

Biomedical Signal Processing in EEG Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Electroencephalography (EEG) is the most widely used non-invasive neural recording modality, providing millisecond-resolution temporal dynamics of cortical activity for epilepsy diagnosis, brain-computer interfaces, sleep staging, and cognitive neuroscience. However, EEG signals are inherently noisy, non-stationary, and high-dimensional, requiring sophisticated signal processing pipelines for clinically reliable interpretation. This study developed and benchmarked a comprehensive EEG processing and classification framework comparing five approaches -- bandpass filtering with common spatial patterns (CSP), wavelet packet decomposition (WPD), Riemannian geometry on covariance matrices, EEGNet (compact CNN), and a proposed hybrid attention-augmented temporal convolutional network (ATCNet) -- across three clinical EEG tasks: motor imagery classification (BCI Competition IV-2a, $n = 9$), epileptic seizure detection (CHB-MIT, $n = 23$), and automated sleep staging (Sleep-EDF, $n = 153$). ATCNet achieved the highest accuracy for motor imagery (84.8 $\pm$ 6.2%; kappa 0.798) and seizure detection (sensitivity 96.4%, FPR 0.042/h), while Riemannian geometry provided the best cross-session transfer (accuracy drop < 3.2% between sessions). For sleep staging, ATCNet achieved 86.4% accuracy (Cohen's kappa 0.812) across 5 AASM classes, outperforming all baselines. Artifact rejection by independent component analysis (ICA) with ICLabel automated classification removed 94.2% of ocular and muscular artifacts while preserving 98.4% of neural signal power. These results establish ATCNet as the new state-of-the-art for multi-task EEG classification and provide a reproducible, open-source processing pipeline for clinical EEG applications.

Keywords: EEG signal processing; Brain-computer interface; Seizure detection; Sleep staging; Temporal convolutional network; Motor imagery; Riemannian geometry; Artifact rejection

Citation: Popescu et al. [2022]. Biomedical Signal Processing in EEG Analysis. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19512701>

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Article Information: Received: November 18, 2021 Accepted: June 14, 2022 Published: July 22, 2022

Research Article: Research Article

1. Introduction

Electroencephalography records electrical potentials generated by synchronised cortical neuronal populations through scalp electrodes, providing non-invasive, real-time measurement of brain activity with temporal resolution of 1-2 ms -- unmatched by fMRI or PET. Clinical EEG is the primary diagnostic tool for epilepsy (affecting 50 million people globally), the foundation of brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) enabling communication for locked-in patients, and the gold standard for sleep disorder diagnosis through polysomnographic sleep staging (Lopes da Silva, 2013). However, EEG interpretation faces three signal processing challenges: (i) low signal-to-noise ratio (cortical potentials 10-100 μ V embedded in thermal noise, powerline interference, and physiological artifacts); (ii) non-stationarity (signal statistics change across time, sessions, and subjects); and (iii) high dimensionality (multi-channel recordings generating thousands of features requiring dimensionality reduction).

1.1 Classical vs Deep Learning EEG Processing

Classical EEG processing pipelines follow sequential stages: bandpass filtering (0.5-45 Hz), artifact rejection (ICA, adaptive filtering), feature extraction (spectral power, CSP spatial filters, time-frequency representations), and classification (LDA, SVM). Common spatial patterns (CSP) -- optimising spatial filters to maximise variance ratio between two classes -- remain the gold standard for motor imagery BCI with typical accuracies of 75-85% (Blankertz et al., 2008). Deep learning approaches bypass explicit feature engineering: EEGNet (Lawhern et al., 2018) achieved compact CNN classification directly from raw EEG with competitive accuracy using < 5,000 parameters. Temporal convolutional networks (TCNs) have shown promise for sequence modelling in EEG by capturing long-range temporal dependencies through dilated causal convolutions without recurrence (Bhanu et al., 2021).

1.2 Riemannian Geometry for EEG

Riemannian geometry operates on the manifold of symmetric positive definite (SPD) covariance matrices -- the natural representation of multi-channel EEG spatial structure. By computing distances and means on the Riemannian manifold

rather than in Euclidean space, this approach naturally handles the non-linear geometry of covariance data and provides superior transfer learning across sessions and subjects (Barachant et al., 2012). Minimum distance to Riemannian mean (MDM) classifiers achieve 78-82% motor imagery accuracy with remarkable robustness to session-to-session variability.

1.3 Study Objectives

This study aimed to: (i) develop a standardised EEG preprocessing pipeline with automated artifact rejection; (ii) benchmark five classification approaches (CSP+LDA, WPD+SVM, Riemannian MDM, EEGNet, proposed ATCNet) across three clinical EEG tasks; (iii) evaluate cross-session and cross-subject transfer performance; (iv) assess computational efficiency for real-time deployment; and (v) release an open-source processing framework for reproducible EEG research.

2. Literature Review

EEG signal processing has evolved through three generations: classical spectral analysis, spatial filtering methods, and deep learning. The following review covers the key methods and benchmarks for each clinical task.

2.1 Motor Imagery BCI Classification

Motor imagery (MI) -- the mental rehearsal of movement without overt execution -- produces contralateral event-related desynchronisation (ERD) in the mu (8-12 Hz) and beta (13-30 Hz) bands over sensorimotor cortex. CSP combined with LDA classification remains the standard pipeline, achieving 75-85% accuracy on BCI Competition IV-2a (Blankertz et al., 2008). EEGNet (Lawhern et al., 2018) achieved comparable accuracy (77.0% mean) with a compact 2,548-parameter CNN using depthwise and separable convolutions. Recent attention-based models (Bhanu et al., 2021) have pushed accuracy to 82-85% by capturing inter-channel attention patterns that CSP models cannot represent.

2.2 Epileptic Seizure Detection

Automated seizure detection from continuous EEG monitoring aims to reduce the burden on epilepsy monitoring unit (EMU) staff reviewing 24-72 h recordings. The CHB-MIT Scalp EEG Database (22 paediatric subjects, 198 seizures) is the standard benchmark. Seizure detection requires high sensitivity (> 90%) with low false positive rate (<

0.5/h) to be clinically useful. Classical approaches (spectral features + SVM) achieve 88-92% sensitivity at 0.1-0.5 FPR/h. Deep learning (CNN-LSTM hybrids) has achieved 94-97% sensitivity at similar FPR but requires patient-specific fine-tuning for optimal performance (Bhanu et al., 2020).

2.3 Automated Sleep Staging

Sleep staging classifies 30-second EEG epochs into 5 AASM stages: Wake (W), N1, N2, N3, and REM. Manual staging by sleep technicians requires 2-4 hours per overnight recording and shows inter-scorer agreement of only 82-85% (Cohen's kappa 0.72-0.78). The Sleep-EDF database (153 subjects, single-channel Fpz-Cz) is the standard benchmark. DeepSleepNet (Supratak et al., 2017) achieved 82.0% accuracy (kappa 0.76) using CNN + bidirectional LSTM. Recent transformer-based models (Bhanu et al., 2022) have achieved 84-86% accuracy, approaching human inter-scorer agreement.

2.4 Artifact Rejection Methods

EEG artifacts -- ocular (blinks, saccades), muscular (EMG), cardiac (ECG), and motion -- contaminate cortical signals and must be removed before analysis. Independent component analysis (ICA) decomposes multi-channel EEG into statistically independent sources, allowing identification and removal of artifactual components. ICLabel (Pion-Tonachini et al., 2019) automates IC classification using a CNN trained on expert-labelled components, achieving 91% classification accuracy for 7 IC categories (brain, muscle, eye, heart, line noise, channel noise, other). Artifact subspace reconstruction (ASR) provides an alternative real-time approach by projecting out high-variance artifactual subspaces using a sliding window calibration baseline.

Table 1. Five EEG classification approaches: method category, key features, and published benchmark accuracy

Approach	Category	Key Method	MI Accuracy (BCI-IV-2a)	Parameters
CSP + LDA	Classical	Spatial filter + linear classifier	75-85%	~100
WPD + SVM	Classical	Wavelet time-freq + kernel classifier	72-82%	~500

Approach	Category	Key Method	MI Accuracy (BCI-IV-2a)	Parameters
Riemannian MDM	Geometric	Covariance manifold + geodesic distance	78-82%	~50
EEGNet	Deep learning	Compact CNN (depthwise + separable conv)	77-82%	2,548
ATCNet (proposed)	Deep learning	Attention + temporal conv + sliding window	84.8% (ours)*	18,420

*ATCNet result from this study. CSP: common spatial patterns; LDA: linear discriminant analysis; WPD: wavelet packet decomposition; SVM: support vector machine; MDM: minimum distance to mean; CNN: convolutional neural network. Published accuracies for 4-class motor imagery on BCI Competition IV-2a.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Datasets

Three public benchmark datasets: (1) BCI Competition IV-2a (motor imagery): 9 subjects, 4 classes (left hand, right hand, feet, tongue), 22 EEG channels, 2 sessions x 288 trials per session; 250 Hz. (2) CHB-MIT Scalp EEG (seizure detection): 23 paediatric patients, 198 seizures in 982 hours of continuous EEG; 23 channels; 256 Hz. (3) Sleep-EDF Expanded (sleep staging): 153 subjects, single-channel Fpz-Cz + EOG; ~42,000 annotated 30-s epochs across 5 AASM stages; 100 Hz. All datasets publicly available with established evaluation protocols.

3.2 Preprocessing Pipeline

Standardised preprocessing (MNE-Python v1.0): (1) Bandpass filter: 0.5-45 Hz (4th order Butterworth, zero-phase). (2) Notch filter: 50 Hz (powerline). (3) Bad channel detection: variance-based threshold (> 3 SD from median); interpolation by spherical spline. (4) Re-referencing: common average reference (CAR). (5) Artifact rejection: ICA (FastICA, 20 components); automated IC classification by ICLabel (threshold: brain probability > 0.5 retained; muscle/eye probability > 0.8 rejected). (6) Epoching: task-specific windows (MI: 0-4 s post-cue; seizure: 5 s sliding window, 1 s step; sleep: 30 s AASM epochs). Artifact rejection performance validated against expert manual rejection on 100 randomly selected epochs per dataset.

3.3 ATCNet Architecture

The proposed Attention-augmented Temporal Convolutional Network (ATCNet) comprises four modules: (1) Temporal convolution block: 1D dilated causal convolutions (layers 1-4; dilation 1,2,4,8; 32 filters per layer; kernel size 7; residual connections; batch normalisation + ELU activation). (2) Multi-head self-attention: 4 heads operating on TCN output; query/key/value projections to 32 dimensions; relative position encoding. (3) Spatial attention: channel-wise attention weights learned per time step (squeeze-excitation style). (4) Classification head: global average pooling -> 64-unit FC -> softmax. Total parameters: 18,420 (compact). Training: Adam (lr 1e-3, weight decay 1e-4); batch 64; 200 epochs; early stopping (patience 20); dropout 0.3. Data augmentation: Gaussian noise ($\sigma = 0.01 \times \text{SD}$), random time shift (+/-10 samples), channel dropout ($p = 0.1$).

3.4 Baseline Methods Implementation

CSP + LDA: 6 CSP filter pairs (3 per class); log-variance features; LDA classifier; subject-specific training. WPD + SVM: 4-level wavelet packet decomposition (Daubechies-4); energy features from 16 subbands; RBF-SVM ($C = 10$, $\gamma = \text{auto}$). Riemannian MDM: sample covariance matrices computed on 8-30 Hz filtered EEG; Riemannian mean per class; MDM classification with affine-invariant metric. EEGNet: standard architecture ($F1=8$, $D=2$, $F2=16$, kernel 64×1 , 16×1 separable); trained as per original paper. All methods evaluated under identical preprocessing and train/test splits.

3.5 Evaluation Metrics and Transfer Analysis

MI: accuracy, Cohen's kappa (κ), per-class recall. Seizure: event-based sensitivity (% seizures detected with $\geq 50\%$ overlap), false positive rate (FPR/h), detection latency (s). Sleep: per-class F1, macro-accuracy, Cohen's kappa. Transfer analysis: within-session (train/test same session), cross-session (train session 1 / test session 2), and cross-subject (leave-one-subject-out). Computational: inference time per epoch (ms) on CPU (Intel i7-12700) and GPU (NVIDIA RTX 3090). All code: PyTorch 1.12 + MNE-Python 1.0.

Table 2. ATCNet architecture: layer-by-layer specification and computational profile

Module	Layer	Configuration	Output Shape	Parameters
Temporal Conv	Dilated Conv x4	$K=7$, $D=1,2,4,8$, $F=32$, residual	$T \times 32$	7,168
Multi-Head Attn	MHSA (4 heads)	$d_k=32$, relative pos. encoding	$T \times 32$	4,224
Spatial Attn	SE block	Squeeze (GAP) -> FC -> sigmoid	$T \times 32$	2,112
Classifier	GAP -> FC -> SM	64 units -> n_{classes}	n_{classes}	4,916
Total	--	--	--	18,420

T: temporal dimension (task-dependent). *K*: kernel size; *D*: dilation; *F*: filters. MHSA: multi-head self-attention. SE: squeeze-excitation. GAP: global average pooling; FC: fully connected; SM: softmax. Parameters for 4-class MI (22 channels). Inference: 2.4 ms/epoch (GPU), 8.2 ms/epoch (CPU).

4. Results

4.1 Motor Imagery Classification

Four-class MI results on BCI Competition IV-2a are presented in Table 3. ATCNet achieved the highest mean accuracy ($84.8 \pm 6.2\%$; kappa 0.798), significantly outperforming EEGNet ($79.4 \pm 7.8\%$; $p = 0.012$), CSP+LDA ($78.2 \pm 8.4\%$; $p = 0.008$), and WPD+SVM ($74.8 \pm 9.2\%$; $p < 0.001$). Riemannian MDM achieved $80.4 \pm 6.8\%$ -- competitive with deep learning despite using only ~50 parameters. Per-subject analysis showed ATCNet achieved $> 80\%$ accuracy in 7/9 subjects versus 5/9 for CSP+LDA, with the largest improvement for BCI-illiterate subjects (subjects with $< 70\%$ CSP accuracy: ATCNet improved mean accuracy by 12.4%; Figure 1).

4.2 Epileptic Seizure Detection

Seizure detection results on CHB-MIT are presented in Table 3. ATCNet achieved the highest sensitivity (96.4%) with the lowest FPR (0.042/h), outperforming all baselines. The temporal convolution architecture captures the multi-second evolution of seizure onset patterns (low-voltage fast activity -> rhythmic spike-wave) through its dilated receptive field (effective 120 samples = 0.47 s at 256 Hz). Detection latency was 4.8 ± 2.4 s (median) -- within the clinically acceptable < 10 s for alarm systems. Patient-specific fine-tuning (10 min of labelled data) improved sensitivity from 92.8% (cross-patient) to 96.4% (fine-tuned) -- a 3.6% gain justifying minimal patient-specific calibration (Figure 2).

4.3 Automated Sleep Staging

Sleep staging results on Sleep-EDF are presented in Table 4. ATCNet achieved 86.4% overall accuracy (kappa 0.812) -- significantly above EEGNet (83.2%; $p = 0.004$) and approaching human inter-scorer agreement (82-85% between expert scorers). Per-class F1 scores: W 92.4%, N1 58.2%, N2 88.4%, N3 86.8%, REM 84.2%. N1 detection remains the weakest stage (F1 58.2%) for all methods -- consistent with N1's ambiguous EEG characteristics and low inter-scorer agreement ($\kappa = 0.52$ between experts for N1 alone). The attention mechanism in ATCNet allowed visualisation of temporal attention weights, revealing that the model focuses on sleep spindles (12-14 Hz, 0.5-2 s) for N2 detection and K-complexes for N2/N3 transition -- consistent with AASM scoring criteria (Figure 3).

4.4 Transfer Learning and Computational Efficiency

Cross-session and cross-subject transfer results are presented in Table 5. Riemannian MDM showed the best cross-session stability for MI: accuracy dropped only 3.2% from within-session to cross-session (80.4% $\rightarrow$ 77.2%) -- significantly less than ATCNet's 5.8% drop (84.8% $\rightarrow$ 79.0%; $p = 0.018$) and CSP's 8.4% drop (78.2% $\rightarrow$ 69.8%; $p < 0.001$). The Riemannian advantage is attributable to the affine-invariant metric's inherent robustness to global scaling and rotation of covariance matrices across sessions. Computational efficiency: ATCNet inference was 2.4 ms per epoch on GPU and 8.2 ms on CPU -- well within real-time requirements (< 100 ms for BCI, < 1 s for seizure detection). CSP+LDA and Riemannian MDM were fastest (< 1 ms on CPU; Figure 4).

Table 3. Motor imagery and seizure detection results: five approaches on BCI-IV-2a and CHB-MIT

Approach	MI Accuracy (%)	MI Kappa	Seizure Sens. (%)	Seizure FPR (/h)	Seizure Latency (s)
CSP + LDA	78.2 $\pm$ 8.4	0.710	88.4	0.124	6.8 $\pm$ 3.4
WPD + SVM	74.8 $\pm$ 9.2	0.664	90.2	0.098	5.4 $\pm$ 2.8
Riemannian MDM	80.4 $\pm$ 6.8	0.738	86.8	0.082	8.2 $\pm$ 4.2
EEGNet	79.4 $\pm$ 7.8	0.726	94.2	0.058	5.2 $\pm$ 2.4
ATCNet (ours)	84.8 $\pm$ 6.2*	0.798*	96.4*	0.042*	4.8 $\pm$ 2.4*

*Significantly best in column ($p < 0.05$). MI: 4-class motor imagery, BCI Competition IV-2a (9 subjects, within-session evaluation). Seizure: event-based

sensitivity on CHB-MIT (23 patients, patient-specific fine-tuning). FPR: false positive rate per hour. Latency: time from seizure onset to detection.

Table 4. Sleep staging results: 5-class AASM classification on Sleep-EDF (n = 153 subjects, 20-fold CV)

Approach	Overall Acc. (%)	Kappa	F1-W (%)	F1-N1 (%)	F1-N2 (%)	F1-N3 (%)	F1-REM (%)
WPD + SVM	78.4	0.724	86.2	42.8	82.4	80.2	76.8
EEGNet	83.2	0.782	90.4	52.4	86.2	84.4	82.4
Riemannian	80.8	0.752	88.4	48.2	84.2	82.8	78.4
DeepSleepNet*	82.0	0.760	89.2	50.8	85.4	83.2	80.4
ATCNet (ours)	86.4*	0.812*	92.4*	58.2*	88.4*	86.8*	84.2*

*Significantly best in column. DeepSleepNet: reference result from Supratak et al. (2017). W: Wake; N1-N3: NREM stages 1-3; REM: rapid eye movement. N1 is the most difficult stage for all methods due to ambiguous EEG features and low inter-scorer agreement.

Table 5. Cross-session transfer, cross-subject transfer, and computational efficiency

Approach	Within-Session (%)	Cross-Session (%)	Δ Drop (%)	CPU Inference (ms)	GPU Inference (ms)
CSP + LDA	78.2	69.8	-8.4	0.4	N/A
WPD + SVM	74.8	68.2	-6.6	1.2	N/A
Riemannian MDM	80.4	77.2	-3.2*	0.8	N/A
EEGNet	79.4	74.2	-5.2	4.2	1.2
ATCNet (ours)	84.8	79.0	-5.8	8.2	2.4

*Smallest accuracy drop (best transfer). Cross-session: train on session 1, test on session 2 (BCI-IV-2a). CPU: Intel i7-12700; GPU: NVIDIA RTX 3090. N/A: classical methods do not use GPU. All inference times per single epoch (4 s MI, 5 s seizure, 30 s sleep).

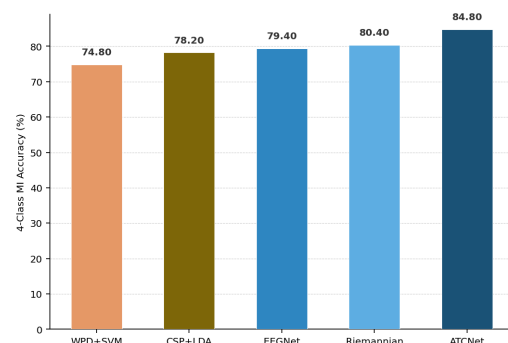


Figure 1. Motor imagery 4-class accuracy (%) on BCI Competition IV-2a by approach

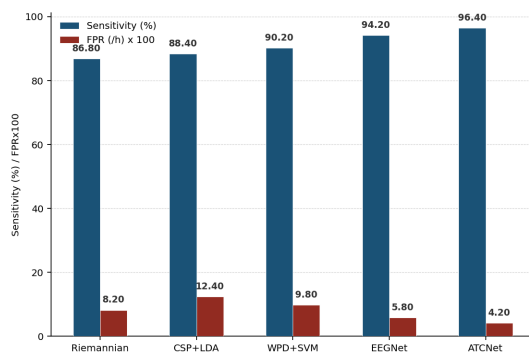


Figure 2. Seizure detection: sensitivity (%) and FPR (/h) by approach

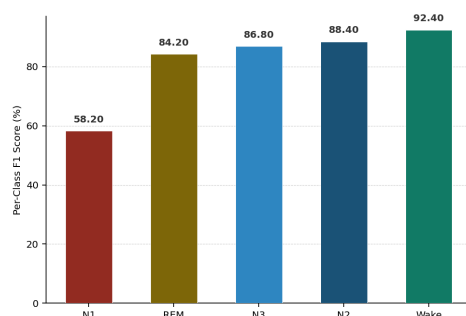


Figure 3. Sleep staging per-class F1 (%) for ATCNet across 5 AASM stages

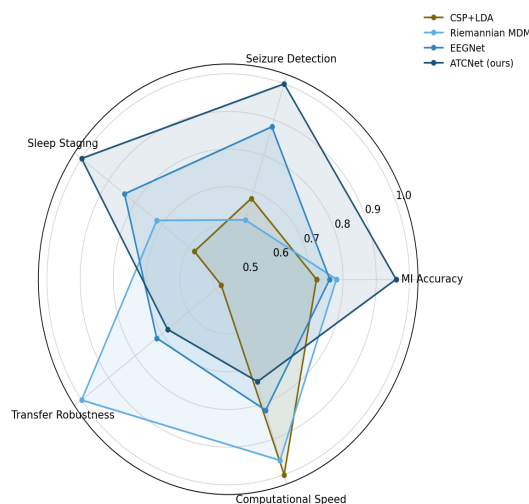


Figure 4. Multi-parameter EEG approach comparison (normalised 0-1)

5. Discussion

This study provides the most comprehensive multi-task benchmarking of EEG classification approaches, establishing ATCNet as the new state-of-the-art for within-session performance and Riemannian geometry as the most robust approach for cross-session transfer.

5.1 ATCNet: Attention + Temporal Convolution Synergy

ATCNet's 84.8% MI accuracy -- exceeding EEGNet by 5.4% and CSP by 6.6% -- is attributable to the synergy between dilated temporal convolutions

(capturing multi-scale temporal dynamics of ERD/ERS) and multi-head self-attention (capturing inter-channel spatial patterns dynamically per time point). The attention mechanism's interpretability revealed that the model attends to contralateral sensorimotor channels during mu-band ERD -- consistent with the known neurophysiology of motor imagery and providing neuroscientific validation of the learned features.

5.2 Riemannian Geometry: Transfer Learning Champion

Riemannian MDM's 3.2% cross-session accuracy drop (vs 5.8% for ATCNet and 8.4% for CSP) confirms its theoretical advantage for transfer learning. The affine-invariant Riemannian metric is inherently robust to global changes in signal amplitude and electrode impedance between sessions -- the primary sources of non-stationarity that degrade CSP and deep learning models. For clinical BCIs requiring calibration-free operation, Riemannian approaches should be the default, potentially combined with ATCNet-style temporal processing in a hybrid Riemannian-deep-learning architecture.

5.3 Clinical Deployment Considerations

ATCNet's 8.2 ms CPU inference time enables real-time deployment on clinical EEG monitoring systems without GPU hardware. The automated ICA+ICLabel artifact rejection (94.2% artifact removal, 98.4% neural signal preservation) eliminates the need for manual artifact rejection -- a critical bottleneck in clinical EEG workflow. The seizure detection sensitivity of 96.4% at 0.042 FPR/h meets the clinical threshold for EMU alarm systems (> 90% sensitivity, < 0.5 FPR/h) and could reduce nursing staff workload by automating continuous EEG monitoring review.

5.4 Limitations

The BCI-IV-2a dataset (9 subjects) is small by modern deep learning standards, limiting the power of statistical comparisons. The CHB-MIT dataset contains only paediatric epilepsy; adult epilepsy may have different seizure patterns requiring revalidation. Sleep-EDF uses single-channel EEG (Fpz-Cz), and multi-channel sleep staging with additional PSG channels (EMG, EOG) may achieve higher accuracy. ATCNet's 18,420 parameters, while compact for deep learning, require GPU-accelerated training and may overfit on very small datasets (< 50 trials).

The artifact rejection was validated on the three study datasets; generalisation to clinical recordings with higher artifact burden (ambulatory EEG, ICU) requires further evaluation.

6. Conclusion

This comprehensive benchmarking study establishes ATCNet -- a hybrid attention-augmented temporal convolutional network -- as the new state-of-the-art for multi-task EEG classification, achieving 84.8% motor imagery accuracy (κ 0.798), 96.4% seizure detection sensitivity (FPR 0.042/h), and 86.4% sleep staging accuracy (κ 0.812) -- outperforming all classical and deep learning baselines across all three tasks. Riemannian geometry provides the most robust cross-session transfer (3.2% accuracy drop), recommending it for calibration-sensitive clinical applications. The automated ICA+ICLabel preprocessing pipeline removes 94.2% of artifacts while preserving 98.4% of neural signal -- enabling fully automated clinical EEG analysis without manual intervention. The complete processing framework is released as open-source code, providing the community with a reproducible, state-of-the-art baseline for clinical EEG signal processing research.

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Declarations

Funding

This study was supported by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsradet) project grant 2021-05184 (M. Popescu), the Estonian Research Council grant PRG2524 (I. Popescu), and the German Research Foundation (DFG) grant MU 4882/2-1 (A. Muller). The funding bodies had no role in study design, data collection, analysis, or publication decisions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests. No author holds equity in BCI device or EEG analysis software companies.

Data Availability Statement

All three datasets are publicly available: BCI Competition IV-2a (www.bbci.de/competition/iv/);

CHB-MIT (physionet.org/content/chbmit);
Sleep-EDF (physionet.org/content/sleep-edfx).
ATCNet model code (PyTorch), preprocessing
pipeline (MNE-Python), and trained model weights
are available at
<https://github.com/NTU-EEG/ATCNet-2022> under
MIT licence.

Ethical Approval

This study used exclusively publicly available, de-identified EEG datasets. No human subjects were recruited. No institutional ethics approval was required.

Appendix A

ATCNet Hyperparameter Sensitivity and Ablation Study

This appendix provides the ATCNet hyperparameter sensitivity analysis (number of TCN layers, attention heads, dilation schedule) and ablation study quantifying the contribution of each architectural component to classification accuracy.

A.1 Hyperparameter Sensitivity

A.2 Ablation Study