

# PATTERNS IDENTIFICATION FOR HITTING ADJACENT KEY ERRORS CORRECTION USING NEURAL NETWORK MODELS

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**Abstract:** People with Parkinson diseases or motor disability miss-stroke keys. It appears that keyboard layout, key distance, time gap are affecting this group of people's typing performance. This paper studies these features based on neural network learning algorithms to identify the typing patterns, further to correct the typing mistakes. A specific user typing performance, i.e. Hitting Adjacent Key Errors, is simulated to pilot this research. In this paper, a Time Gap and a Prediction using Time Gap model based on BackPropagation Neural Network, and a Distance, Angle and Time Gap model based on the use of Probabilistic Neural Network are developed respectively for this particular behaviour. Results demonstrate a high performance of the designed model, about 70% of all tests score above Basic Correction Rate, and simulation also shows a very unstable trend of user's 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' behaviour with this specific datasets.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Computer users with disabilities or some elderly people may have difficulties in accurately manipulating the QWERTY keyboard. For example, motor disability can cause significant typing mistakes. These issues haven't been well addressed by current technologies. Although alternative input devices or software such as keyguard and Dasher are available for use, none of them prove more efficient or comfortable than the conventional QWERTY keyboard. Some efforts associated with standard keyboard has been made such as Windows' Accessibility Options, ProtoType, however the solution to remedy typing difficulties encountered by disabled people hasn't been achieved as yet.

Ouazzane and Li (2008) provide a comprehensive report and classified user performance as four categories, i.e. Motor disability, Dyslexia, Unfamiliar with Computer and Others performance. The 'Miss-stroke' or 'Press Additional Keys' error is classified as sub-category three within category one. However, in the paper only a brief model framework is given based on multi-

technologies to tackle the typing errors as a whole, while there is no specific solution and convincing results for solving the 'Miss-stroke' error.

In the field of computer science, a neural network is a mathematical model or computational model that is inspired by the structure and/or functional aspects of biological neural networks. Modern neural networks are non-linear statistical data modeling tools. They are usually used to model complex relationships between inputs and outputs or to find patterns in data. There are three major learning paradigms, i.e. supervised learning, unsupervised learning and reinforcement learning, while BackPropagation is a supervised learning method and most popular used in practice. It is an implementation of the Delta rule, whose architecture belongs to feedforward network. Probabilistic Neural Networks (PNN) is a type of radial basis network suitable for classification problems. It is a feedforward network built with three layers, and offers a series of advantages, including rapid training speed, incremental training, and robustness to noisy examples.

In the following sections, a Time Gap model and a Prediction using Time Gap model based on BackPropagation are developed respectively to verify the influence of parameters such as keyboard layout, key distance and time gap on human typing behaviour. Then, an innovative model named Distance, Angle and Time Gap model based on Probabilistic Neural Network is developed to simulate and predict a specific user typing behaviour – ‘Hitting Adjacent Key Errors’ as a pilot research.

## 2 TIME GAP MODELLING

From Fitts’law (Fitts, 1954), users input performance  $IP$  in bits per second is proportional to the variable movement time  $ID$ , which has a direct relation with the moving distance from one point to another. Let’s consider a standard keyboard layout, the time gap between two consecutive strokes directly depends upon the distance between those two keys. As observed, the last key’s position represented by the distance and angle with the target typing key could affect some of the disabled users’ judgment on their typing accuracy and speed, which would be reflected by the time gap recorded on the computer log. Given the user’s typing history, a 1-gram neural network model named as Time Gap Neural Network (TGNN) is designed here to simulate and predict the two consecutive typing letters’ time gap. A typical structure of generated log is shown below.

```
01929 KeyPress 20080605-132149-593 'I' Status=(down) Key(84) Extra(0xc14) KeyDistance(3.500000) TimeGap(307)
01930 KeyPress 20080605-132149-635 'I' Status=(up) Key(84) Extra(0xc014) KeyDistance(0.000000) TimeGap(62)
01931 KeyPress 20080605-132149-638 'H' Status=(down) Key(72) Extra(0xc23) KeyDistance(2.500000) TimeGap(3)
01932 KeyPress 20080605-132149-694 'H' Status=(up) Key(72) Extra(0xc023) KeyDistance(0.000000) TimeGap(36)
01933 KeyPress 20080605-132149-804 'A' Status=(down) Key(65) Extra(0xc1e) KeyDistance(5.000000) TimeGap(110)
01934 KeyPress 20080605-132149-992 'A' Status=(up) Key(65) Extra(0xc01e) KeyDistance(0.000000) TimeGap(188)
```

Figure 1: Example structure of a generated log.

It is extracted from a charity helpline keystroke log. The associated computer is routinely used as a question recording, database query and email writing tool by a disabled volunteer. From the reflected keystroke log, the typing mistakes are predominantly about adjacent key press errors. The keystroke recording tool used in this research is KeyCapture software(Soukoreff and MacKenzie, 2009), which has been modified and adjusted for the purpose of this research. It runs in background under Windows environment to collect keystrokes without interfering with user’s work.

A function - *OnBnClickedsuggesttimegap* is programmed to pre-process the dataset. A fifty-four

virtual key codes set is considered, which includes fifty-three visible symbols such as alphabet, numbers and space. The other symbols are classified as an assumed symbol - ‘Other’.

*OnBnClickedsuggesttimegap* function only extracts the keystrokes whose time gaps is in a range of  $[0, 3000]$  ms. The rest keystrokes which have been considered as either out of range or computer system related problems are ignored. 2-gram dataset is created with their corresponding time gaps. This requires 108 (i.e. NumberOfSymbols \* Gram) neurons in the input layer. All the time gap values are normalized into a range of  $[-1, 1]$  according to Min-Max Normalization before they are used by the Time Gap Neural Network model (TGNN). The normalization equation is shown below,

$$v' = (v - V_{\min}) * (V'_{\max} - V'_{\min}) / (V_{\max} - V_{\min}) + V'_{\min} \quad (1)$$

Where  $V'_{\max} = 1, V'_{\min} = -1$  and variable  $v$  is the time gap value extracted from the dataset. The results of TGNN model will be reversed to their natural values based on the same equation.

Then, a traditional BackPropagation neural network is designed with a 108-7-1 three layer structure. The input includes two consecutive symbols represented by unary codes, and the output is the expected time gap between these two consecutive symbols. MATLAB neural network toolbox is used for programming. The ‘*tansig*’ and ‘*purelin*’ functions are considered as the hidden and output layer’s activation function.

A reconstructed dataset extracted from the log file is used as neural network’s training dataset; another two datasets, i.e. English alphabets in an alphabetical order and QWERTY keyboard layout order respectively, ‘*abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz*’ and ‘*qwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnm*’, are used as two testing cases. The experimental results generated by TGNN model then demonstrated on these two datasets are shown in Figure 2 and 3.

Firstly, the TGNN (Time Gap Neural Network) model is trained based on the log file. Then the Alphabet and QWERTY sequences are applied to the TGNN model. Figure 2 shows a simulation of the user’s typing behaviour (e.g. speed and time gap) by typing an Alphabet sequence; Figure 3 shows a simulation of the user’s typing behaviours (e.g. speed and time gap) by typing a QWERTY sequence. Due to no predecessors, both corresponding time gaps of the first keystrokes in sequence (in Figure 2 is ‘a’; and in Figure 3 is ‘q’) are counted as zero.

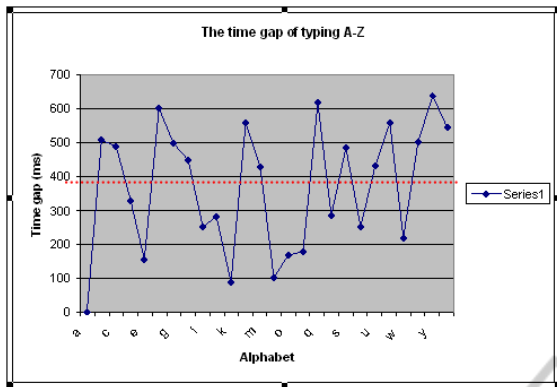


Figure 2: Modelling time gap using A→Z sequence.

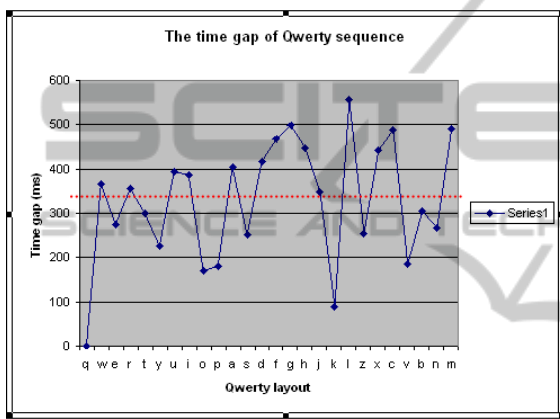


Figure 3: Modelling time gap using QWERTY sequence.

In Figure 2 and 3, x-axis represents user's typing sequence; y-axis represents the time gap in milliseconds. Between each two consecutive alphabets, a blue line is drawn to illustrate the elapsed time. The maximum time gap (637.4ms) occurs in Figure 2 when the finger moves from key 'x' to 'y'; while the minimum time gap (89.9ms) appears in both figures, when the finger moves from 'j' to 'k'.

These two figures show that the current keystroke's predecessor affects the user's typing behaviour (e.g. time gap) if one ignores the user's keystroke action itself and behaviour randomness that human may have. Due to the distance difference between each two keys in computer QWERTY keyboard, the time gap of each two consecutive keys during user strokes varies.

The red lines in Figure 2 and 3 represent the average time cost of all twenty-five movements, which show that the cost of typing an alphabet order sequence is 384.44ms (see Figure 2), whereas the cost of typing a QWERTY order sequence is 342.50ms (see Figure 3). The test shows typing an

Alphabet sequence is more time consuming based on a standard keyboard. This can be explained by movement cost, meaning that an alphabet order sequence would require more time for a user to locate the keys from one to another.

This research gives a glance at the idea that the Time Gap between two consecutive keystrokes is influenced by current symbol's predecessor. A further research tracing back more than one gram history accompanied with a larger dataset is necessary.

### 3 PREDICTION USING TIME GAP

As mentioned in the introduction, people with motor disability or Parkinson disease using keyboard may press adjacent keys or stick keys. These can be shown from the time gap between each two consecutive key strokes. For example, a time gap between the windows keyboard messages caused by sticking keys can be much smaller than the user's normal typing speed; the opposite case may also happen when more time can be spent by disabled people aiming at the target before making up their mind. From observation, interestingly it is rare for those people to completely miss typing a symbol. According to these distinct behaviours, a neural network model using BackPropagation (*newff*) is designed by adding an extra Time Gap variable in the input layer, called Prediction using Time Gap (PTG). Here, a small sample typed by a Parkinson person is used to demonstrate the idea. The target typing sample is,

*the quick brown fog jumped over the lazy dog*

The user's true typing sample is,

*hthe quick brroowwnn fgow jumpppefd iobverethe lwqazy doogfg*

The typed sample is reconstructed for preprocessing,

*@the quick br@@@wn@ @@f@ox@ jum@p@e@d @@@o@ver the l@@azy do@g@@@@*

Where the symbol '@' represents an error or a NULL, compared to the right sample which should be recognized by PTG model. During preprocessing, the time gap value which is one of the input

parameters is categorized into three levels and converted into three bits unary codes. In this case,

' $\leq 10$  milliseconds' over-fast  $\Rightarrow$  001  
 '10 &&  $\leq 1000$  milliseconds' user-Speed  $\Rightarrow$  010  
 '>1000 milliseconds' over-slow  $\Rightarrow$  100

The user's typing has been recorded both by Notepad and KeyCapture software.

Prediction using Time Gap model is designed with three layers 30-7-28 structure, where the input requirement of PTG model is twenty seven length unary coding symbol {'a'...'z', space} and three length unary coding time gap, and the output requirement is twenty eight length unary coding limited in symbol set {'a'...'z', space, '@'}, where the symbol '@' is added to represent an additional or missed symbol.

The correction rate distribution within one hundred times training is shown in Figure 4, which has a mean value of 0.8480 and a deviation of 0.0501. The x-axis represents the correction rate based on the comparison between the target dataset and PTG generating dataset; the y-axis represents the absolute frequency of the one hundred times training results, which illustrates the number of times a particular outcome occurs.

Figure 4 demonstrates the range that PTG model's correction rate lies on. It shows that the results lie predominantly between 65% and 90%. Under this test sample there is about twenty-seven times where the correction rate has reached near 90% and only once the correction rate happens to be less than 65%.

This test indicates that the time gap can be considered as an input element used by neural network model to correct wrong typed symbols. Due to no gram consideration and the size limitation of training dataset, the relationship built between input and output is a pure right-wrong relationship. This could lead to a further research on the  $n$ -gram language modelling with larger training and testing dataset.

#### 4 PROBABILISTIC NEURAL NETWORK MODELLING

- ◆ **Assumption:** the research carried out in this section is based on one finger typing user case. User's each key press and move rely entirely on a single finger. Skilful users' typing behaviour in controlling

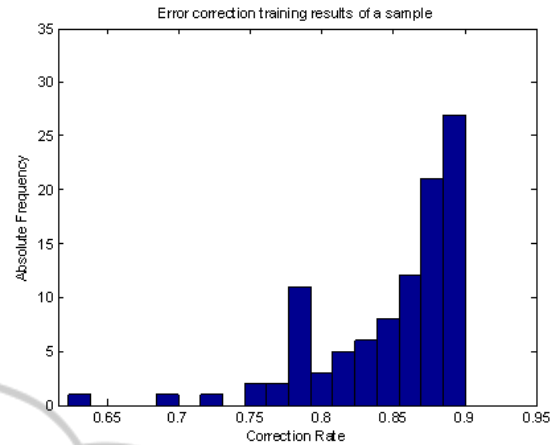


Figure 4: Absolute Frequency of PTG model Correction Rate.

fingers may vary, and the distance of fingers move between two consecutive keystrokes could be more complex.

- ◆ **Key Distance Definition:** according to the layout of a computer QWERTY keyboard, there exists a physical distance between each two keys. Let  $d_{i,j}$  be the distance between *key i* and *key j*, and define the measure unit as key-distance. Then,  $d_{a,s} = 1$  shows that the distance between key 'A' and key 'S' is one key-distance;  $d_{a,f} = 3$  means there are three key-distances between key 'A' and key 'F'. Users move their fingers toward the next key as soon as they finish current key press. The distance between two keys affects a user's typing performance.
- ◆ **Error Margin Distance (EMD) Definition:** based on Key Distance, a variable  $\Delta d_{s,f}$  is further defined as a distance between a user's typed key - *key<sub>s</sub>* and target key - *key<sub>f</sub>* and called Error Margin Distance. The Error Margin Distance is mainly caused by the user's 'Hitting Adjacent Key Error'.
- ◆ **Key Distance Class Definition:** let's define a class,  $C_{key_i,j} = \{\overline{key_{ij}} \mid key_i\}$ , by giving  $key_i, \overline{key_{ij}} \in \{key_1, \dots, key_n\}$ ,

where  $i, j \leq n$ ,  $n$  is the number of keys related to a computer QWERTY keyboard,  $\overline{key}_{ij}$  represents a key set around  $key_i$  within  $j$  key-distances. For instance, a one key-distance set corresponding to key 's' is,  

$$C_{s,1} = \{\overline{s}_1 | s\} \approx \{'D', 'E', 'W', 'A', 'Z', 'X'\}$$

Noisy data prediction models such as Focused Time-Delay Neural Network not only can be generally used to analyze a language text, but also can be explored to analyze some specific problems. For example, let's take the helpline data as a real scenario. As shown in the data, a typist is frequently making 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' mistakes. Therefore, all the typing mistakes are extracted from the log file and used to identify the possible rules. A sample of it is shown below,

```
"Q" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(*)
"S" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(*)
"BACK" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(*)
"D" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(*)
```

Figure 5: A sample of 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors'.

This is a typical 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' typing mistake that occurred within a user's typing stream. The user's intention is to type a letter 'd' following letter 'q', but the letter 's' is mistakenly pressed. So the user has to go back and make a correction by pressing 'backspace' key shortly after the mistake is made (in virtual key code, the 'backspace' is represented by 'BACK'). Both Key Distance and Time Gap are calculated and recorded in the log.

The user investigation shows users' Hitting Adjacent Key behaviour is related to the positions of both the last key and the current key if one ignores the stroke randomness that users' symptoms may cause. It also shows that a user's typing speed moving from one key to another also plays an important role in making such errors. For example, although a faster typing speed than a user's normal speed increases the occurrence of 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors', the users' hesitation which leads to much slower typing speed does not always help to an increase of right typing rate, as shown in the log file.

Here, the idea is to use these essential parameters, namely, Key Distance, Time Gap and Error Margin Distance to discover the fundamental rules behind users' typing mistakes. Let's start with the introduction of QWERTY keyboard layout, and consider Figure 6 and 7,

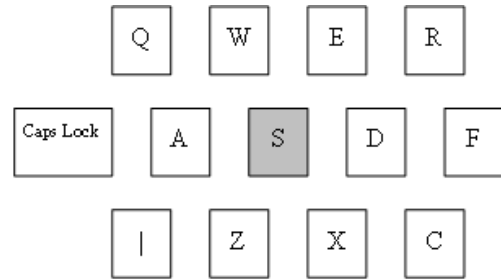


Figure 6: A QWERTY keyboard layout sample.

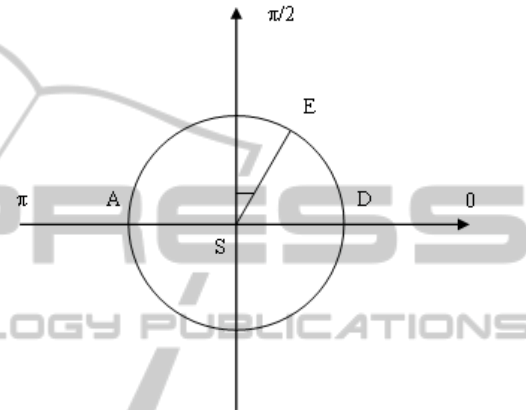


Figure 7: Relationship - angle between keys and its surrounding keys D, E, A.

In Figure 6, key 'S' is surrounded by one key-distance dataset {'W', 'E', 'A', 'D', 'Z', 'X'} and two key-distance dataset {'Q', 'R', 'caps lock', 'F', '|', 'C'}. Given certain inputs, if one requires the neural network model to be able to produce the right symbol that a user intends to type, the designed model not only need to deduce the dataset which the right symbol belongs to, but also the right angle the user intends to move towards. This is illustrated in Figure 7. All keys surrounding 'S' are positioned with different angles. Let's assume the circle starts from right-hand side of 'S' and turns in an anticlockwise direction. Then the key 'D' can be expressed by a three dimensions vector,  $key_d = \{key='S', distance=1, angle=0\}$ , where  $key='S'$  illustrates the dataset surrounding key 'S',  $distance=1$  &  $angle=0$  represent the key which is one key-distance away from key 'S' with an angle of zero degree. The key 'A' can be expressed as  $key_a = \{key='s', distance=1, angle=\pi\}$ ,  $distance=1, angle=\pi$  means the key is one key-distance away from key 'S' with an angle of  $\pi$  degree.

The key distance and time gap between last two grams could determine the error margin between the wrong key and the right key. In order to prove this

hypothesis, a Neural Network Topology with Distance, Angle and Time Gap vectors in the input layer, and the Error Margin Distance vector between the typed key and target key in the output layer is designed. These require a precise measurement on both input and output parameters. However, given the difficulty of QWERTY keyboard and its associated operating system to respond to an accurate simulation of users' movement and the difficulty of a neural network to provide a precise output, this solution, as it stands, is not practical. For example, the difference in angle between key 'S' → key 'E' and key 'S' → key 'R' is not significant. This high precision requirement raises the design difficulty of a neural network model.

In order to overcome these obstacles, a more robust neural network model with re-designed vectors on both input and output layers is developed in this research. The input of neural network model uses (x, y) coordinate expression instead of distance and angle, where x represents x-axis key-distance (i.e. horizontal distance), and y represents y-axis key-distance (i.e. vertical distance). X-axis key-distance refers to a user's horizontal move toward the typed key; y-axis key-distance refers to a user's vertical move toward the typed key. The time gap parameter is kept unchanged, which represents the time difference (*ms*) between two consecutive key strokes. When the error margin is calculated, the coordinate centre lies at the current typed key. When the distance of last typed key and current typed key is calculated, the coordinate centre lies at the last typed key. The sign of key distance will be determined as soon as the coordinate centre is fixed.

In QWERTY keyboard there are maximum of six one key-distance keys around each key. The user investigation records suggest that most of 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' occur in an area where the keys are equal or less than one key-distance away from the target keys. Therefore, instead of computing a precise error margin  $\Delta d_{i,f}$ , the output of neural network model can be designed as a six-classes classifier. If one counts the class in a wise-clock direction according to traditional coordinate, then, from Figure 7, 'd' belongs to class one, 'e' belongs to class two and so on. Thus the question can be interpreted as finding an appropriate neural network model to solve a classification issue associated with input vectors: Distance, Angle and Time Gap.

It is well known that radial basis networks can require more neurons than standard feedforward BackPropagation networks, but quite often they can be designed in a fraction of the time it takes to train

standard feedforward networks. One of Radial basis networks is Probabilistic Neural Networks (PNN) which can be used for classification problems. As PNN is a time-efficient and classification-solving solution, in this research a 3-N-1 structure model, i.e. Distance, Angle and Time Gap PNN model (DATP model) is designed based on PNN to predict where the target key could possibly lie against the wrong key press.

The DATP model consists of three layers, input layer, hidden layer and output layer. The hidden layer – radbas layer compute the distance between the input vector and the hidden weights vector, and then produces a distance vector which indicates how close the input is against the correct letter. The third layer would classify the results of radbas layer and produces the right class.

In this experiment, thirty three 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' are identified from log file, and are converted into the format training dataset manually. At the same time another ten samples are used as test samples. Here an example is given to show the pre-processing procedure,

```
"C" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(78)
"J" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(108)
"BACK" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(78)
"R" Status=(*) Key(*) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(923)
→ 3.5 1 108 4
```

Figure 8: An example of pre-processing procedure.

The first four lines are extracted from log file. The line following an arrow is the data transformed manually from the lines above, which has four parameters, namely, horizontal distance, vertical distance, time gap between two consecutive keystroke, and class.

The first line shows that the horizontal distance from 'C' to 'J' is 3.5 key-distances, however, if the move are from 'J' to 'C', the key-distance would be -3.5; the vertical distance is one key-distance; the time gap from 'C' to 'J' is 108ms (shown in red) and the class is '4' as the key 'H' is at the left hand side of key 'J'. In the case of overlapping keys, a half key-distance can be counted. For example,

```
"D" Status=(*) Key(68) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(93)
"G" Status=(*) Key(71) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(218)
"H" Status=(*) Key(72) Extra(*) KeyDistance(*) TimeGap(3)
→ 2.5 0 218 4
```

Figure 9: An example of overlapping keys pre-processing.

This is a typical key press with overlapped key 'G' and key 'H'. The time gap between 'G' press and 'H' press is 3ms, which is much less than the

user's usual typing speed. This has been proved by the user's correction which happened afterwards, as shown in the log file. The horizontal key-distance between key 'D' and key 'G' is two key-distances, however, another 0.5 key-distance is added in pre-processing by taking into consideration the overlapping. The vertical distance between these two keys is zero, while the time gap is 218ms and the output class is 4.

The experimental results show a correction rate of 50% which is five out of the ten testing samples. However, due to the highness of user's typing disorder and the small size of training dataset, a random training and testing dataset selection strategy is further adopted. The thirty three training samples and ten testing samples are mixed up and the random function *iRand* is applied to randomly pick up the training dataset and testing dataset in a proportion of 2/3 and 1/3 respectively. Two groups of trials are carried out, and each group of them includes ten training and testing samples. The corresponding plots are shown in Figure 10.

The x-axis refers to training and testing samples that are picked up randomly; the y-axis refers to the prediction rate of the DATP model. The dashed line in red shows the prediction rate of each testing dataset according to its training dataset; the line in blue is the random prediction rate which has been named as Basic Rate.

The first plot of Figure 10 demonstrates that there are six rounds out of eight whose prediction rates are above Basic Rate, while the rest are below Basic Rate. The highest score (40%) occurs at the third round, while the lowest score occurs at eighth round (0%). The second plot indicates that there are seven rounds whose prediction rates are above Basis Rate, while the three remaining rounds are below Basic Rate. The highest score (36%) occurs at the tenth round while the lowest score (7%) occurs at the third round.

Both plots show that there are 70% of all tests scoring above Basic Rate. They also demonstrate a very unstable trend of user's 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' behaviour. It recommends that the training dataset with a small size of data may not be able to give a high prediction rate as the dataset has a bad convergence. In that case, several rounds of training with a random dataset selection strategy may be required.

Further work to be carried out should focus on two areas: the DATP model development with larger scaled data to obtain a more accurate prediction rate, and a touch keyboard combining the sensitivity of

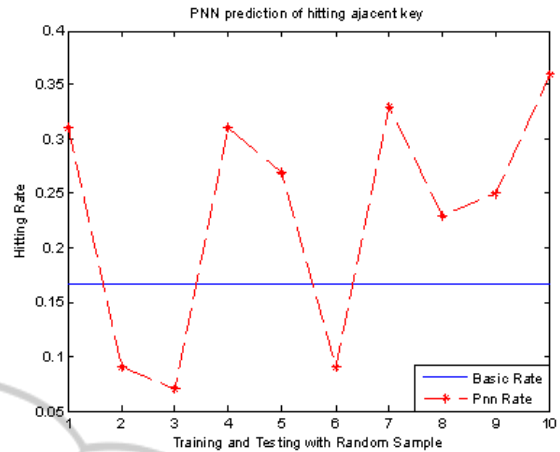


Figure 10: Hitting Adjacent Key prediction rates based on PPN network (the top and the beneath plots are generated from group one and two trials respectively).

touch screen and functionality of QWERTY layout to detect the users' finger movement more precisely to calculate the accurate  $\Delta d_{s,f}$ .

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper the influence of time gap on user's typing performance is studied, and a unique Time Gap model is developed. Experimental results show that the current keystroke's predecessor affected the user's typing behaviour, and the Time Gap between two consecutive keystrokes is influenced by current symbol's predecessor. Inspired by this conclusion, a fundamental PTG model is developed. Its experimental results indicate that the correction rates predominantly lie in between 65% and 90% with the current testing sample.

Furthermore, an innovative Distance, Angle and Time Gap PNN model based on Probabilistic Neural Network is developed to simulate a specific user typing behaviour – 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' based on unique factors such as key distances. Results demonstrate that about 70% of all tests score above Basic Correction Rate. Results also show a very unstable trend of user's 'Hitting Adjacent Key Errors' behaviour, which suggest that several training trials with a random dataset selection strategy could be applied.

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