Comparison of Black Box Implementations of Two Algorithms of Processing of NMR Spectra, Gaussian Mixture Model and Singular Value Decomposition

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Analysis of NMR spectra is a multi-stage computational process performed with the use of appropriately Abstract: chosen sequence of algorithms. Initial stages of this process, called pre-processing, including filtering, baseline correction, phase correction and removal of unwanted components, are aimed at improving the quality of NMR spectral signal by rejection of noise, removing unnecessary spectral components and irregularities. After pre-processing the basic operations on NMR spectra are aimed at estimation of levels of certain metabolites by analysis of appropriate structural properties of NMR spectral signals. In this paper authors present design and implementation of two signals modelling methods. The first one is based on singular value decomposition of the induction decay signal. The second is done with use of mixture model constructed for frequency spectrum. Authors present all assumption that need to be satisfied and processing steps that must be performed before final analysis. The methods studied in the paper are implemented under the black - box assumption; i.e., prior knowledge of parameters of metabolites in the spectra is not used. As a second part of the project authors present a comparison of obtained result with popular modelling techniques and software LCmodel and Tarquin, based on experimental phantom dataset. Comparisons between different methods are based on the commonly used quality indexes, mean squared errors corresponding to levels of detected metabolites and specificities and sensitivities of the process of detection of metabolites. Using the presented comparisons we authors are able to characterize advantages and drawbacks of the studied approaches.

1 INTRODUCTION

Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS) is commonly used as an experimental technique in current biochemistry and medicine (Behar, 1994). Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR), which is a physical background for MRS, is an effect relying on magnetic properties of atomic nuclei. NMR is a base for two diagnostic methods – Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS) G. MRI – gives detailed visualization of spatial structures of tissues, used in medical diagnostics, to distinguish pathologically changed tissues from normal. MRS provides information on the biochemical (metabolite) composition of samples (Jacobsen, 2007).

Methods for computational analyses of NMR spectra can be most generally categorized into two classes; black box methods and basis set methods. Black box methods involve analyses of NMR signals, which do not incorporate any prior knowledge on structural properties of spectra, given their possible metabolites components and settings of the experimental setup. In contrast, basis set methods incorporate prior knowledge into modelling. This knowledge includes such elements as positions of peaks corresponding to metabolites, ratios between peaks, data on shapes of signals

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(peaks) corresponding to metabolites, dependences between structural properties of spectral signals and experimental parameters (echo and repetition time). Major efforts in the research on modelling NMR spectra have, so far, been paid to developing basis sets approaches and comparisons of their efficiencies .(Krone et al., 2011)

This tendency is motivated by the fact that basis set algorithms are most important in massive routine analyses of NMR spectra in laboratory experiments. Nevertheless, black box methods have also important areas of applications, including e.g., analyses of NMR spectral signals with possible unknown metabolite components or analyses of NMR spectra of special character (sparse, long echo (Gunther, 1992)). Therefore there is a need to evaluate efficiency and to compare methods for black box NMR spectral analysis. It is also of interest, how black box methods compare to basis sets methods in terms of the possible loss of accuracy. It seems, however, that such comparisons/analyses are lacking (sparse) in the literature. Therefore the aim of this paper was the implementation of two black box methods of NMR spectra analyses, HSVD and Gaussian mixture, and their comparisons to each other and to two implementations of basis set methods. Evaluations of accuracy and comparisons were done on the basis of experimental metabolite amount estimation for a phantom dataset.

The contribution of the paper include black box implementations and comparisons of two methods for processing NMR spectra Hankel singular value decomposition (HSVD), which operates on the time domain free induction decay signal and Gaussian mixture decomposition (GMM) of the frequency spectrum of the NMR signal. A study, efficiency evaluations and comparisons concerning precision of the modelling of the FID signal and accuracy validation study based on the recovery of metabolite components in an experimental phantom study with known metabolite concentrations. A part of the project was also an additional validation of the obtained modelling solutions by comparison to widely used software platforms LC Model Provencher et al (Provencher, 1995) and Tarquin (Wilson et al., 2010).

2 SIGNAL PREPARATION AND PRE-PROCESSING

The signal measured in the receiving coil of an MR

spectrometer is called free induction decay (FID) signal and it contains components corresponding the resonant time responses of the atom nuclei in the analysed sample. FID signal consists of two parts – real and imaginary part of FID, which correspond respectively to x and y components of the rotating magnetization vector M. Magnetization vector represents a wave emitted from signal in a process called Larmor precession (Millar, 2006). Complex notation commonly used to represent FID signal is feasible for all further mathematical operations. The real and imaginary parts of FID correspond to axes (x-axis and y-axis) of the plane perpendicular to the axis of rotation of magnetization vector M (z-axis) in the 3D space.

NMR spectrometers provide output signals in different formats, all of which contain useful information for analyses of data. In the preprocessing steps of or algorithms we use two FID signals. FID ref is called a reference FID signal. It corresponds to the raw NMR measurements before the water suppression procedure. FID act is the 'actual' signal, which is a basis for further analyses, where the water component has been removed by hardware – implemented filter.

Quantification of NMR signal is performed after appropriate sequence of pre-processing steps. These may include signal smoothing and noise filtration (Müller, 2006), phase correction (Weinreb et al., 1985), baseline correction (Hofmann et al., 2001) and Eddy currents correction (Graff, 2007).

3 METHODS OF METABOLITE AMOUNT EVALUATION IN NMR EXPERIMENTS

3.1 Hankel Matrix Singular Value Decomposition

The first black box method of modelling (decomposition) of FID signals implemented in this paper is Hankel singular value decomposition HSVD, which belongs to the group of time-domain algorithms for quantification of NMS signals. HSVD algorithm approach analyses of NMR spectra was described in several papers in the literature (Lupu and Todor, 1995). There are also several variants of its application. Each component of the FID signal is described by 4 parameters, as depicted in equation (1) below.

$$z_n = x_n + jy_n = \sum_{k=1}^{K} a_k \, e^{(-d_k + j2\pi f_k)t_n + j\varphi_k} \quad (1)$$

Parameters of FID signal components: a_k amplitude of a single component, d_k - damping factor of a single component, f_k - frequency of a single component, t_n - sampling time, φ_k - phase of single component, j-imaginary unit.

HSVD uses singular value decomposition (SVD) - a computational technique of factorization of a rectangular complex m x n matrix M. SVD factorization of M has the following form: (Graff, 2007)

$$M = U\Sigma V^* \tag{2}$$

In the above formula:

U - unitary matrix of size $m \times m$

 Σ – diagonal matrix of *size* $m \times n$ with nonnegative diagonal

 V^* - $n \times n$ unitary matrix created as the conjugate transpose of V

FID signal (1) can be generated as a linear statespace model and the HSVD method is derived from the Ho-Kalman algorithm for identification of the state matrix given the output signal of the model. For the sake of simplicity at the beginning assumption that data are noiseless is taken. HSVD starts with arranging data in the form of an L×M matrix called Hankel, S_H where elements are arranged as follows

$$S_H = \begin{bmatrix} z_0 & \dots & z_{M-1} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ z_{L-1} & \dots & z_{N-1} \end{bmatrix}$$
(3)

Values of *L* and *M* should be chosen greater than number of expected exponentially damped sinusoids *K*. The sum of *L* and *M* should be equal to the number of data points N increased by one. It has been proven (Graff, 2007) that the best results method gives when relation is in the range $0.5 \le L/M$ ≤ 2.0 . Values outside that region may cause increase of statistical error. It can be noticed also that it is recommended to chose such parameters *L* and *M* to get matrix *S_H* as square as it is possible. In the next step data matrix S is decomposed into a product of three matrices by application of SVD

$$S_H = S_{LxM} = U_{LxL} \Sigma_{LxM} V_{MxM}^H \tag{4}$$

Analogously to (2) U_{LxL} and V_{MxM}^{H} are unitary matrices whose columns are singular vectors and the superscript H denotes Hermitian conjugation. Σ is a diagonal matrix whose entries on the main diagonal are singular values of S_{H} . In the noise-free case the number of non-zero singular valus is equal to the number of components in the FID signal (1). However, when noise is present in the signal all singular values become nonzero and the designer of the algorithm must specify a threshold value for discriminating signal components from components resulting from noise. Signal-to-noise-ratio of singular values related to noise are (significantly) smaller then signal-related singular values. On the basis of the assumed threshed, nn the next step of the procedure matrix S_H is truncated into matrix S_K ,

$$S_K = U_K \Sigma_K V_K^H. \tag{5}$$

By K, in the above formula, we denote the number of sinusoids, which is assumed necessary for describing the measured signal. It corresponds to the number of rows of the matrix U_K and columns of the matrix V_K . In (5) Σ_K denotes K×K diagonal matrix with non-zero elements in the upper-left diagonal. The task for now is to find the matrix that can transform one into another. By application of the Ho-Kalman approach we use (5) to estimate eigenvalues of the state matrix E^H corresponding to the model of (1). Let us denote by $V^{(t)}$ and $V^{(b)}$ matrices resulting from V_K by omitting the first and the last row respectively. Then the system of linear equations for estimation of the state matrix are (Lupu, 1995)

$$V_K^{(t)} E^H \approx V_K^{(b)} \tag{6}$$

When the equation (6) is solved in the least squares sense, K eigenvalues of E^{H} lead to estimates of the damping coefficients d_{k} and frequencies f_{k} .

$$\hat{z}_n = e^{(-\widehat{d_K} + j2\pi \widehat{f_K})t_n} \tag{7}$$

In the next step, estimates z_k can be filled in model equation and by the least squares fit of the model (1) to the measured NMR signal, the remaining parameters of the model (1), amplitudes a_k and phases Φ_k , can be calculated. To obtain these estimates we denote by

$$\widehat{c_k} = \widehat{a_k} e^{j\widehat{\varphi_k}},\tag{8}$$

and we substitute (8) in (1)

$$z_n \approx \sum_{k=1}^{K} c_k \, \widehat{z_k^n} \tag{9}$$

The most time expensive part of HSVD is the computation of the SVD of $L \times M$ matrix, which time complexity is even of 3^{rd} order. The least square solution algorithm by applying correct methods can be computed efficiently. From that paper it can be noticed that full SVD is not required since only first K columns of matrices are necessary. Therefore improvements of HSVD are based on alternative matrix decomposition. Modification of HSVD was introduced thanks to Lanczos algorithm(Beer et al., 1992). HLSVD computes only those singular values and vectors that represents the signal, ignore all

others and exploit the Hankel structure of the data matrix. By invoking HLSVD the execution time of SVD can be reduced. Algorithm has the disadvantage that it can slow down in case of repeated or close singular value.

In figure 1 and figure 2 we present examples of results of modelling the NMR signal by using HSVD decomposition method. The number of components K in (10) through (14) was set K=35. This estimate was taken as equal to the number of Gaussian components in the GMM method, described in the next section, obtained by using the Bayesian information criterion (BIC). In figure 1 we show real and imaginary parts of the FID signal and its HSVD model with K=35 components, while in figure 2 we show real and imaginary parts of the FOU signal and its HSVD model with FID signal and its HSVD model



Figure 1: FID signal for exemplary NMR data and its HSVD model with K=35 components. Upper plot – real part of the FID, lower plot – imaginary part of FID. Colors: red, original signal- blue.



Figure 2: Fourier transforms (spectra) of a FID signal of an exemplary NMR data and its HSVD model with K=35 components. Upper plot – real part of the spectrum, lower plot – imaginary part of the spectrum. Colors: red, original signal- blue.

3.2 Gaussian Mixture Model

The second black box approach for quantification of NMR spectra involves modelling in the frequency domain. The frequency domain analysis is based on the application of the Fourier transform to the FID signal (1). Quantitative information about metabolite amount in tissue under investigation is done on the basis of the real part of the frequency spectrum of the FID signal (Gunther, 1992).

Since black box modelling assumes no prior knowledge on the structure of the frequency spectrum then the decomposition must be performed, such that components will correspond to hypothetical species present in the analysed tissue (sample). The possible solution to the problem is to use a mixture model (McLachlan and Peel, 2000), where the amplitude spectrum corresponding to the FID signal is represented as a sum of components detected in the amplitude spectrum. Analytical computations imply that damped sinusoidal signals in the time domain correspond to Lorenzian components in the frequency domain. However, due to finite range of frequencies and due to existence of the noise in the signal Gaussian mixture model (GMM) can be a reasonable approximation for amplitude spectrum of the FID signal (Jacobsen, 2007), GMM is constructed under the hypothesis that there is K Gaussian components in the amplitude spectrum. Each of these components is represented by a Gaussian distribution function described by a formula

$$f(x,\mu,\sigma) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \exp\left(\frac{-(z-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$$
(10)

and a mixture distribution composed of Gaussian components (10) has the form:

$$f^{mix}(z, \alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_k, \mu_1, \dots, \mu_K, \sigma_1, \dots, \sigma_K) = \sum_{K=1}^{K} \alpha_k f_k(x, \mu_k, \sigma_k)$$
(11)

In the above formulae (10) and (11) x denotes a data point – a value of an amplitude of the frequency spectrum, μ_k and σ_k are means and standard deviations of mixture distribution functions and α_k are componentsweights. Component weights must satisfy the normalization criterion

v

$$\sum_{1}^{K} \alpha_k = 1. \tag{12}$$

The model (10)-(12) must be additionally scaled in order to properly represent the amplitude spectrum of the FID signal (Polanski and Kimmel, 2007) $\begin{bmatrix} F \\ n \end{bmatrix}$.

For simplicity we drop superscript symbol and absolute value operator and we formulate the scaled mixture model as follows

...

$$x_n = \vartheta \sum_{K=1}^{K} \alpha_k f_k(x_n, \mu_k, \sigma_k)$$
(13)

In the above ϑ is a scale parameter and z_n is a simplified notation for $\begin{bmatrix} F\\n \end{bmatrix}$.

A most commonly used computational iterative algorithm for fitting GMM model parameters to data is Expectation Maximization (EM) (Dempster, 1977). Due to application of the scaled form of the mixture model appropriate formulation (variant) of the EM algorithm is necessary, as described below.

EM for mixture parameters estimation relies on a latent variable describing the hypothetical identity of the component, which generated the observation x. At the beginning a parameter guess is taken

$$\alpha_1^{old}, \dots, \alpha_K^{old}, \mu_1^{old}, \dots, \mu_K^{old}, \sigma_1^{old}, \dots, \sigma_K^{old}.$$
 (14)

Then two main steps of the iterations expectation (E) and maximization (M) are alternately executed. In the E step conditional probabilities for the latent variable are calculated according to the formula (15) (Polanski and Kimmel, 2007).

$$p(k|x_{n}, p^{old}) = \frac{\alpha_{k}^{old} \exp[\frac{-(x_{n} - \sigma_{k}^{old})^{2}}{2(\sigma_{k}^{old})^{2}}]}{\sum_{k=1}^{K} \alpha_{k}^{old} \exp[\frac{-(x_{n} - \mu_{k}^{old})^{2}}{2(\sigma_{k}^{old})^{2}}]}$$
(15)

In the M step the expectation of the logarithmic likelihood function is maximized with respect to parameters. This leads to the following updates of parameter values

$$\alpha_k^{new} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^N p(k|x_n, p_{old})}{\sum_{n=1}^N z_n},$$
(16)

$$\mu_{k}^{new} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N} x_{n} z_{n} p(k|x_{n}, p_{old})}{\sum_{n=1}^{N} z_{n} p(k|x_{n}, p_{old})},$$
(17)

$$(\sigma_k^{new})^2 = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^N (x_n - \mu_k^{new})^2 z_n p(k|x_n, p_{old})}{\sum_{n=1}^N z_n p(k|x_n, p_{old})}.$$
 (18)

In order to efficiently use the EM algorithm with given NMR spectroscopy data several further adjustments are necessary (Binczyk et al., 2010).

- 1. Initial values of parameters are drawn randomly. Mean values are drawn on the basis of uniform sampling distribution defined by the ranges of the frequency values. Component weights from the Dirichlet distribution. Component standard deviations are assumed constant.
- 2. In order to better explore possible multiple

local maxima of the log likelihood function the process of iterations is repeated for about 150 times, each with different guess for initial values of mixture model components parameters.

3. The number of components of the mixture *K* is successively incremented and for each value the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) is calculated according formula

$$BIC = -2\ln(L) + (3K - 1)\ln(\sum_{n=1}^{N} z_n).$$
(19)

The number of components corresponding the largest value of BIC obtained is chosen as the estimate of the true value of K (Millar, 2006).

When computed for successive values of K, the plot BIC versus K shows a minimum point, which corresponds to estimate of the values fore each mixture component. Exemplary mixture model scaled to original signal is presented on the figure 3.



Figure 3: Real part of the frequency spectrum of the exemplary NMR signal versus its GMM model with K=35 components. Colours: real part of the spectrum of the original NMR signal – blue, GMM model of the spectrum – red.

4 EXPERIMENT AND RESULTS

The data set used during experiments consists of series of NMR spectra obtained for one phantom data using NMR GE 1.5T Signal Echo Speed scanner. The primary goal of scheduling the experiment performed with the use of GE scanner was to verify repeatability of the device for the same data set. The series of experimental phantom measurements was repeated each week through 4 months. The phantom sample contained metabolites: 12.5 mM of NAA, 10 mM of creatine, 3 mM of choline (Cho), 7.5 mM of myo-inositol, 5 mM of

lactate, 50 mM of potassium, 12.5 mM of sodium hydroxide and 1ml/L of magnevist.

The original study measured in LC Model consists of metabolite concentration and relation of metabolites with respect to creatine. Authors for further analysis used such ratios. For all of the data sets were available measured water signals, which were used in pre-processing techniques.

4.1 Comparisons of the Accuracy of Modelling NMR Signals



Figure 4: Error of modelling NMR signal, calculated for both methods: GMM (Y axis) and HSVD (X axis).

To compare ability of whole signal reconstruction, results given by both methods: GMM and HSVD were compared in interval 0.5-4.5 ppm. The overall modelled signals were subtracted from original one and error was calculated. The results are presented in a form of scatter plot in which each point represents an error calculated for a spectrum from set of 27 in a coordination set spanned by error values for 2 modelling algorithms: HSVD on axis x and GMM on axis y.

From above one can notice that there is Pearson's correlation equal to: 0,61, between result of two proposed methods. It means that one of them is slightly better from the other. To determine which one is it basic statistics were calculated and shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean value of error of overall signal modelling and its 95 % CI calculated for both signal modelling methods: HSVD and GMM.

Method	Mean value of error [Counts]	95 % CI [Counts]	
SVD	1.076	0.028	
GMM	1.118	0.024	

From above table it is easy to notice that HSVD technique gives slightly better results in analysis of whole signal (all possible peaks).

4.2 Comparisons of the Accuracy of Estimation of Metabolite Concentrations

Constructed GMM is then used to obtain information about metabolite dispersion and amount in tested specimen. To do so authors proposed to use a convolution of chosen mixture model component (or group of peaks- dependent on metabolite) and a signal.

Each component of proposed model may be understood as an independent peak from the spectrum. Parameters of Gaussian component are responsible for peak description: weight of component- peak height, mean value of the component- peak position in spectrum or frequency and component variance - peak width. Authors decided to use set of 27 spectra while for all of them it was possible to use results obtained with use of commercial solution LC Model developed by Proventure (Provencher, 1993; Provencher, 1995). Additionally data were analysed by Tarquin software, which is free to use. All of obtained results were compared with LC model reports. For such a report it was possible to retrieve results for each chosen metabolite and its relation with respect to creatine. Results of all 4 algorithms (including LC Model and Tarquin) were compared in means of boxplots. Authors proposed to present recurrence of results with use of relation true values. In order to present them in clear and understandable way, the results are shown on the separate plots for each chosen metabolite by means of their main peak. Authors did not have enough data to calculate correction coefficient for transverse and longitude relaxation. Therefore for comparison authors decided to correct results with use of derived coefficient of correction based on known value of metabolite amount in the phantom. Such a methodology implies division of the 27 spectra dataset into two subsets: training and validating. The training subject was decided to contain 12 spectra and the others were used to verify estimated correction coefficient.

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3,180

1,010

HSVD

GMM

3,256

0,928

2,800

1,733

4,500

2,080

Figure 5: Comparison of 4 methods in terms of

concentration of metabolite.

3,653

1,453

Relative error [%]					
	Naa	Choline	Lactate	Inositol	
LC Model	1,360	1,333	2,600	2,000	
Tarquin	3,120	11,000	5,600	5,867	
HSVD	1,520	2,000	3,600	2,533	
GMM	0,640	1,333	2,000	1,467	

Table 2a: Comparison of Approximation error of relations.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Data set that was used during experiments was originally used to verify recurrence of newly bought GE scanner. Such results were tested in each week in few months time for the same phantom to check if obtained results are comparable. For the comparison authors took main peaks of 5 metabolites: Naa, Creatine, Choline. Lactate, Myoinositol and checked relations of metabolite with respect to Creatine (such ratio is commonly used in oncology). The main idea for this study was application of black box methods without any additional prior knowledge. It was decided to implement and compare two different methods of signal analysis. One that is focused in time domain analysis and on the other hand on frequency domain. According to authors experience and performed literature study there are few methods basing on Singular Value Decomposition however HSVD seems to be more accurate. In case of frequency domain it was observed that peaks poses Gaussian shape. It was then decided to use Gaussian Mixture Model. Both methods were implemented in Matlab-Simulink software as two separated tools for NMR spectra analysis.

Authors decided to verify recurrence of obtained results, which gave an answer for the question, whether proposed methods could give reliable results. Results obtained with use of two implemented and tuned modelling methods were compared to already existing solution - LC Model. Results look reliable. After analysis of obtained boxplots, authors may conclude that obtained modelling algorithms are not worse than already used- LC Model. What is more in some cases they were even better. However HSVD technique gives better results during analysis of whole signal with all possible peaks. (Table 1)

First method applied to the phantom data was method based on Gaussian mixture model. Authors observed that in comparison to LC Model data, which were treated as a reference values, its result is satisfactory. It is so, because the aim of the method is construction of a good fitted model of the data. However authors observed that for some cases result obtained by calculating the convolution of specific Gaussian component and a signal differs from the reference one. It might be caused by additional components that are present in the data. Such a components are: phase error, baseline and noise. The study under consideration was a phantom measurement so authors decided to neglect influence of phase error and baseline. Signal noise is not only visible as additional low amplitude peaks in frequency spectrum, but also influences peak height. In such a case peak and noise component are easily recognized as just one component of mixture model. To deal with the problem author's decided to use Savitzky-Golay approach while result was satisfactory and the amplitude of filtered signal was not damped. Such a filtering technique was applied to the data in frequency domain- spectrum. It is author's suspicion that LC Model may use filters that deal with FID instead of signal in frequency domain. What is worth to notice, original idea of GMM application to NMR spectroscopy data was to analyse signals from many voxels instead of just one. In such a case noise component that still remains in the signal after application of Savitzky-Golay [14] technique might be neglected. What is more such an approach tells more about spatial dependencies between metabolites instead of just simple semi-quantification for each.

Methods based on SVD can be used in many preprocessing techniques. Thanks to the fact that after SVD decomposition singular values are arranged in descending order one can notice that noise is present always at the end of singular values. Such feature can be applied in filtering of signal. Another approach is connected to phase correction, which relies on finding and correcting particular component of FID. HSVD can model signal with high precision depending on number of components that is expected in result. In comparison to EM it processes on FID in time domain and it strongly depends on number of points that generates time consumption. Many modifications of calculating SVD have been proposed such as for example Lanczos algorithm.

In order to calculate correct metabolites concentration by means of SVD proper preprocessing has to be done. In the next step method should calculate components parameters and one should identify metabolites that are searched and build them from obtained components. The concentration is based on calculating area under peak present in spectrum by used of trapezoidal rule. It has to be mentioned that before metabolites analysis optimal pre-processing has to be performed, otherwise results may be incorrect.

As authors shown both of mentioned methods gave satisfactory result, according to the reference and what is more widely used software solution. Taking into account all experiments performed by authors it was proven that both methods might be successfully used for analysis of NMR spectroscopy data. Authors observed that crucial points is sensitivity of both methods for unwanted components such as noise that might not be completely removed with advance techniques. Authors decide to focus on improvement of that crucial part in their future research.

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