EEG signal in different conditions. The works on prediction of seizure onset [28],
53 distinguishing Alzheimer patients [29], classifying brain activity of epilepsy patients during ageing [30],
54 analyzing the speech-evoked Auditory Brainstem Responses (s-ABR) between binaural and monaural
55 listening conditions [31], analysis of the difference between normal subjects and subjects with stuttering in

56 speech evoked auditory brainstem response [32], analysis of the influence of stress [33], meditation [34],
57 visual [35-36], and auditory [37] stimuli on EEG signal are noteworthy to be mentioned.

58 Beside all efforts done on investigating about the non-linear structure of EEG signal in different
59 conditions, no study has been reported yet that analyzed the influence of limb movements on brain signals
60 using fractal theory. Therefore, in this research we employ fractal theory to investigate how the complexity
61 of EEG signal changes in case of different limb movements. For this purpose, first, we bring our
62 methodology and then we present the data collection and analysis, and accordingly the obtained results
63 from analysis. In the last section, we draw discussion about obtained results and provide some future works.

64

65 **Method**

66 Here we want to investigate the variations of the nonlinear structure of EEG signal between rest
67 condition and six limb movement conditions in two sessions, which are motor execution (ME), and motor
68 imagination (MI). The limb movements that were same in both sessions include elbow flexion/extension,
69 forearm supination/pronation and hand open/close. For this purpose, we employ fractal dimension as the
70 measure of time series complexity, where its greater values stand for a more-complex process.

71 We can compute the fractal dimension using several methods [38] that approximate scaling and detail
72 from limits estimated from regression lines over log-log plots of size versus scale. In fact, the general fractal
73 dimension can be defined using entropy concept. Considering the EEG signal with the maximum and
74 minimum values of voltage, V_{\max} and V_{\min} respectively, the total range of signal can be divided into M bins,
75 where the size of each bin is $\delta \in$:

$$76 \quad M = \frac{V_{\max} - V_{\min}}{\delta \epsilon} \quad (2)$$

77 The probability of occurrence in the i 'th bin is:

$$78 \quad w_i = \lim_{N \rightarrow \infty} \frac{M_i}{M} \quad (3)$$

79 In equation (3), M_i is the total number of occurrence in the i -th bin. Equation (3) can be written for a time
80 series as:

$$81 \quad w_i = \lim_{T \rightarrow \infty} \frac{t_i}{T} \quad (4)$$

82 In equation (4), t_i is the total time of occurrence in the i -th bin. T represents the total time.

83 The general form of fractal dimensions can be written as:

$$84 \quad D_q = \lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{q-1} \frac{\log \sum_{i=1}^N w_i^q}{\log \epsilon} \quad (5)$$

85 where ϵ is the scaling factor.

86 In this research, we employ box-counting method for calculation of fractal dimension. In fact, fractal
87 dimension, D , is estimated as the exponent of a power law:

$$D = \lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} \frac{\log N(\epsilon)}{\log \epsilon} \quad (6)$$

88 Where fractal dimension is estimated from regression line of the log-log plot of number boxes used to
89 fill (N), versus scaling factor (ϵ) that is called box size here.

90 Therefore, in our approach, we analyze the variations of the complex structure of EEG signal in rest
91 and different limb movements, using fractal dimension.

92

93 Database and analysis

94 In this research, we used the open-access data on EEG signal, which was collected by Ofner et. al.
95 [39] and is available in [40]. The data include the EEG signals from 15 healthy subjects (9 F, 6 M). The
96 EEG data includes seven conditions: one rest condition and six limb movements conditions. The EEG
97 recording in limb movements was done in two sessions: motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI).
98 The limb movements that were same in both sessions include elbow flexion/extension, forearm
99 supination/pronation and hand open/close. In all movements, subjects started the task at a neutral position,
100 the hand half open, the lower arm extended to 120 degree and in a neutral rotation. It is noteworthy that in
101 the ME session, subjects were instructed to execute sustained movements. In the MI session, subjects
102 performed kinesthetic MI. In case of each session, the EEG data was recorded from 61 channels (g.tec
103 medical engineering GmbH, Austria) in 10 runs, with 42 trials per run. Ofner et al. [39] did band-pass filtering
104 on the recorded EEG data from 0.01 Hz to 200 Hz and sampled with 512 Hz.

105 We proceeded with the data analysis by computing the fractal dimension. It is noteworthy that
106 computation of fractal dimension was based on the box counting method [41].

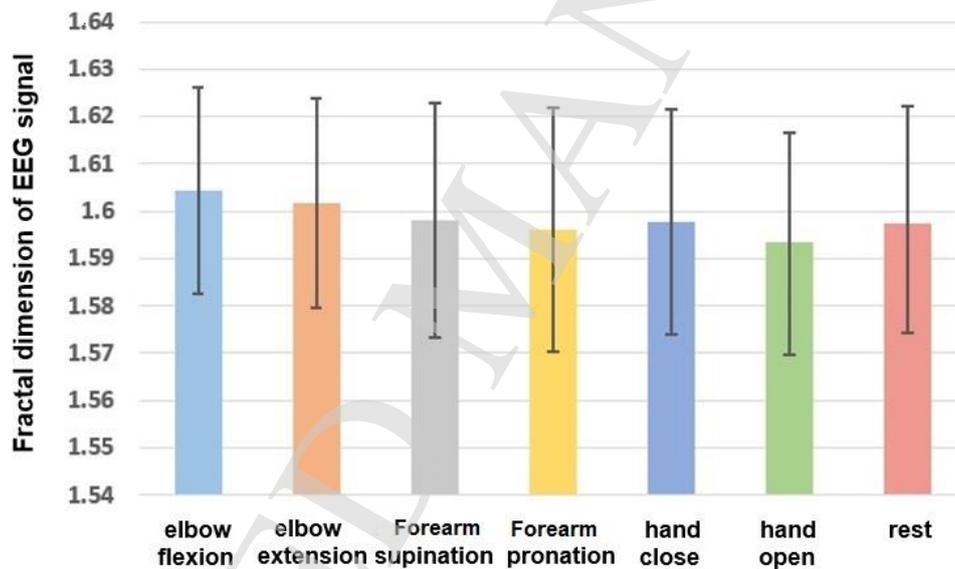
107 In case of statistical analysis, first, the computed values of the fractal dimension were tested for
108 normality using Anderson–Darling test. We run Post-hoc Tukey HSD test to compare the mean value of

109 fractal dimension of EEG signal between different limb movements and also rest conditions within motor
 110 execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI). 2-tailed paired t-test was chosen to check the difference
 111 between motor execution (ME) and motor imagination (MI) in case of different limb movements and rest
 112 conditions. The significance level in case of all statistical tests was considered as 0.05

113

114 Results

115 Here we bring the result of fractal analysis. The result of Anderson–Darling test indicates that the
 116 computed fractal exponents of EEG signal in case of different limb movements are normal. Figure 1 shows
 117 the fractal dimension of EEG signal in case of rest and six limb movements' conditions in motor execution
 118 (ME) session.



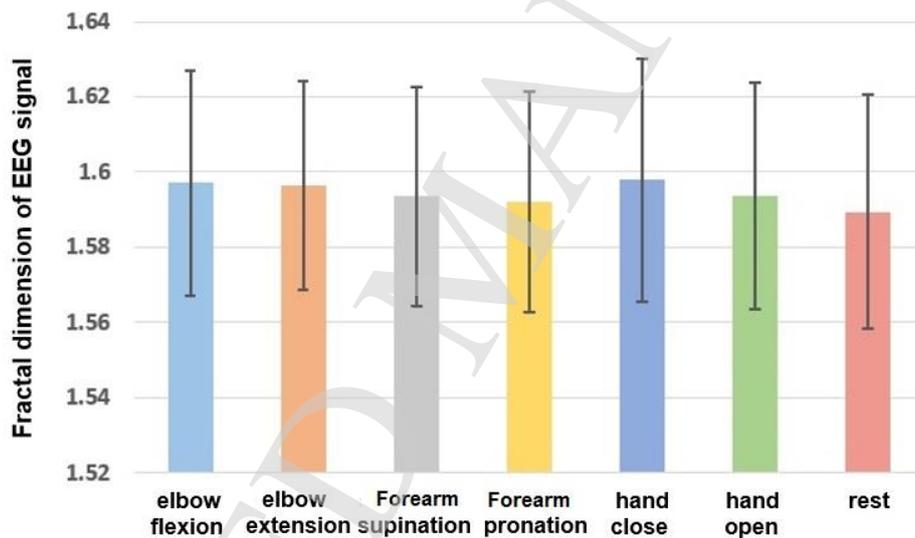
119

120 Figure 1. Fractal dimension of EEG signal in case of rest and six limb movement conditions in motor
 121 execution (ME) session.

122 As can be seen in Figure 1, the EEG signal in case of elbow flexion shows the greatest fractal
 123 dimension compared to other limb movements and rest condition. On the other hand, the fractal dimension
 124 of EEG signal for hand-open condition experiences the smallest value compared to other conditions. Since
 125 fractal dimension stands for the complexity of process, it can be said that the EEG signal in case of elbow
 126 flexion and hand-open movements has the greatest and lowest complexity. Another interesting result is the
 127 comparison between hand-open and hand-close conditions, where the hand-close movement causes

128 greater fractal dimension of EEG signal than hand-open movement. In addition, as it is clear in this figure,
 129 the complexity of EEG signal in case of hand-open and forearm pronation movements is less than rest
 130 condition. The other comparisons between different limb movements show that the EEG signal in case of
 131 elbow flexion has greater fractal dimension than elbow extension. In addition, the EEG signal in case of
 132 forearm supination has greater fractal dimension than forearm pronation. As was mentioned before, we
 133 also run Post-hoc Tukey HSD test to compare the fractal dimension of EEG signal between each pair
 134 movements and also rest conditions. The result of this test indicates that there is no significant difference
 135 between fractal dimension of EEG signal between every pair of movements or rest.

136 In the similar analysis, Figure 2 shows the fractal dimension of EEG signal in case of rest and six limb
 137 movement conditions in motor imagination (MI) session.



138
 139 Figure 2. Fractal dimension of EEG signal in case of rest and six limb movement conditions in motor
 140 imagination (MI) session.

141 As can be seen in Figure 2, the EEG signal in case of hand-close movement shows the greatest fractal
 142 dimension compared to other limb movements and rest condition. On the other hand, the fractal dimension
 143 of EEG signal in rest condition experiences the smallest value compared to other conditions. Therefore, it
 144 can be said that the EEG signal in case of hand-open movement and rest has the greatest and lowest
 145 complexity. Similar to motor execution (ME) session, the EEG signal in case of elbow flexion has greater
 146 fractal dimension than elbow extension. Also, the EEG signal in case of forearm supination is greater than

147 forearm pronation. In addition, the EEG signal in case of hand-close is greater than hand-open movement.
 148 Similar to the results in case of motor execution (ME), there is no significant difference between fractal
 149 dimension of EEG signal between every pair of movements or rest, based on Post-hoc Tukey HSD test.

150 As was mentioned before, we did 2-tailed paired t-test in order to compare the fractal dimension of
 151 EEG signal in case of different movements between motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI).
 152 The result of test is provided is Table 1.

153 Table 1. The result of 2-tailed paired t-test in comparison between motor execution (ME), and motor
 154 imagination (MI) in case of different limb movements.

Case of comparison	p-value
Elbow flexion	0.45
Elbow extension	0.57
Forearm supination	0.65
Forearm pronation	0.68
Hand close	0.97
Hand open	0.97

155
 156 Based on Table 1, in case of fractal dimension of EEG signal for all limb movements, there is no
 157 significant difference between motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI) for different limb
 158 movements. Therefore, it can be said although the complexity of brain changes between motor execution
 159 (ME), and motor imagination (MI) sessions, however this difference is not significant. In addition, the
 160 smallest difference between motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI) was observed in case of
 161 hand close and also hand open conditions. On the other hand, the greatest difference between motor
 162 execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI) was observed in case of elbow flexion.

163 In summary, it can be said that fractal analysis could decode the difference between different limb
 164 movements and also rest condition, in both motor execution (ME) and motor imagination (MI) sessions.

165
 166
 167

168 Discussion

169 In this paper, we employed fractal theory in order to analyze human EEG signal in response to six limb
170 movements and during rest. The experiments were done in two sessions that were motor execution (ME),
171 and motor imagination (MI). In motor execution (ME), the greatest and smallest fractal dimension were
172 obtained in case of elbow flexion and hand-open movements. Another interesting result in case of this
173 session was that the fractal dimension of EEG signal in case of hand-open and forearm pronation
174 movements was less than rest condition. The result of fractal analysis in case of limb movements in motor
175 imagination (MI) session showed that the EEG signal in case of hand-close movement shows the greatest
176 fractal dimension compared to other limb movements and rest condition. On the other hand, the fractal
177 dimension of EEG signal in rest condition experiences the smallest value compared to other conditions. **In
178 addition, it is noteworthy to mention that in both sessions, the EEG signal in case of elbow flexion, forearm
179 supination, and hand-open movement respectively has greater fractal dimension than elbow extension,
180 forearm pronation, and hand-close movement.**

181 We also did the statistical analysis using Post-hoc Tukey HSD test to compare the fractal dimension
182 of EEG signal between each pair movements and also rest condition. In both motor execution (ME), and
183 motor imagination (MI) sessions, the result of this test indicates that there is no significant difference in
184 fractal dimension of EEG signal between every pair of movements or rest. In comparison between the
185 obtained results for each limb movement between motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI), the
186 statistical analysis (t-test) showed that there is no significant difference between motor execution (ME), and
187 motor imagination (MI) in case of different limb movements. Therefore, it can be said although the
188 complexity of brain changes between motor execution (ME), and motor imagination (MI) tasks, however
189 this difference is not significant.

190 In general, it can be said that fractal analysis could decode the difference between different limb
191 movements and also rest condition in both motor execution (ME) and motor imagination (MI) sessions. **In
192 fact, the analysis that was done in this research is one step forward to the studies [42-44] that only
193 investigated the limb movements without linking them to the brain activity.**

194 As it is known, the brain sends messages to the spinal cord and muscles through neural networks [45-
195 46]. In addition, it is known that when the brain is engaged more with the processing, the EEG signal

196 complexity (fractal dimension) changes more. Different limb movements were originated from different
197 levels of activity of human brain. Therefore, it can be said that the EEG signals in case of different limb
198 movements have different complexity levels (fractal dimension).

199 The application of fractal theory in analysis of EEG signal is not limited to analysis of the influence of
200 limb movements. We can also extend our analysis in order to investigate the influence of different actions
201 of human such as walking and respiration on his EEG signal. In further steps, we can also investigate how
202 the complexity of different bio-signals are correlated with the complexity of EEG signal. For instance, we
203 can study how the complexity of human gait time series is correlated with the complexity of EEG signal
204 during walking. In addition, the obtained results can be mathematically linked to the brain activity using the
205 current developed models in the literature [47-50], to generate the model of brain reaction to different limb
206 movement. In overall, all these analysis can help scientists to link between human actions and brain activity
207 that is the most important issue in rehabilitation science. On the hand, the developed model can be applied
208 to other branch of engineering and science [51], where relating the memory and complexity of system is
209 the important concept

210

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