

Face Recognition under the Skin

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4.1 Introduction

Face recognition stands as the most appealing biometric modality, since it is the natural mode of identification among humans and is totally unobtrusive. At the same time, however, it is one of the most challenging modalities (Zhao et al. 2003). Several face recognition algorithms have been developed in recent years, mostly in the visible and a few in the infrared domains. A serious problem in visible face recognition is light variability, due to the reflectance nature of incident light in this band. This can clearly be seen in Figure 4.1. The visible image of the same person in Figure 4.1(x) acquired in the presence of normal light appears totally different from that in Figure 4.1(y), which was acquired in low light.

Many of the research efforts in thermal face recognition were narrowly aiming to use in the dark to reduce this deleterious effect of light variability (Figure 4.1) (Savchynsky et al. 2000; Schinger and Savchynsky 2004). Methodologically, such approaches did not differ very much from face recognition algorithms in the visible band, which can be classified as appearance-based (Chen et al. 2003) and feature-based (Buddharaja et al. 2006). Recently attempts have been made to fuse the visible and infrared modalities to increase the performance of face recognition (Savchynsky and Schinger 2004a; Wang et al. 2004; Chen et al. 2003; Kong et al. 2003).

The authors have pioneered a physiological facial recognition method that promotes a different way of thinking about face recognition in the thermal infrared (Buddharaja et al. 2006, 2007; Buddharaja and Pavlidis 2008). This work has shown that facial physiological information, extracted in the form of a superficial vascular network, can serve as a good and time-invariant feature vector for face recognition. However, the methodology in that pilot work had some weak points. The recognition performance reported in past experiments

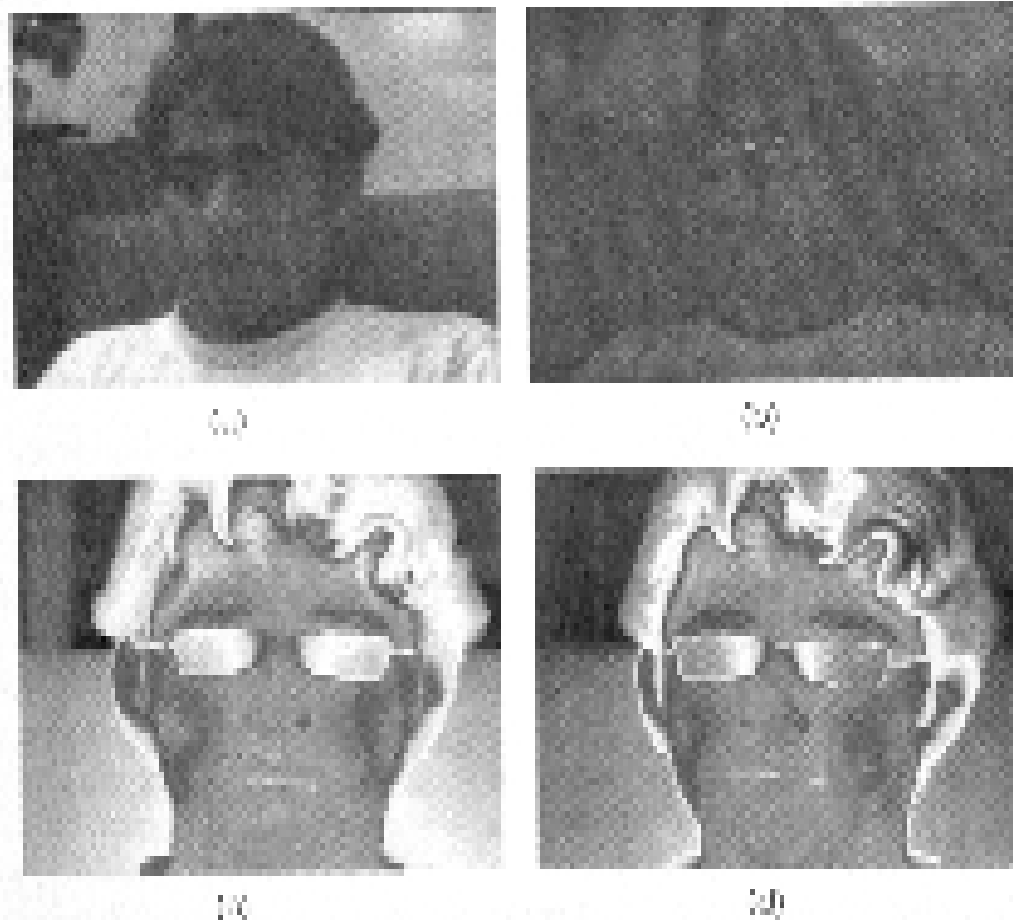


Figure 4.1: Example showing illumination effect on visible and thermal infrared images. All the images were captured from the same subject at the same time. (a) Visible image in normal light. (b) Visible image in low light. (c) Thermal infrared image in normal light. (d) Thermal infrared image in low light.

(Boddhupati et al., 2007) can be substantially improved by curing these weaknesses. This chapter presents an advanced methodological framework that helps to transform physiological face recognition from feasible to viable. Specifically, the main contributions in the chapter are:

- A new vessel segmentation post-processing algorithm that removes fake vascular contours detected by the top hot vessel segmentation method.
- A new vascular network matching algorithm that is robust to nonlinear deformations due to facial pose and expression variations.
- Extensive comparative experiments to evaluate the performance of the new method with respect to previous methods.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows. Section 4.2 presents an overview of the new methodology. Section 4.3 presents in detail the vessel segmentation post-processing algorithm. Section 4.4 discusses the new vascular

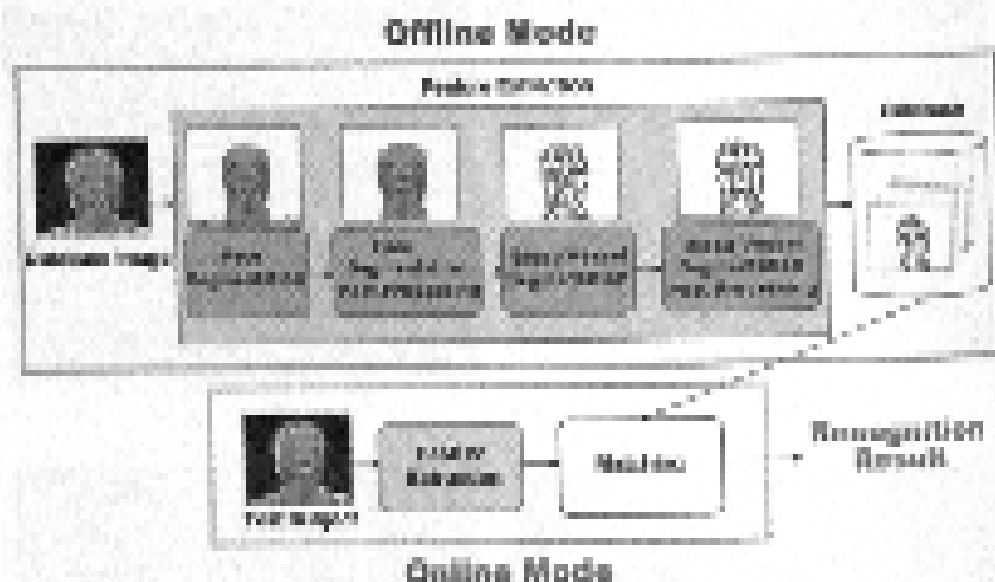


Figure 4.2. Methodology architecture.

network matching algorithm. Section 4.5 presents the experimental results and makes a critical evaluation. The chapter concludes in Section 4.6.

4.2 Methodology

Figure 4.2 shows the methodological architecture. The method operates in the following two modes:

Offline Mode: The thermal facial images are captured by a mid-wave infrared (MWIR) camera. For each subject to be registered in the database, the feature extraction algorithm extracts the feature vector from the facial image and links it to the subject's record. The feature extraction algorithm has four steps:

First, a *Bayesian face representation* separates facial tissue from background. Second, *face representation post-processing* corrects face segmentation errors which are due to occasional overlapping between pixels of the tissue and background distributions. Third, a *top-hat vessel segmentation algorithm* extracts the vascular network from the face segment after an anisotropic diffusion cleanses fuzzy edges, due to heat diffusion. These three steps have been adapted from Buddhharaja et al. (2007) and are briefly presented in this section. Fourth, a new *facial segmentation post-processing algorithm*, which is one of this chapter's contributions, corrects vessel segmentation. The vessel segment occasionally is fooled by areas of high contrast (e.g., hair-line and skin edges) and reports them as vascular contours. These fake vascular contours participate in the matching process with deleterious effects.

Online Mode: Given a query image, its vascular network is extracted using the feature extraction algorithm outlined in the offline mode, and it is matched

against vascular networks stored in the database. The new matching algorithm, which is another of this chapter's contributions, has two stages.

First, a face pose estimation algorithm estimates the pose of the incoming test frame, which is required to calculate the vascular network deformation between it and database images. Second, the dual-beamstop $\mathcal{L}_2^1$ matching algorithm matches the test and database vascular networks. The matching score between the two depends on the amount of overlapping.

4.2.1 Face Segmentation

Because of its physiology, a human face contains of “hot” parts that correspond to those areas that are rich in vasculature and “cold” parts that correspond to those areas with sparse vasculature. This makes the human face a bimodal appearance distribution entity, which can be modeled using a mixture of two Normal distributions. Similarly, the background can be described by a bimodal appearance distribution with walls being the “cold” object and the upper part of the object’s body dressed in clothing being the “hot” object. The consistency of similarity across subjects and image backgrounds is critical. We approach the problem of segmenting facial areas from background using a Bayesian framework since we have a priori knowledge of the bimodal nature of the scene.

We call θ the parameter of interest, which takes two possible values (skin or background) and b with some probability. For each pixel x in the image at time t , we draw an inference of whether it represents skin (i.e., $\theta = 1$) or background (i.e., $\theta = 0$) by $g_t(x)$ on the posterior distribution $p^{(t)}(\theta|x_t)$ given by

$$p^{(t)}(g|x_t) = \begin{cases} p^{(t)}(x|x_t) & \text{when } \theta = 1, \\ p^{(t)}(b|x_t) = 1 - p^{(t)}(x|x_t), & \text{when } \theta = 0. \end{cases} \quad (4.1)$$

We develop the statistics only for skin, and then the statistics for the background can easily be inferred from Eq. (4.1).

According to Bayes’ theorem,

$$p^{(t)}(x|x_t) = \frac{\pi^{(t)}(x) f(x_t|x)}{\pi^{(t)}(x) f(x_t|x) + \pi^{(t)}(b) f(x_t|b)}. \quad (4.2)$$

Here $\pi^{(t)}(x)$ is the prior skin distribution and $f(x_t|x)$ is the likelihood for pixel x representing skin at time t . In the first frame ($t = 1$) the prior distributions for skin and background are considered equiprobable:

$$\pi^{(1)}(x) = \frac{1}{2} = \pi^{(1)}(b). \quad (4.3)$$

For $t > 1$, the gray value distribution $\mathcal{P}^{(t)}(x)$ at time t is equal to the gray value distribution at time $t = 1$.

$$\mathcal{P}^{(t)}(x_t) = \mathcal{P}^{(1)}(x_1) \quad (4.4)$$

The likelihood $\mathcal{P}^{(t)}(x_t)$ of pixel x_t representing skin is found to be unity

$$\mathcal{P}^{(t)}(x_t) = \sum_{i=1}^C u_i^{(t)} \mathcal{P}^{(t)}(u_i | x_t) \quad (4.5)$$

Given the skin color parameter $\mu_{\text{skin}}(t)$ and variance $\sigma_{\text{skin}}(t)$, $t = 1, 2$, and $u_1 = 1 - u_2$, the bivariate skin distribution can be approximated by a jointly bivariate EM distribution. For this, we select N representative vectors u_i with different human variety of subjects that we call the training set. There are two sub-segments for each of the N factors, skin (or background) ones, with given μ_i^{skin} , σ_i^{skin} and $\mu_i^{\text{background}}$, $\sigma_i^{\text{background}}$, pixels.

Variances, part of the subject's skin can be approximately estimated as background and background pixels can be approximately estimated as skin. This is done by iterated swapping between persons of the skin and background distributions. The selected names of these mis-labeled persons make the pixels correlation change systematically. We apply a three-step procedure that fit to the binary segmented image. Using μ_i^{skin} and σ_i^{skin} background removal, we find the mislabeled pixels to foreground and foreground pixels to background.

4.2.2 Blood Vessel Segmentation

Given an input image of human face, we extract the region of interest (ROI) of the blood vessel from the face image, which is defined and in the following steps:

Step 1: Process the image to remove noise and enhance the edges.

Step 2: Apply morphological operations to localize the region of interest.

This work signals edges formed due to high diffusion at the local neighborhood. The modelled edge of a single mean is diffusion. The anisotropic diffusion filter is a non-linear process that enhances object boundaries by performing a non-linear operation to the input image.

The anisotropic diffusion equation described this process as

$$\frac{\partial I(x, y)}{\partial t} = \nabla \cdot (D \cdot \nabla I(x, y)) \quad (4.6)$$

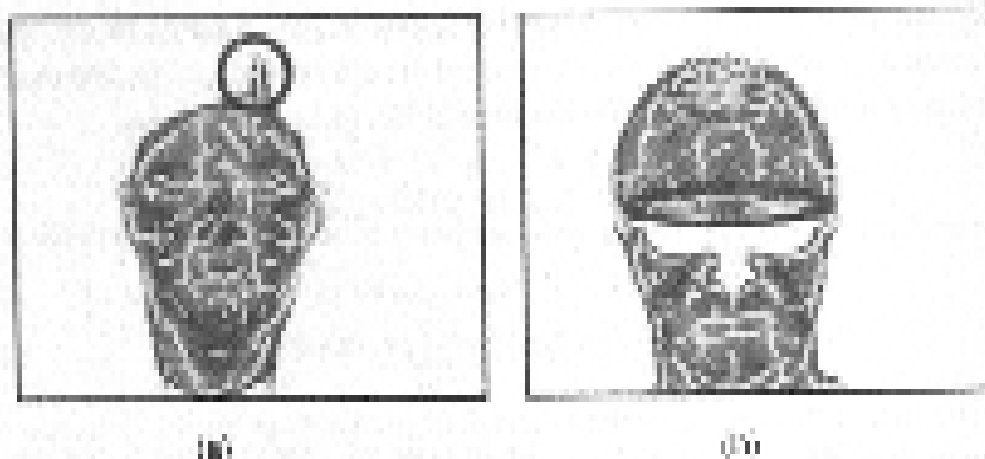


Figure 4.3. Errors from the top-hat segmentation algorithm for a representative function. (a) outliers due to facial hair, (b) outliers due to glasses.

The top-hat segmentation algorithm is successful in localizing vessels because it targets transitions from hot to cold to hot. In some instances, such transitions are not due to the presence of vessels. Examples include those between hair lines or lines between glasses and foreheads (see Figure 4.3).

It is essential to detect and remove these outliers from the vascular network before applying a matching algorithm. To study in depth the properties of these outliers, the authors selected 25 representative subjects from the University of Houston dataset and analyzed the segmentation errors. Specifically, the authors identified the locations of both true vessels and outliers. Then they drew measurement lines across each of the vessels and outliers and plotted the corresponding temperature profiles. They noticed that the variance between minimum and maximum temperature values was much larger in outliers than in true vessels. Indeed, the gradient in outliers is quite steep (several degrees C), as it is formed between facial hair or glasses and tissue. By contrast, in true vessels, the gradient is quite small (only tens of degrees C), as it is formed between the projection of the vessel's lumen and surrounding skin (Figure 4.4). Figure 4.5 shows the difference between minimum and maximum temperatures ($T_{\min} - T_{\max}$) across all the selected line profiles from the 25 representative subjects.

The new segmentation post-processing algorithm removes outliers based on the above findings. Specifically, it involves the following steps:

- Step 1: Skeletonize the vascular network to one pixel thickness.
- Step 2: Draw a normal parallelogram across each skeleton pixel and plot all the pixels covered by this parallelogram.

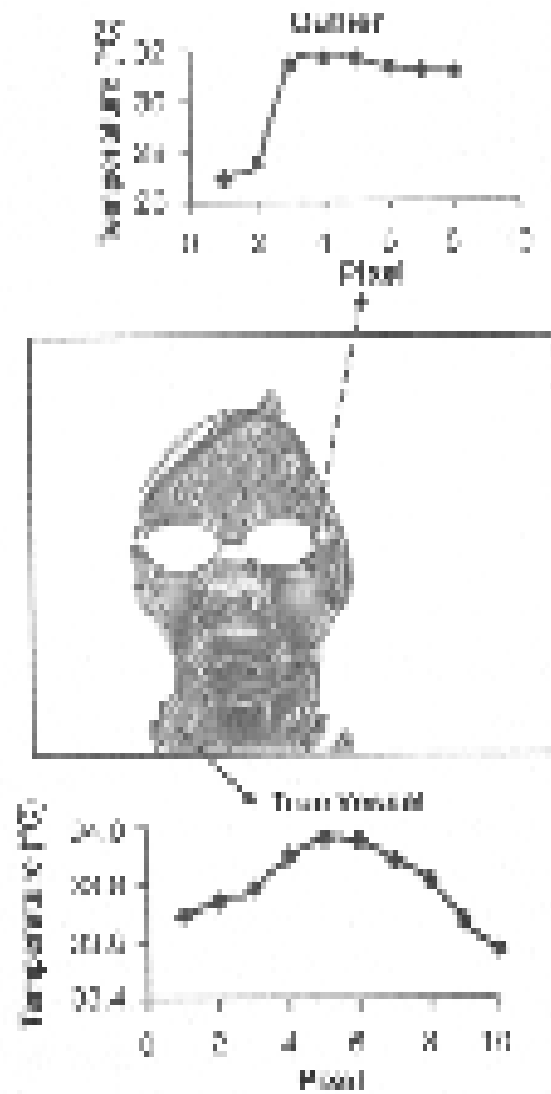


Figure 4A. Temperature profiles of brain tissue near a catheter and brain vessels.

- Step 3: Apply K -Means (with $K = 2$) on the pixels covered by this parallelogram. If the difference between the centers of each cluster is greater than 1.5, then mark it as an outlier pixel.
- Step 4: Remove all the branches from the vascular network that have more than 50% of their pixels marked as outliers.

After deleting the outliers from the vascular network, the remaining vascular map can be stored in the database.

4.4 Vascular Network Matching

The matching method presented in Buddhupriya et al. (2017) could not cope with continuities in the deformation of the vascular network, because of variations

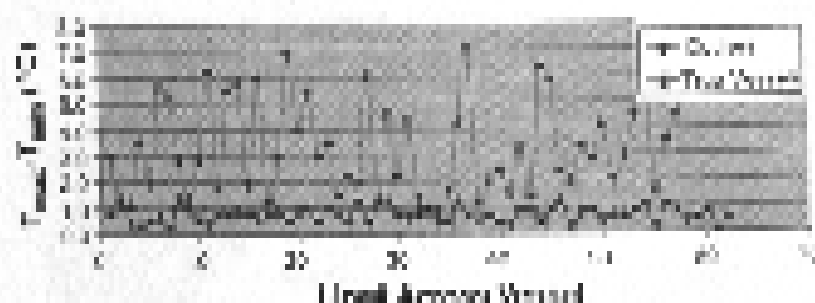


Figure 4.5: Difference between maximum and minimum intensities for all the selected line profiles.

in facial pose and expressions. This chapter presents a new vascular network matching algorithm that is robust to non-linear deformations.

4.4.1 Registration of Vascular Networks

The aim is to register the vascular network of the test image with that of the database image, so that they can be aligned. The *Iterative Closest Point* (ICP) algorithm has appealing properties for point-based registration (Besl and McKay 1992). ICP requires proper initialization, as different invocations of the algorithm need different combinations of image points, distance metrics and transformation models. In Stewart et al. (2005), developed a variation of the ICP algorithm, called *dual bootstrap ICP*, that works well when initialization provides just a ‘‘low level’’ on the current estimate of the transformation and successfully registers elongated structures such as vasculature. Specifically, they reported good results from registration of retinal vascular images in the visible band. Since superficial vasculature extracted in the thermal infrared has morphological resemblance to retinal vasculature in the visible, the authors adopted the dual bootstrap algorithm for the registration task at hand.

After successful registration of the test and database vascular images, the matching score is computed based on the number of overlapping vessel pixels. If I_{test} represents the test vascular image with N_{test} vessel pixels, and I_{db} represents the database vascular image with N_{db} vessel pixels, the matching score is

$$\text{Score} = \frac{N_{overlap}}{\min(N_{test}, N_{db})} \times 100, \quad (4.20)$$

where $N_{overlap}$ represents the number of vessel pixels in I_{test} with a corresponding vessel pixel in I_{db} within a certain distance.

Figure 4.6 shows some examples of the performance of the dual bootstrap ICP algorithm in registering vascular images in the thermal infrared. The couple at the bottom row of the figure frames substantial pose variations between

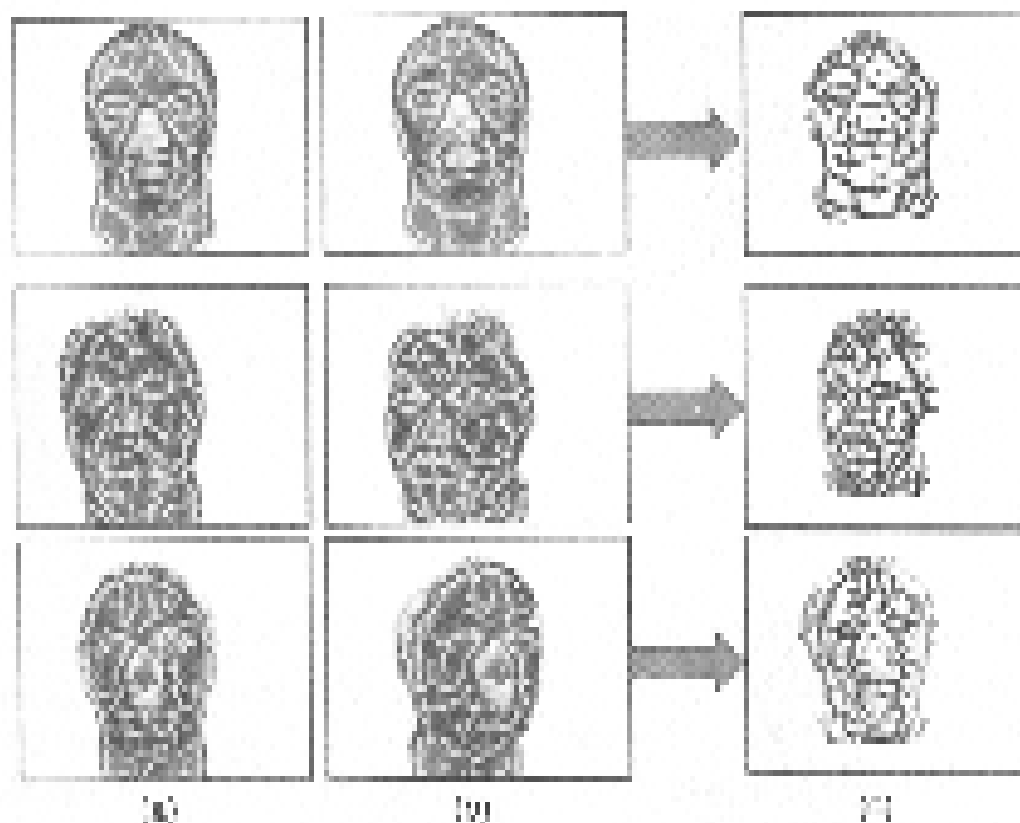


Figure 4.6: Key feature point matching examples: (a) test vascular network, (b) database vascular network, (c) registration results.

the test and database images. The larger the pose variation, the more difficult it becomes for the dual threshold MCP to cope successfully. This can be improved by estimating the pose of the test and database images and setting accordingly the threshold value (T_{th}) used to accept or reject the test image. The pose estimation algorithm that was developed for this purpose is presented in the next section.

4.4.2 Face Pose Estimation

At a neutral pose ($\theta_{face} = 0^\circ$) the nose is at the center of the face, that is, the position of the nose is halfway between the left and right ends of the face. From the face segmentation algorithm presented in Badkhouji et al. (2007), one can find the left and right ends of the face. Hence, if one locates the nose, he or she can estimate the facial pose.

In a thermal infrared image, the nose is typically at a gradient with its surroundings, as shown in Figure 4.7. This is because of the nose's shape (bridge exists), its composition (cartilage), and the forced circulation of air, due to breathing. The combination of all three creates a nasal thermal signature that is different from that of the surrounding skin and soft tissue.

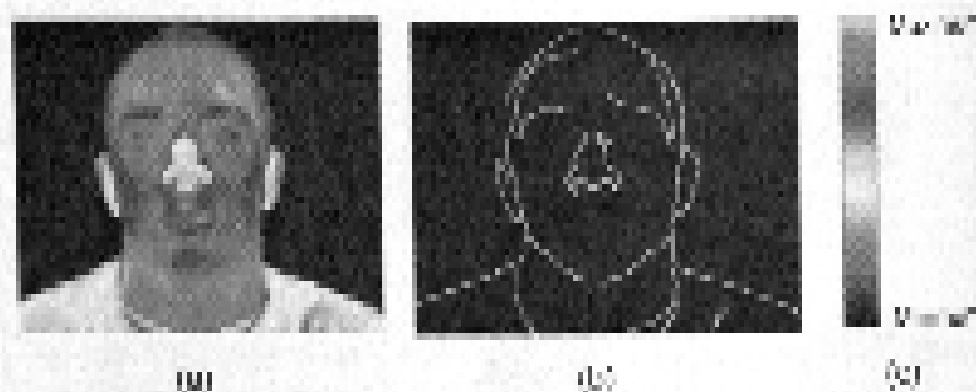


Figure 4.7: Face edge extraction from thermal facial images: (a) normal facial image, (b) edge extracted using the Canny edge detection algorithm, (c) color map.

By using a standard edge detection algorithm, one can extract the face edge from the facial image. The next step is to search for the nose edge model in the facial edge map. The authors used a Hausdorff-based matching algorithm to localize the nose model in the face edge image (Hummelshaker et al. 1999). Figure 4.8 shows performance examples of the face pose estimation algorithm.

4.5 Experiments

The authors conducted several experiments to validate the performance of the new physiological face recognition method. This section presents the experimental setup and results in detail.

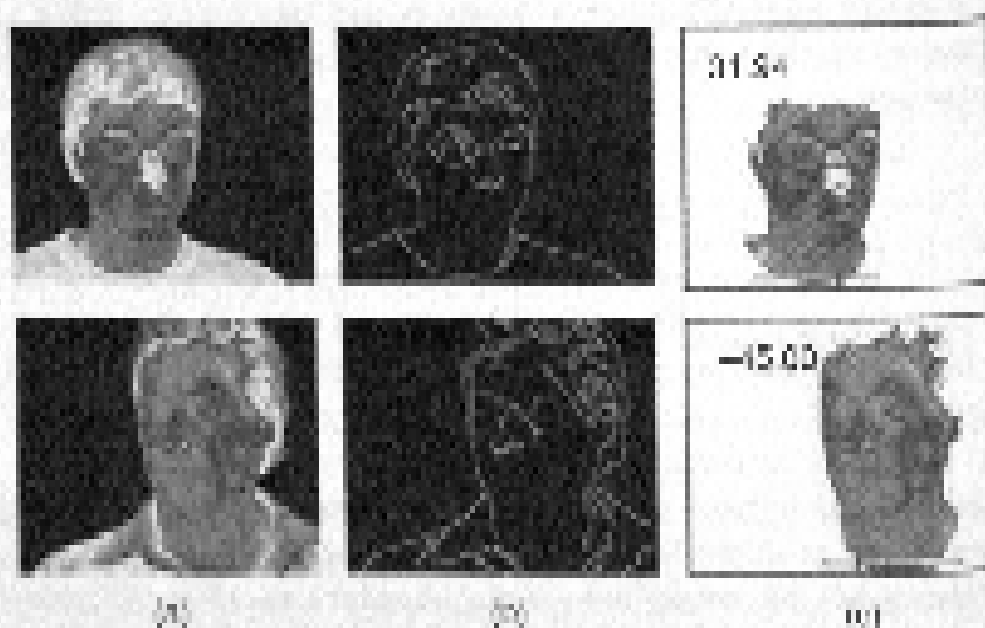


Figure 4.8: Face estimation performance examples: (a) thermal facial image; (b) nose detection using Hausdorff-based matching; (c) pose estimation.

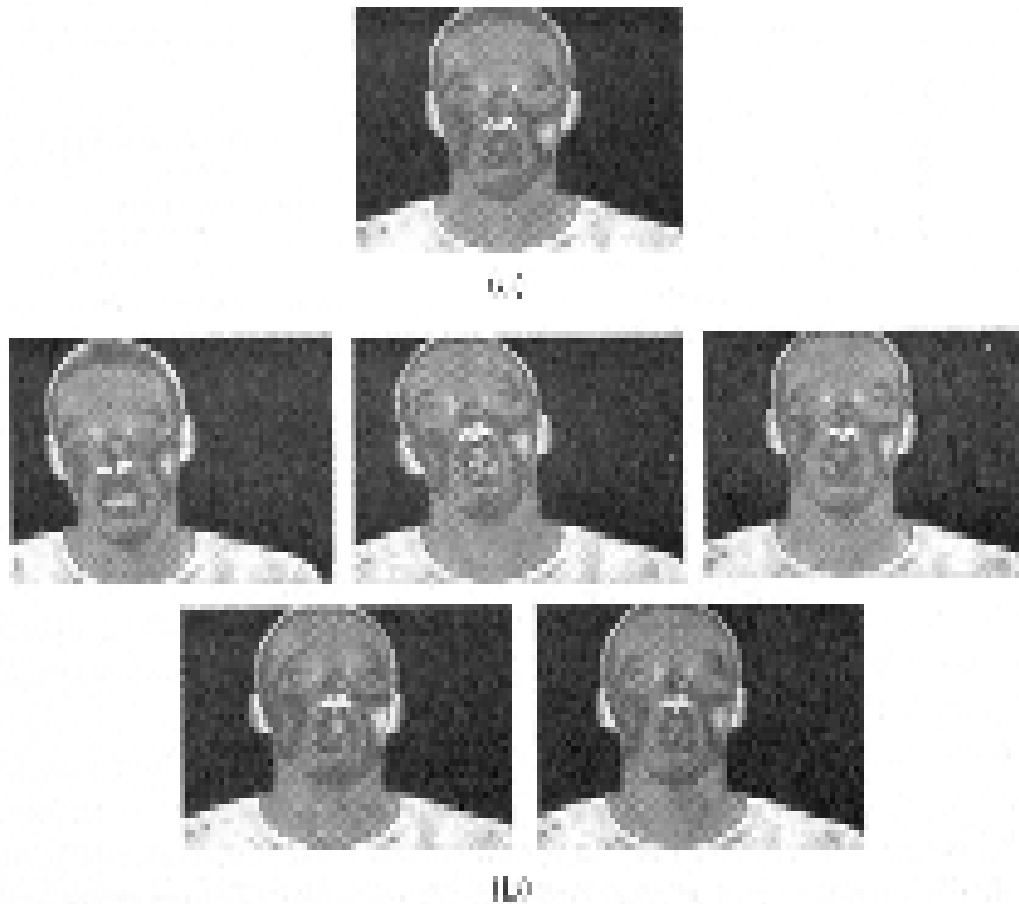


Figure 4.9: Sample subject set from TTDS dataset: (a) one gallery image (neutral pose and expression); (b) five probe images at varying facial expressions.

4.5.1 Experiments on the University of Houston Database

The authors collected a substantial thermal facial dataset for the purposes of this evaluation. This set, known as the University of Houston (UH) database, has thermal facial images of varying expressions and poses from 300 subjects. The images were captured using a high-quality mid-wave infrared (MWIR) camera.

4.5.1.1 Facial Expression Dataset

To test the performance of the new method in the presence of varying facial representations between gallery and probe images, the authors created the facial representation dataset (FRDS) out of the UH database as follows. From each of the 300 subjects one frontal facial image at 0° pose and neutral expression was used as a gallery image. Then five different facial images at ~0° pose but with varying facial expressions were used as probe images for each subject. Hence, FRDS has a total of 300 gallery images and 1500 probe images from 300 subjects. Figure 4.9 shows a sample subject set from FRDS.



Figure 4.10: Experimental results on the PFES dataset using dual bootstrap ICP versus TMP matching: (a) CMC curve; (b) ROC curve.

Figures 4.10(a) and 4.10(b) show, respectively, the Cumulative Match Characteristic (CMC) and Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curves of the PFES experiments using the dual bootstrap point (TMP) matching algorithm reported in Sukhrajya et al. (2007) (a fingerprinting, variety) versus the dual bootstrap ICP matching algorithm.

The results demonstrate that the dual bootstrap ICP outperforms the TMP matching algorithm. In the case of TMP matching, the CMC curve shows that rank 1 recognition is 46%, whereas for the dual bootstrap ICP is 93%. Also, the dual bootstrap ICP matching method achieves a high positive recognition at very low false detection rates, as shown in Figure 4.10(b). This reflects that the ICP matching algorithm is highly robust to deformations caused in the vascular network by facial expression variations.

4.5.3.2 Facial Pose Dataset

To test the performance of the new method in the presence of varying pose between gallery and probe images, the authors created the facial pose dataset (FPDS) out of the UTI database as follows: From each of the 200 subjects' frontal face images at 0° pose and neutral expression was used as a probe image. Then four different frontal images of neutral facial expression but at varying poses between -30° and 30° were used as probe images. Hence, FPDS has a total of 900 gallery images and 1200 probe images from 400 subjects. Figure 4.11 shows a sample subject set from FPDS.

Figures 4.12(a) and 4.12(b) show the results of the PFES experiments using the dual bootstrap ICP matching algorithm. The results demonstrate that the algorithm copes well with facial pose variations between gallery and probe images. Specifically, the CMC curve shows that rank 1 recognition is 89% and the ROC curve shows that it requires a false acceptance rate over 0.4 to reach a positive acceptance rate above the 90% range. One can notice that the false acceptance rate on FPDS experiments is a bit higher than on PFES

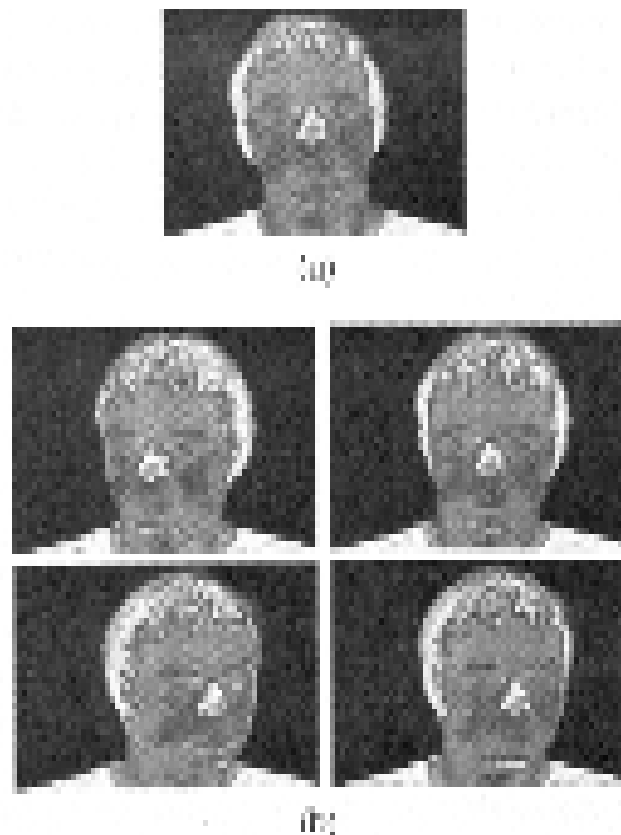


Figure 4.11: Sample output from UTDS dataset: (a) one gallery image in control pose and expression, (b) four probe images in varying poses.

experiments. This is to be expected, as variations in pose typically cause more nonlinear deformations in the vascular network than those caused by variations in facial expressions.

4.5.2 Experiments on the University of Notre Dame Database

A major challenge associated with thermal face recognition is recognition performance over time [Sokolinsky and Selinger, 2004b]. Facial thermograms

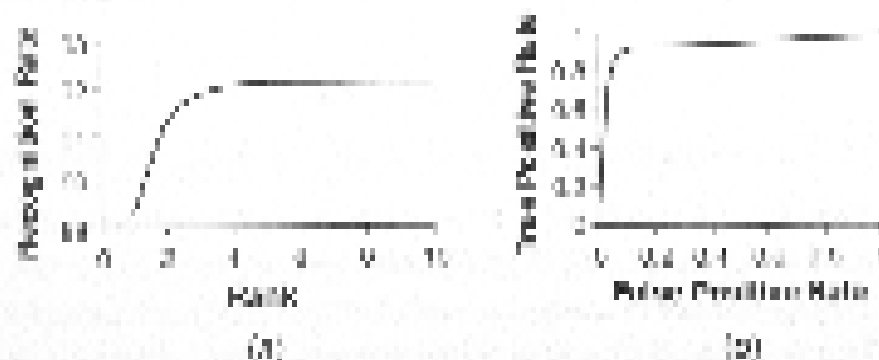


Figure 4.12: Experimental results on the UNDS dataset using the fast bootstrap R-Functioning algorithm: (a) ROC curve, (b) TPR curve.

may change depending on the physical condition of the person, making it difficult to obtain a similar feature for the same person over time. Previous face recognition methods in the literature inferred past visual and thermal face-related suggested performance over time (Chen et al., 2020, 2019). Additionally, information, however, remains sensitive to physical conditions across the life and various aspects like diseases and environmental conditions maintained around one's face.

Since most of the subjects in the TM database had images collected during the same session, an statistically significant quantification of the biometric problem was possible. For this reason, the authors attempted to use to apply the proposed approach over a set of data of the University of New Orleans (UNO) in the University of New Orleans 1. This database has close collection of visible and thermal facial images acquired within the same database, however, visible and thermal images acquired from a subject is during the same time, which makes applying the current approach off the shelf as a comparison and facial expression condition of the thermal expression, which is expensive.

The database is divided into four facial gallery and probe sets (FFA, FFA-FFB, FFA-FFC, FFA-FFD, and FFA-FFE). Each of the gallery sets (i.e., FFA-FFG) can be tested against the other three probe sets (e.g., FFA-FFB, FFA-FFC, and FFA-FFE). Thus, 3 different pairs of gallery and probe sets are used for testing. The effectiveness of the new facial biometric TM matching algorithm was compared to that of TCF matching (face image) and TCF and TCF matching (face and TCF) algorithms (Table 4.1). In addition, to make a comparison results of these algorithms on each of the TM expression facial gallery into a combination of the 3 different expression gallery sets and 3 probe sets, the expression was used in a database. From the table, it can be seen that the new matching algorithm yields better recognition results even in the presence of time and expression variations, thus making the TM (based on physiology-based) and FFA (based on learned-based) recognition algorithms.

4.3.3 Experiments on the University of Arizona Database

The authors have also used data from stress experiments carried out at the University of Arizona (UA). These data, although acquired within a few minutes for each subject, feature characteristic changes in the facial thermal appearance over a period of stress. In fact, in a few minutes much more variability is present in the data than in TCF, which takes months to assemble. The largest stress experiment is approximately 20 minutes. From a novel point, the authors carried out about five equally time-spaced frames from the entire data. This sample is not

Table 4.1: Recall Recognition Performance of Dual Bootstrap Feature Classifiers for (1) ECG Feature-based Approach, Matching Algorithm: TSP Matching Algorithm (Quelhaugen et al. 2007), and (2) ECG Feature Classifiers (Quelhaugen et al. 2007) using 12 ECG features on the ECG Database

Classifier	Feature	Results		
		ECG	ECG+T	ECG+T+X
ECG+T	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)
	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)
	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)
ECG+T+X	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)
	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)
	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)
ECG+T+X+Y	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)	85.50% (DBICP)
	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)	85.50% (TMBP)
	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)	85.50% (PCA)

from the database is shown in Figure 4.13. It can clearly be seen that the classifier from the last column, that the performance changed significantly between training (Figure 4.13(a)) and test stages (Figure 4.13(b)).

Figure 4.14 shows the recall, matching and FPR for the ECG and ECG+T experiments using TSP for training, TSP versus the TSP matching algorithm. The results demonstrate that the dual bootstrap TSP versus the TSP matching algorithm (Quelhaugen et al. 2007), to the case of TSP versus the TSP matching algorithm that rank a recognizer is 85.00%, whereas the FPR is 95.2%. Also, the dual bootstrap TSP matching method achieves a high positive detection rate at very low false detection rate as is shown in Figure 4.14(c).

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter presents new algorithms that substantially improve the performance of physiology-based heart recognition based on the neural network. Specifically, a vascular network post-processing algorithm that removes false contours detected by vessel segmentation algorithm, a new vascular network matching algorithm, cope with multiple deformations, a new feature and feature selection method.

It is recommended to compare further with the ECG, TSP, and ECG+T classifiers. Similar metrics (e.g., recall and the complexity of the new method).

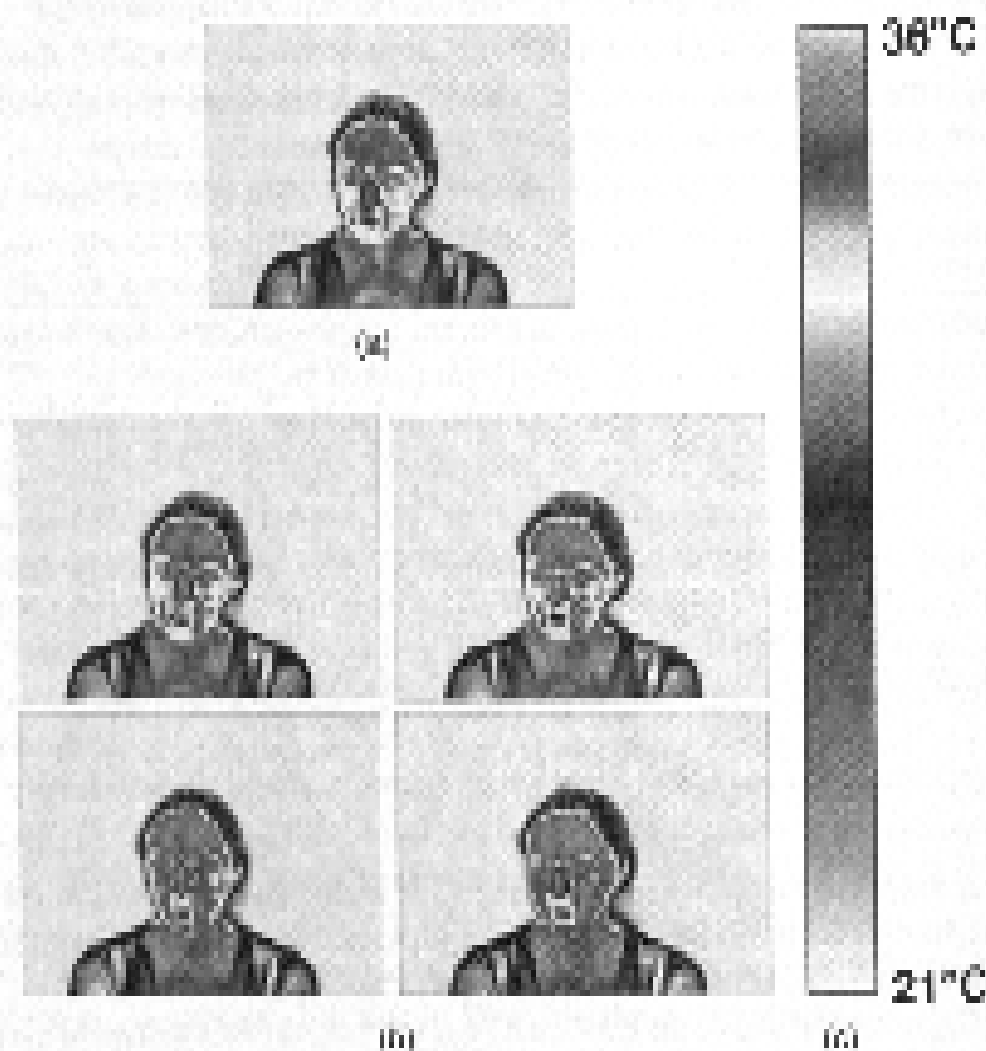


Figure 4.13. Sample subject from UA dataset: (a) one face thermal image captured at 2 minutes; (b) stack of face thermal images captured at 0 minute, 5 minutes, 9 minutes, 13 minutes, 17 minutes, 21 minutes, 25 minutes, 29 minutes, 33 minutes, and 37 minutes; (c) Thermal color map used for visualization.

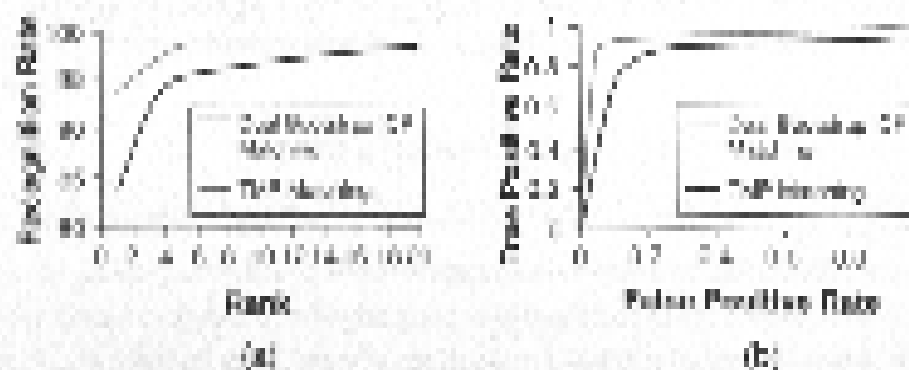


Figure 4.14. Results of face recognition on the UA database using dual boosting: (a) Average Hit Rate tracking; (b) ROC curves; (c) ROC curves.

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