

METHOD OF AUGMENTING A DATASET USED IN FACIAL EXPRESSION ANALYSIS

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present disclosure relates to a computer-implemented method of augmenting a training or testing dataset for a facial expression analysis system.

BACKGROUND

Classification of basic prototypical high-intensity facial expressions is an extensively researched topic. Inspired initially by the seminal work of Ekman [1], it has made significant strides in recent years [2, 3]. However, such approaches have limited applicability in real life, where people rarely exhibit high-intensity prototypical expressions; low-key, non-prototypical expressions are much more common in everyday situations. Consequently, researchers have started to explore alternative approaches, such as intensity of facial action units [4,5], compound expressions [6], or dimensional models of facial affect [7–9]. Yet these alternatives have not received much attention in the computer vision community compared to categorical models.

One major problem that impedes the widespread use of dimensional models is the limited availability of datasets. This stems from the difficulty of collecting large sets of images across many subjects and expressions. It is even more difficult to acquire reliable emotion annotations for supervised learning. Continuous dimensional emotion labels such as Valence and Arousal are difficult for laymen users to assess and assign and hiring experienced annotators to label a large corpus of images is prohibitively expensive and time consuming. Since even experienced annotators may disagree on these labels, multiple annotations per image are required, which further increases the cost and complexity of the task. Yet there are no guarantees that the full range of possible expressions and intensities will be covered, resulting in imbalanced datasets. Consequently, large, balanced emotion datasets, with high quality annotations, covering a wide range of expression variations and expression intensities of many different subjects, are in short supply.

Accordingly, there exists an unmet need to create balanced, annotated image datasets, appropriate for training and testing Facial Expression Analysis systems for dimensional affect in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A primary embodiment of the present invention is a computer-implemented method of augmenting a dataset used in facial expression analysis comprising the steps of adding to a dataset a first facial image and a second facial image, mapping the first and second facial

images to a first expression point and second expression point respectively in a continuous dimensional emotion space, determining a position of a third expression point in the continuous dimensional emotion space, the third expression point being a position between the first and second expression point, generating an expression variation image assigning a first dimensional label to the expression variation image and optionally adding the expression variation image to the dataset, the expression variation image and first dimensional label are derived from the position of the third expression point, based on its position relative to the first and second facial image.

Optionally, the third expression point is determined by applying an expression distance to the first expression point or second expression point. Optionally, the expression distance is preselected.

Optionally, the first and second facial images are each assigned a label comprising the following expressions: happy, surprised, afraid, angry, disgusted or sad and are mapped to positions that correspond to the labels in the continuous dimensional emotion space. Optionally, the first and second facial images are apex expressions.

Optionally the primary embodiment further comprises the step of adding to the dataset, a neutral facial image, mapping the neutral facial image to a neutral point in the continuous dimensional emotion space, determining a first intensity point in the continuous dimensional emotion space, the first intensity point being a position between the neutral facial image and one of: the first facial image, the second facial image or the expression variation image, generating an intensity variation image, assigning a second dimensional label to the first variation image and optionally adding the intensity variation image to the dataset, the intensity variation image and the second dimensional label are based on the first intensity point's relative position between the neutral facial image and the first facial image.

Optionally, the first intensity point is determined by applying an intensity distance to the neutral expression point or the first facial image. Optionally, the intensity distance is preselected. Optionally, the expression variation image is obtained by applying a first morph function to interpolate the first facial image and the second facial image and the intensity variation image is obtained by applying a second morph function to interpolate the neutral image and the first facial image.

An alternative of the primary embodiment is a computer-implemented method of augmenting a dataset used in facial expression analysis comprising the steps of adding to a dataset, a neutral facial image and a first facial image, mapping the neutral facial image to a neutral point and the first facial image to a first expression point, the neutral point and first

expression point being located in a continuous dimensional emotion space, determining a first intensity point on an intensity plane in the continuous dimensional emotion space, the first intensity point being a position between the neutral facial image and the first expression, generating an intensity variation image and assigning a dimensional label to the intensity variation image, the intensity variation image and the dimensional label are based on the first intensity point's relative position between the neutral facial image and the first facial image.

Optionally, the intensity variation image is obtained by applying a second morph function to interpolate the neutral image and the first facial image.

Optionally, the continuous dimensional emotion space is a valence-arousal circumplex.

An alternative of the primary embodiment is a storage medium comprising machine readable instructions stored thereon for causing a computer system to perform a method as described above.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 illustrates a method of augmenting a dataset used in facial expression analysis according to the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a depiction of the augmentation framework according to the present invention in valence-arousal space of the circumplex model.

Fig. 3 depicts two types of morphings use to generate expression and intensity variations.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In the following detailed description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, which form a part hereof. The illustrative embodiments described in the detailed description, drawings and claims are not meant to be limiting. Other embodiments can be utilized, and other changes can be made, without departing from the spirit or scope of the subject matter presented herein.

The present invention provides a method of augmenting a dataset used in Facial Expression Analysis systems **100** specifically, by it premised on the observation that many expression variations can be approximated by generating high-quality morphings between the existing available images of a categorical dataset. While expected to be typically employed to augment training datasets used to train machine learning models used in facial expression analysis, the method can likewise be used to augment a testing dataset.

Referring to Fig. 1 and in primary embodiment of the present invention, a first facial image and second facial image are added to a dataset **101**. Facial images that are added to the dataset typically depict one of seven expressions, namely: Neutral (NE), Happy (HA), Surprised (SU), Afraid (AF), Angry (AN), Disgusted (DI) and Sad (SA), and are already annotated/labelled as such. By way of example, a typical categorical dataset is expected to contain each of the seven expressions per subject. However, it will be readily understood by a skilled addressee that the first and second facial image may also be other expressions such as, but not limited to Delighted, Excited. For the purposes of augmenting expressions, the first and second facial images cannot depict Neutral.

In one embodiment, the first facial image and second facial image both depict an apex expression, meaning the facial expression is a peak intensity.

Referring to Figure 2, a 2-dimensional polar affective space, similar to the Arousal-Valence (AV) space of the circumplex model, with Neutral at the center is depicted. Distance from the center (i.e. deviation from neutral) represents the intensity of an expression. High intensity expressions (e.g. 'extremely happy') are located at the outer perimeter of the affective space, while low-key expressions (e.g. 'slightly happy') near the center of the space, close to Neutral. Arousal and Valence are in the range of $[-1, 1]$. Emotions are defined by angles in the interval $[0^\circ, 360^\circ]$, while intensity of expression is defined by the distance from the center (Neutral) and is in the interval $[0, 1]$. The following assumptions are made. Firstly, one-to-one correspondence of affective coordinates to facial deformations. Secondly, continuity of the facial deformation space. Thirdly, neighbouring affective coordinates have similar facial deformations. Small changes in affective coordinates, result in small changes in the facial deformation space. Lastly, continuity of the dimensional affective space.

The first and second facial images are mapped to a first and second expression point respectively in a continuous dimensional emotion space **102**. A non-limiting example of a continuous two-dimensional emotion space is the valence-arousal space of the circumplex model which will be discussed further as a non-limiting example.

Since the first and second facial images are already labelled, the first and second expression points can be very specific coordinates in the valence-arousal space of the circumplex model. Referring to Fig. 2, the original dataset images are depicted as outlined circles. It is apparent after mapping a typical dataset with facial images depicting the seven typical facial expressions that there is a lot of empty space in the valence-arousal space.

Next, a position of a third expression point in the continuous dimensional emotion space is determined, the third expression point being a position between the first and second

expression point **103**. Preferably, the position of the third expression point is determined by applying an expression distance to either the first or second expression point, so long as the third expression point lies therebetween. Preferably, further expression points can be determined by applying the expression distance to the third expression point and so on to obtain a series of expression points between the first and second expression point. Although not strictly required More preferably, the expression distance is preselected based on the specific needs of the training or testing dataset, such as expression granularity, augmentation factor and symmetry between the points. Preferably, the expression distance is an angle increment of 15° starting from either the first or second expression point and strikes a balance between the aforementioned criteria. Preferably the expression is preselected. The method as described above can also be applied to a neutral point and any expression image, including the first facial image and second facial image and newly generated images as a result of augmentation such as an expression variation image described below to generate an intensity variation image with the third expression point being analogous to the first intensity point for the purposes of mapping.

Preferably, the first and second facial images correspond to points that are immediately adjacent to each other when mapped in the continuous dimensional emotion space. By way of example, and once again referring again to Fig. 2, the emotions, angry and afraid are example of two expressions that are immediately adjacent to each other in the valence arousal space.

With the position of the third expression determined, an expression variation image can be generated, and a first dimensional label assigned to the expression variation image, the expression variation image and first dimensional label being derived from the position of the third expression point, based on its position relative to the first and second facial expression.

104. In a non-limiting example, and assuming a two-dimensional valence arousal space of the circumplex model.

Let F_i^E denote the face image of subject i with facial expression E . For categorical datasets, usually $E \in \{NE, HA, SU, AF, AN, DI, SA\}$. Let θ^E denote the specific angle of each expression in the polar valence-arousal space, as estimated from emotion studies [7, 23]. Let $I_i^E \in [0, 1]$ denote the intensity of expression E of subject i . Zero expression intensity $I^e = 0$ coincides with NE (by definition $I^{NE} = 0$), while $I^E = 1$ represents the highest possible intensity of expression. Let $M_p(F_i^{source}, F_i^{target}, r)$ be a morphing function, based on p facial landmarks, that returns a new face image, which is the result of morphing F_i^{source} towards F_i^{target} with a ratio $r \in [0, 1]$; when $r = 0$ the morphed image is identical to F_i^{source} and when $r = 1$ it is

identical to F_i^{target} . Any known contemporary morphing approach can be used for this, such as Delaunay triangulation followed by local warping on groups of facial landmarks.

The augmentation method according the present invention is based on 2 types of morphings. In order to synthesize new expression variations, Apex to Apex morphing (1) is used, between the given apex expressions of the categorical dataset:

$$\text{Apex to Apex} \begin{cases} \mathbf{F}_i^{A_1 r A_2} = M_p(\mathbf{F}_i^{A_1}, \mathbf{F}_i^{A_2}, r) \\ I_i^{A_1 r A_2} = (1-r)I_i^{A_1} + rI_i^{A_2} \\ \theta^{A_1 r A_2} = (1-r)\theta^{A_1} + r\theta^{A_2} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

Where A, A_1 and A_2 are apex expressions from the parent dataset, and r is a ratio in the interval $[0, 1]$.

In order to synthesize new intensity variations, Neutral to Apex morphing (2) is used, between the NE image and a given (or interpolated) apex image:

$$\text{Neutral to Apex} \begin{cases} \mathbf{F}_i^{rA} = M_p(\mathbf{F}_i^{NE}, \mathbf{F}_i^A, r) \\ I_i^{rA} = rI_i^A \\ \theta^{rA} = \theta^A \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Referring to Fig. 3, examples of these 2 types of morphings are depicted. For every given or generated face image F_i^E , with I_i^E and θ^E , the first dimensional label can be computed as $V_i^E = I_i^E \cos(\theta^E) = 1$ and $A_i^E = I_i^E \sin(\theta^E)$. Preferably an intensity variation image is generated by applying a intensity distance, the intensity distance being an intensity increment of 0.1. Optionally, both (1) and (2) can both be applied to generated augmented image(s) for both facial expressions and intensity.

Optionally, the expression variation image or expression variation image can be added to the dataset **105**.

CLAIMS

1. A computer-implemented method of augmenting a dataset used in facial expression analysis comprising the steps of:

adding to a dataset a first facial image and a second facial image;

mapping the first and second facial images to a first expression point and second expression point respectively in a continuous dimensional emotion space;

determining a position of a third expression point in the continuous dimensional emotion space, the third expression point being a position between the first and second expression point;

generating an expression variation image;

assigning a first dimensional label to the expression variation image; and

adding the expression variation image to the dataset;

wherein the expression variation image and first dimensional label are derived from the position of the third expression point, based on its position relative to the first and second facial image.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the third expression point is determined by applying an expression distance to the first expression point or second expression point.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the expression distance is preselected.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the first and second facial images are each assigned a label comprising the following expressions: happy, surprised, afraid, angry, disgusted or sad and are mapped to positions that correspond to the labels in the continuous dimensional emotion space.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the first and second facial images are apex expressions.

6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

adding to the dataset, a neutral facial image;

mapping the neutral facial image to a neutral point in the continuous dimensional emotion space;

determining a first intensity point in the continuous dimensional emotion space, the first intensity point being a position between the neutral facial image and one of: the first facial image, the second facial image or the expression variation image;

generating an intensity variation image;

assigning a second dimensional label to the first variation image; and

adding the intensity variation image to the dataset;

wherein the intensity variation image and the second dimensional label are based on the first intensity point's relative position between the neutral facial image and the first facial image.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the first intensity point is determined by applying an intensity distance to the neutral expression point or the first facial image.

8. The method according to claim 6, wherein the intensity distance is preselected.

9. The method according to claim 1 or 6, wherein the expression variation image is obtained by applying a first morph function to interpolate the first facial image and the second facial image and the intensity variation image is obtained by applying a second morph function to interpolate the neutral facial image and the first facial image.

10. A computer-implemented method of augmenting a dataset used in facial expression analysis comprising the steps of:

adding to a dataset, a neutral facial image and a first facial image;

mapping the neutral facial image to a neutral point and the first facial image to a first expression point, the neutral point and first expression point being located in a continuous dimensional emotion space;

determining a first intensity point on an intensity plane in the continuous dimensional emotion space, the first intensity point being a position between the neutral facial image and the first expression;

generating an intensity variation image; and

assigning a dimensional label to the intensity variation image;

wherein the intensity variation image and the dimensional label are based on the first intensity point's relative position between the neutral facial image and the first facial image.

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the intensity variation image is obtained by applying a second morph function to interpolate the neutral facial image and the first facial image.
12. The method according to claims 1-11, wherein the continuous dimensional emotion space is a valence-arousal circumplex.
13. A storage medium comprising machine readable instructions stored thereon for causing a computer system to perform a method according to any one of claims 1 to 12.