

# A HIERARCHICAL SELF-ORGANIZING MAP MODEL IN SHORT-TERM LOAD FORECASTING

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**Abstract**— This paper proposes a novel neural model to the problem of short-term load forecasting. The neural model is made up of two self-organizing map nets — one on top of the other. It has been successfully applied to domains in which the context information given by former events plays a primary role. The model was trained and assessed on load data extracted from a Brazilian electric utility. It was required to predict once every hour the electric load during the next 24 hours. The paper presents the results, and evaluates them.

**Keywords**— short-term load forecasting; self-organizing map; neural network.

## 1 Introduction

With power systems growth and the increase in their complexity, many factors have become influential to the electric power generation and consumption (e.g., load management, energy exchange, spot pricing, independent power producers, non-conventional energy, generation units, etc.). Therefore, the forecasting process has become even more complex, and more accurate forecasts are needed. The relationship between the load and its exogenous factors is complex and non-linear, making it quite difficult to model through conventional techniques, such as time series and linear regression analysis. Besides not giving the required precision, most of the traditional techniques are not robust enough. They fail to give accurate forecasts when quick weather changes occur. Other problems include noise immunity, portability and maintenance (Khotanzad et al., 1995).

Neural networks (NNs) have succeeded in several power system problems, such as planning, control, analysis, protection, design, load forecasting, security analysis, and fault diagnosis. The last three are the most popular (Mori, 1996). The NN ability in mapping complex non-linear relationships is responsible for the growing number of its application to the short-term load forecasting (STLF) (Liu et al., 1996; Bakirtzis et al., 1996; Mohammed et al., 1995; Park et al., 1991). Several electric utilities over the world have been applying NNs for load forecasting in an experimental or operational basis (Khotanzad et al., 1995; Mori, 1996; Bakirtzis et al., 1996).

So far, the great majority of proposals on the application of NNs to STLF use the multilayer perceptron (MLP) trained with error backpropagation. Besides the high computational burden for supervised training, MLPs do not have a good ability to detect data outside the domain of the training data.

This paper introduces a new hierarchical neural model (HNM) to STLF. The HNM is an extension of the Kohonen's original self-organizing map (Kohonen, 2001). Several researchers have extended the Kohonen's self-organizing feature map model to recognize sequential information. The problem involves either recognizing a set of sequences of vectors in time or recognizing subsequences inside a large and unique sequence.

Several approaches, such as windowed data approach (Kangas, 1994), time integral approach<sup>1</sup> (Chappell and Taylor, 1993), and specific approaches (James and Miikkulainen, 1995) have been proposed in the literature. Many of these approaches have well-known deficiencies (Carpinteiro, 2000). Among all, loss of context is the most serious.

The proposed model is a hierarchical model. The hierarchical topology yields to the model the power to process efficiently the context information embedded in the input sequences. The model does not suffer from loss of context. On the contrary, it holds a very good memory for past events, enabling it to produce better forecasts. It has been applied to load data extracted from a Brazilian electric utility.

This paper is divided as follows. The second section provides an overview of related research. The third section presents the data representation. The HNM is introduced in the fourth section. The fifth section describes the experiments, and discusses the results. The last section presents the main conclusions of the paper, and indicates some directions for future work.

## 2 Related research

The importance of short-term load forecasting has been increasing lately. With deregulation and competition, energy price forecasting has become

<sup>1</sup>Also known as leaky integral approach.

a valuable business. Bus-load forecasting is essential to feed analytical methods utilized for determining energy prices. The variability and non-stationarity of loads are becoming critical owing to the dynamics of energy prices. In addition, the number of nodal loads to be predicted does not allow frequent interactions with load forecasting experts. More autonomous load predictors are needed in the new competitive scenario.

Artificial neural networks (NNs) have been successfully applied to short-term load forecasting (STLF). Many electric utilities, which had previously employed STLF tools based on classical statistical techniques, are now using NN-based STLF tools.

Park et al. (Park et al., 1991) have successfully introduced an approach to STLF which employs a NN as main part of the forecaster. The authors employed a feed-forward neural network trained with the standard error backpropagation algorithm (EBP). Three NN-based predictors have been developed and applied to short-term forecasting of daily peak load, total daily energy, and hourly daily load, respectively. Three months of actual load data from Puget Sound Power and Light Company have been used in order to test the aforementioned forecasters. Only ordinary weekdays were taken into consideration for the training data.

Another successful example of NN-based STLF can be found in Lee et al. (Lee et al., 1992). The authors employed a multilayer perceptron (MLP) trained with EBP to predict the hourly load for a lead time of 1–24 hours. Two different approaches have been considered, namely one-step ahead forecasting (named static approach), and 1–24 steps ahead (named dynamic approach). In both cases, the load was separated in weekday (Tuesdays through Fridays) and weekend loads (Saturdays through Mondays).

Bakirtzis et al. (Bakirtzis et al., 1996) employed a single fully connected NN to predict, on a daily basis, the load along a whole year for the Greek power system. The authors made use of the previous year for training purposes. Holidays were excluded from the training set and treated separately. The network was retrained daily using a moving window of the 365 most recent input/output patterns. More, the paper proposed another procedure to 2–7 days ahead forecasting.

Papalexopoulos et al. (Papalexopoulos et al., 1994) compared the performance of a sophisticated regression-based forecasting model to a newly developed NN-based model for STLF. It is worth mentioning that the regression model had been in operation in a North-American utility for several years, and represented the state-of-art in the classical statistical approach to STLF. The NN-based model has outperformed the regression model, yielding better forecasts. Moreover, the

development time of the neural model was shorter, and the development costs lower in comparison to the regression model. As a consequence, the neural model has replaced the regression model. This report is important, for it evaluates the operation of a neural model in a realistic electrical utility environment.

Khotanzad et al. (Khotanzad et al., 1998) describe the third generation of an hourly short-term load forecasting system, named artificial neural network short-term load forecaster (ANNSTLF). Its architecture includes only two neural forecasters — one forecasts the base load, and the other predicts the change in load. The final prediction is obtained via adaptive combination of these two forecasts. A novel scheme for forecasting holiday loads is developed as well. The performance on data from ten different utilities is reported and compared to the previous generation forecasting system.

Finally, a comprehensive review of the application of NNs to STLF can be found in Hippert et al. (Hippert et al., 2001). The authors examine a collection of papers published between 1991 and 1999.

### 3 Data representation

The input data consisted of sequences of load data extracted from a Brazilian electric utility. Seven neural input units are used in the representation, as shown in table 1. The first unit represents the load at the current hour. The second, the load at the hour immediately before. The third, fourth and fifth units represent respectively the load at twenty-four hours behind, at one week behind, and at one week and twenty-four hours behind the hour whose load is to be predicted. The sixth and seventh units represent a trigonometric coding for the hour to be forecast, i.e.,  $\sin(2\pi \cdot \text{hour}/24)$  and  $\cos(2\pi \cdot \text{hour}/24)$ . Each unit receives real values. The load data is preprocessed using ordinary normalization (minimum and maximum values in the  $[0,1]$  range).

Table 1: Input variables for the HNM model

Input	Variable name	Lagged values (h)
1–5	Load(P)	1, 2, 24, 168, 192
6	HS	0*
7	HC	0*

\*Lag 0 represents the hour to be forecast



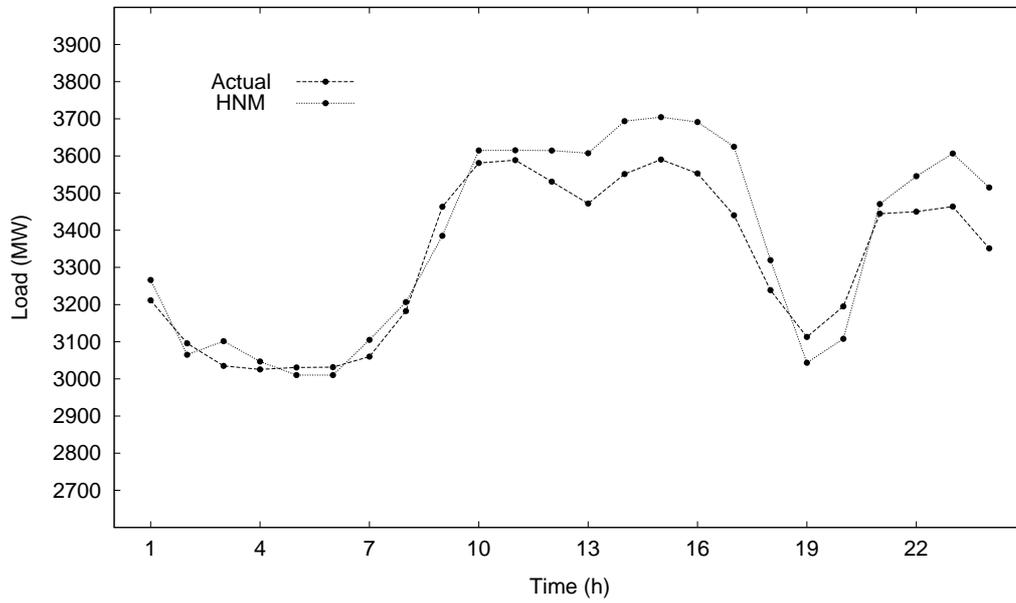


Figure 2: Actual load and forecast load for February 03, 1995

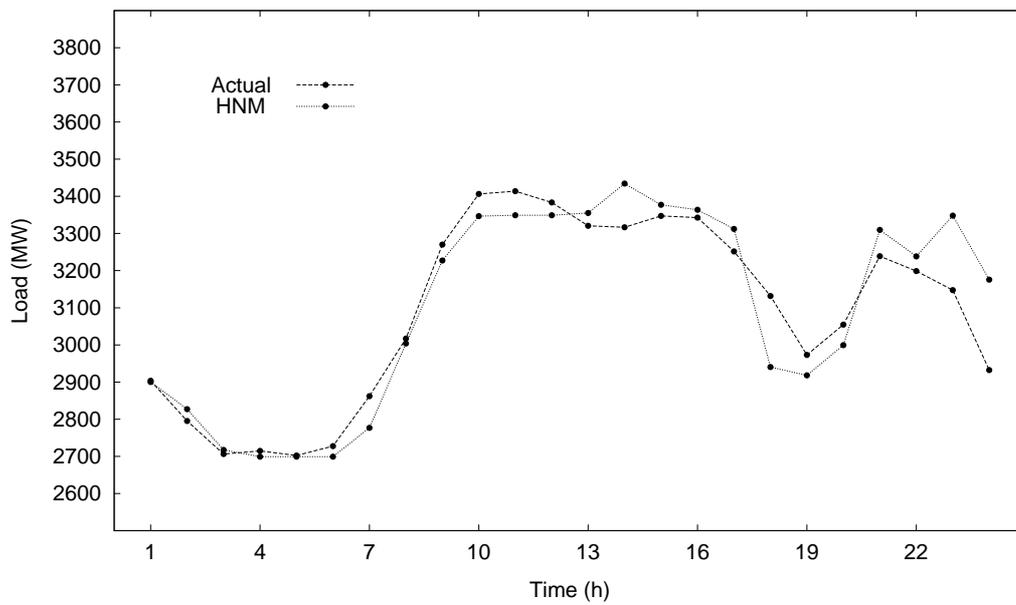


Figure 3: Actual load and forecast load for February 07, 1995

Table 2: Hourly percentage error for February 03 and 07, 1995

Time (h)	Feb. 03	Feb. 07
1	1.70	0.11
2	0.99	1.14
3	2.19	0.41
4	0.70	0.58
5	0.68	0.12
6	0.71	1.04
7	1.47	2.98
8	0.76	0.43
9	2.26	1.31
10	0.94	1.75
11	0.74	1.90
12	2.37	1.02
13	3.90	1.04
14	4.01	3.54
15	3.19	0.90
16	3.89	0.63
17	5.36	1.86
18	2.49	6.11
19	2.24	1.85
20	2.74	1.81
21	0.75	2.19
22	2.77	1.24
23	4.12	6.38
24	4.89	8.30
MAPE (%)	<i>2.33</i>	<i>2.03</i>

The training set comprised 2160 load patterns, spanning ninety days. The maximum electric load fell around 3900 MWatts. There was no particular treatment for holidays.

Figures 2 and 3 show the actual load and forecast load for two particular days. The first one — Friday, February 03, 1995 — is a typical weekday, and the second one — Tuesday, February 07, 1995 — is a special weekday.

A typical weekday is one whose load patterns share some similarity with the load patterns of the same weekdays in former weeks. For instance, the load patterns for Tuesdays tend to display a similar behaviour. Yet, when an unexpected event, such as a holliday, happens on one of those Tuesdays, it changes that fairly stationary behaviour. Such holliday is then said to be a special weekday. Special weekdays break down forecasters, for they perform much better on typical than on special weekdays.

Table 2 presents the performance of the forecasters for one to twenty-four step ahead predictions on those weekdays, as well as the mean absolute percentage error (MAPE).

The results from the HNM are very promising. They were compared to the results from a mul-

tilayer perceptron (MLP), working on the same 2160 load patterns (da Silva et al., 2001). According to such results, MLP obtained MAPE values of 2.64 and 5.92 for the typical and special weekdays respectively.

On the typical day, HNM performed thus better than MLP. On the special day, the performance of HNM was significantly superior than that of MLP. The superior performance displayed by HNM seems to be justified by its superior capacity to encode context information from load series in time, and to memorize that information in order to produce better forecasts.

The forecasting errors were fairly high, however, even for the HNM model. The load patterns were divided into seven groups, each one corresponding to a specific weekday. An analysis of those groups of patterns was then performed. It was observed that the training patterns within each group did not share much similarity between themselves. More, the difference was significant when comparing them with the testing patterns. Another Brazilian electric utility was contacted to provide us with more relevant and enlarged sequences of load data.

## 6 Conclusion

The paper presents a novel artificial neural model for sequence classification and prediction. The model has a topology made up of two self-organizing map networks, one on top of the other. It encodes and manipulates context information effectively.

The results obtained have shown that the HNM was able to perform efficiently the prediction of the electric load in both very short and short forecasting horizons. Furthermore, the results are better than those obtained by MLP on equal data.

It is worth mentioning that MLP has been widely employed to tackle the problem of STLF so far. The results obtained thus suggest that HNM may offer a better alternative to approach such problem.

A research and development project for a Brazilian electric utility is under course. The research will focus on the effects of the HNM time integrators on the predictions in order to produce a better adaptability. Besides, it will focus on the study of its performance on larger load databases. The forecasts should also span a larger number of days in order to be more significant statistically.

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