

Emerging Collective Intelligence in Othello Players Evolved by Differential Evolution

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Abstract—The evaluation function for game playing is very important. However, it is difficult to make a good evaluation function. In this study, we propose to play Othello using collective intelligence of players. The evaluation functions of the players are learned or optimized by Differential Evolution. The objective value is defined based on the total score of the games with a standard Othello player. In order to generate different types of players, the objective value is slightly changed by introducing the stability of each player. Each player can select a next move using the learned evaluation function. The collective intelligence player selects a move based on majority vote where the move voted by many players is selected. It is shown that the collective intelligence is effective to game players through computer simulation.

Keywords—collective intelligence; differential evolution; Othello; two-player game

I. INTRODUCTION

In zero-sum, two-player games with perfect information such as checkers, chess and Othello, successful computer-based approaches often utilize the following three elements:

- Opening book: An opening book is used to choose good moves in opening stage.
- Evaluation function: A next move is decided by using minimax method or $\alpha\beta$ -pruning in middle stage. A minimax game tree for legal moves is constructed up to a certain depth. Leaf nodes of the tree are evaluated with the evaluation function. A move which has the best evaluation value is selected as the next move.
- Complete search: The best move in endgame stage is decided by searching all legal moves until the end of the game. Victory or defeat of the game can be determined if players take the best moves always.

When it is difficult to make an evaluation function for the game like Go, Monte Carlo tree search [1] can be adopted. Many playouts, in which both players select legal moves randomly or stochastically until the end of the game, are performed. Since the next move is selected based on the winning percentage of the playouts, the evaluation function is not used.

The evaluation function is very important element for playing game. However, it is difficult to make a good evaluation function, because the special knowledge for the game is necessary to make it and much effort is necessary to

improve it through trial and error. In order to solve the difficulty, there are studies to learn the evaluation function or the game strategy automatically or by unsupervised learning. For example, reinforcement learning can be adopted to learn the strategy using the victory or defeat of games as a reward or a penalty. Also, optimization methods such as evolutionary computation can be adopted to learn the evaluation function using the score of a game as an objective value or a fitness value.

In this study, we propose to play Othello using collective intelligence of Othello players in order to investigate whether collective intelligence is effective to two-player games or not. Collective intelligence [2] is group intelligence that emerges from the cooperation or competition of multiple individuals. The intelligence appears in decision making by the individuals such as bacteria, animals, human beings and computer agents. For example, Kasparov versus the World [3] was a game of chess played in 1999 over the Internet. Kasparov faced with the World Team of over 50,000 people where moves are decided by plurality vote. Although Kasparov won, he admitted that he had never expended as much effort on any other game in his life. Also, ensemble learning in machine learning is a method where multiple models (weak learners), which have relatively low performance, are generated and combined to make a better model (strong learner), which have high performance. It is thought that the ensemble learning is an example of collective intelligence.

In this study, collective intelligence is introduced to Othello-learning players. The evaluation functions of the learning players are optimized by Differential Evolution, which is an evolutionary algorithm. The objective value of each player for optimization is defined based on the total score of the games with a standard Othello player. In order to generate different types of players, the objective value is slightly changed by introducing the stability of each player. Each player can select a next move using the learned evaluation function. The next move using collective intelligence of the players is decided by majority vote. That is, the collective intelligence player chooses the move which is voted by many players. It is shown that the collective intelligence is effective to game players through computer simulation.

In Section II, related works are briefly reviewed. Othello and the evaluation function are explained in Section III. An algorithm for evolving Othello players using Differential Evolution is proposed in Section IV. In Section V, collective

intelligence of the players is investigated and experimental results are shown. Finally, conclusions are described in Section VI.

II. RELATED WORKS

The representative methods for unsupervised learning of game strategy are reinforcement learning approaches such as temporal difference learning (TDL) [4] and evolutionary learning approaches [5]. A famous reinforcement learning approach was Tesauro's TD-Gammon [6], [7] which played the backgammon. The game strategy of backgammon was expressed by the neural network which was learned by TDL. TD-Gammon was very strong, nearly as strong as the human world champion. Also, the strategies of chess [8] and Othello [9] were learned by TDL. Evolutionary learning approaches have been applied to backgammon [10], checker [11], [12] and so on. Also, comparative studies on TDL and evolutionary approach [13] was performed and hybridization of both approaches [14], [15] was proposed. But players generated by unsupervised learning in chess, Othello, shogi or Go are not comparable to strong human players.

Recently, collective intelligence in games has been paid attention to. Takahama and Sakai [16], [17] proposed to learn multiple players who play tic-tac-toe using neural networks learned by TDL in artificial game society. A consultation system to play Shogi was proposed in [18]. One of the moves that are sent by a set of players is selected as the actual move. It was shown that the system composed of three famous Shogi programs played better than each software individually. Marcolino and Matsubara [19] proposed a multi-agent version of UCT Monte Carlo Go. During the Monte Carlo simulations, one agent is randomly selected in multiple agents (agent database) and the agent will decide the move. The agents are generated by changing the order of the default heuristics of Fuego [20]. It was shown that a group of good agents selected from the database could significantly overcome Fuego.

It is thought that introducing collective intelligence to artificial game players is one of promising approaches in games. There are the following problems:

- Generating different types of players, where each player selects somewhat different moves, is key issue for emerging collective intelligence. Although different types of players can be prepared using some heuristics, the special knowledge for the game is necessary. Also, if a different initial solution or a different initial population is used in TDL or evolutionary approaches, different types of players might be generated. But the types of players tend to become similar when same objective value is used and the optimization process finds nearly optimal solution.
- The number of players is important to emerge collective intelligence. If a complex evaluation function is adopted, execution time for playing games becomes large and the number of players must be reduced.

In this study, stability of players in addition to the fitness of players is considered to generate different types of players using an evolutionary approach. A learning player plays with a

standard player in plural games. The fitness value of the learning player in the games is defined by the results of the games. The plural games are repeated and the average and the standard deviation of the fitness values are obtained. Since a player who has small standard deviation is a stable player, it is thought that a player with larger fitness value and smaller standard deviation is a good player. In order to generate different types of players, the weight between the average fitness value and the standard deviation is changed appropriately. Also, the weighted piece counter which is the simplest evaluation function for Othello is adopted and 101 players are evolved to investigate whether collective intelligence can be emerged or not.

III. OTHELLO

Othello is a two-player board game with perfect information and is played on an 8×8 board. There are 64 identical pieces called discs which are white on one side and black on the other side. First move player uses black side and second move player uses white side.

A. Rules

The game starts with two white and two black discs where same-colored discs are on a diagonal with each other in the center on the board. The players take turns putting own colored disc on the board. A legal move consists in placing a disc on an empty position so that it will bound a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line of opponent player's discs by 2 current player's discs on each end. The sandwiched opponent's discs are reversed and the color of the discs is changed to current player's color after the disc is placed. A player passes if and only if there is no legal move. The game ends when both players passed consecutively. Then, the player who has more discs with their color wins. If both players have the same number of discs with their color, the game is tied.

Fig. 1 shows the initial Othello board and legal moves of black as stars in the left and legal moves of white in the right.

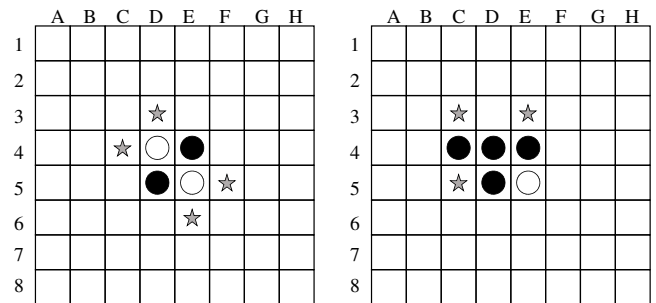


Fig. 1. Initial state of Othello and legal moves.

B. The Othello League

A good reference for different Othello player models and their estimated performance is provided by the Othello Position Evaluation Function League [21]. The goal is not to design state-of-the-art Othello players, but to evaluate position evaluation functions. Therefore, a 1-ply setup is adopted: given the current state of the board, a player generates all legal moves and applies the evaluation function to the next states

which are obtained by the legal moves. The most desirable evaluation value is selected to determine the next move. Ties are resolved at random. Player's rank in the league is based on the score obtained in games played at 1-ply against the standard heuristic player who uses the standard weighted piece counter to be described later.

Since Othello game and the players are deterministic (with an exception when at least two positions have the same evaluation value and a position is randomly selected), there can be only two games with changing the color. In order to provide better performance measure, Othello League introduces some random factors to Othello. Both players are forced to make random moves with the probability of $\varepsilon = 0.1$. In other words, ε greedy strategy is adopted by both players, where 10% of moves are selected randomly.

C. Weighted piece counter

The weighted piece counter (WPC) is the simplest position evaluation function which assigns a weight to each position in Othello board. Let a board position be denoted by (x, y) which corresponds the x -th column and the y -th row where $x = 1, 2, \dots, 8, y = 1, 2, \dots, 8$. Let a weight of the position (x, y) be denoted by w_{xy} . The evaluation function $f_{\mathbf{w}}(\cdot)$ maps current board state $\mathbf{b} = (b_{xy})$ into the evaluation value and is defined as follows:

$$f_{\mathbf{w}}(\mathbf{b}) = \sum_{y=1}^8 \sum_{x=1}^8 w_{xy} b_{xy} \quad (1)$$

$$b_{xy} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{a black disc is placed} \\ 0 & \text{empty} \\ -1 & \text{a white disc is placed} \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

The first move (black) selects a move that maximizes the evaluation value, but the second move (white) selects a move that minimizes the evaluation value.

Fig. 2 shows the standard heuristic WPC whose weights are hand-coded by Yoshioka et al [22]. This standard WPC is often used in Othello researches as an heuristic expert opponent.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	1	-0.25	0.1	0.05	0.05	0.1	-0.25	1
2	-0.25	-0.25	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.25	-0.25
3	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.1
4	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.05
5	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.05
6	0.1	0.01	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.1
7	-0.25	-0.25	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.25	-0.25
8	1	-0.25	0.1	0.05	0.05	0.1	-0.25	1

Fig. 2. The standard heuristic Weighted Piece Counter.

IV. LEARNING WPC BY DIFFERENTIAL EVOLUTION

Multiple players learn their own game strategy represented by WPC using Differential Evolution to emerge collective intelligence.

A. Learning WPC

The number of variables for WPC is $8 \times 8 = 64$. It is possible to reduce the number of variables by taking advantage of symmetries of Othello board. As shown in Fig. 3, WPC can be represented by 10 variables from a to j [23].

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	a	b	c	d	d	c	b	a
2	b	e	f	g	g	f	e	b
3	c	f	h	i	i	h	f	c
4	d	g	i	j	j	i	g	d
5	d	g	i	j	j	i	g	d
6	c	f	h	i	i	h	f	c
7	b	e	f	g	g	f	e	b
8	a	b	c	d	d	c	b	a

Fig. 3. The 10 variables a to j for weighted piece counter.

The 10 sets of 100 games are played using WPC, which is defined by a decision vector \mathbf{x} , against the 0.1-greedy standard WPC player with changing first move and second move. Thus, the problem of learning WPC can be defined as follows:

$$\text{maximize} \quad f(\mathbf{x}) \quad (3)$$

$$\mathbf{x} = (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j)$$

$$f(\mathbf{x}) = \text{score}(\mathbf{x}) + \alpha \text{stability}(\mathbf{x})$$

$$\text{score}_i(\mathbf{x}) = (\text{Win}_i + 0.5 \text{Draw}_i) / N, i = 1, 2, \dots, S$$

$$\text{score}(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{1}{S} \sum_{i=1}^S \text{score}_i(\mathbf{x})$$

$$\text{stability}(\mathbf{x}) = -\sqrt{\frac{1}{S} \sum_{i=1}^S (\text{score}_i(\mathbf{x}) - \text{score}(\mathbf{x}))^2}$$

where α is the weight between score and stability, Win_i is the number of winning games, Draw_i is the number of draw games in the i -th set. N is the total number of games in one set where $N = 100$. This kind of score is used in real Othello tournament. S is the number of the sets.

In (3), the stability is defined by the negative value of the standard deviation and a player with larger score and larger stability, or smaller standard deviation, can be obtained. In order to generate 101 players, α is changed as $\alpha = 0, 0.02, 0.04, \dots, 2$.

B. Differential Evolution

Differential evolution (DE) is proposed by Storn and Price [24]. DE is a stochastic direct search method using a population or multiple search points. DE has been successfully

applied to optimization problems including non-linear, non-differentiable, non-convex and multimodal functions [25], [26]. It has been shown that DE is fast and robust to these functions.

In DE, initial individuals are randomly generated within given search space and form an initial population. Each individual contains D genes as decision variables. At each generation or iteration, all individuals are selected as parents. Each parent is processed as follows: The mutation operation begins by choosing several individuals from the population except for the parent in the processing. The first individual is a base vector. All subsequent individuals are paired to create difference vectors. The difference vectors are scaled by a scaling factor F and added to the base vector. The resulting vector, or a mutant vector, is then recombined with the parent. The probability of recombination at an element is controlled by a crossover rate CR . This crossover operation produces a trial vector. Finally, for survivor selection, the trial vector is accepted for the next generation if the trial vector is better than the parent.

There are some variants of DE that have been proposed. The variants are classified using the notation $DE/base/num/cross$ such as $DE/rand/1/bin$ and $DE/rand/1/exp$. “*base*” specifies a way of selecting an individual that will form the base vector. For example, $DE/rand$ selects an individual for the base vector at random from the population. $DE/best$ selects the best individual in the population. “*num*” specifies the number of difference vectors used to perturb the base vector. In case of $DE/rand/1$, for example, for each parent \mathbf{x}^i , three individuals \mathbf{x}^{r1} , \mathbf{x}^{r2} and \mathbf{x}^{r3} are chosen randomly from the population without overlapping \mathbf{x}^i and each other. A new vector, or a mutant vector \mathbf{m} is generated by the base vector \mathbf{x}^{r1} and the difference vector $\mathbf{x}^{r2} - \mathbf{x}^{r3}$, where F is the scaling factor.

$$\mathbf{m} = \mathbf{x}^{r1} + F(\mathbf{x}^{r2} - \mathbf{x}^{r3}) \quad (4)$$

“*cross*” specifies the type of crossover that is used to create a child. For example, ‘bin’ indicates that the crossover is controlled by the binomial crossover using a constant crossover rate, and ‘exp’ indicates that the crossover is controlled by a kind of two-point crossover using exponentially decreasing the crossover rate. Fig. 4 shows the binomial and exponential crossover. A new child \mathbf{x}^{child} is generated from the parent \mathbf{x}^i and the mutant vector \mathbf{m} , where CR is a crossover rate.

C. The Algorithm of Differential Evolution

The algorithm of DE is as follows:

- Step 0 Population size NP , a scaling factor F and a crossover rate CR are given.
- Step 1 Initialization of a population. Initial NP individuals $P = \{\mathbf{x}^i | i = 1, 2, \dots, NP\}$ are generated randomly in search space and form an initial population.
- Step 2 Termination condition. If the number of generations reaches the maximum number of generations T_{max} , the algorithm is terminated.
- Step 3 DE operations. Each individual \mathbf{x}^i is selected as a target vector (parent). If all individuals are selected, go to Step 4. A mutant vector \mathbf{m} is generated according to Eq. (4). A trial vector (child)

```

binomial crossover DE/./bin
jrand=randint(1,D);
for(k=1; k ≤ D; k++) {
    if(k == jrand || u(0,1) < CR) x_k^child = m_k;
    else x_k^child = x_k^i;
}
exponential crossover DE/./exp
k=1; j=randint(1,D);
do {
    x_j^child = m_j;
    k=k+1; j=(j+1)%D;
} while(k ≤ D && u(0,1) < CR);
while(k ≤ D) {
    x_j^child = x_j^i;
    k=k+1; j=(j+1)%D;
}

```

Fig. 4. Binomial and exponential crossover operation, where $\text{randint}(1,D)$ generates an integer randomly from $[1, D]$ and $u(l, r)$ is a uniform random number generator in $[l, r]$.

is generated from the parent \mathbf{x}^i and the mutant vector \mathbf{m} using a crossover operation shown in Fig. 4. In this study, the binomial crossover is adopted. If the child is better than the parent, or the DE operation is succeeded, the child survives. Otherwise the parent survives. Go back to Step 3 and the next individual is selected as a parent.

- Step 4 Survivor selection. The population P is formed by the survivors. Go back to Step 2.

Fig. 5 shows a pseudo-code of $DE/rand/1$.

```

DE/rand/1()
{
// Initialize a population
P=N individuals generated randomly in S;
for(t=1; t ≤ T_max; t++) {
    for(i=1; i ≤ N; i++) {
// DE operation
x^p1=Randomly selected from P (p1 ≠ i);
x^p2=Randomly selected from P (p2 ∉ {i, p1});
x^p3=Randomly selected from P (p3 ∉ {i, p1, p2});
m=x^p1+F(x^p2 - x^p3);
x^child=trial vector is generated from
x^i and m by the binomial crossover operation;
// Survivor selection
if(f(x^child) > f(x^i)) z^i=x^child;
else z^i=x^i;
}
P={z^i, i = 1, 2, ..., N};
}
}

```

Fig. 5. The pseudo-code of DE, T_{max} is the maximum number of generations.

V. EXPERIMENTS FOR COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

A. Experiment 1 for Generating 101 Players

$DE/rand/1/bin$ is executed 101 times to generate 101 different players with changing the weight α as 0, 0.02, 0.04, \dots , 2. The parameters for DE are shown in Table I.

TABLE IV. THE RESULTS IN 10 SETS OF 10,000 GAMES FOR COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE PLAYER

No	set 1	set 2	set 3	set 4	set 5	set 6	set 7	set 8	set 9	set 10	average	std.
CIP	0.5512	0.5423	0.5513	0.5477	0.5476	0.5410	0.5570	0.5520	0.5410	0.5401	0.5471	0.0055
CIP w/o 37	0.5527	0.5466	0.5476	0.5483	0.547	0.5473	0.5524	0.5585	0.5403	0.5556	0.5496	0.0050
average	0.5304	0.5297	0.5301	0.5298	0.5303	0.5303	0.5309	0.5301	0.5299	0.5306	0.5302	0.0045

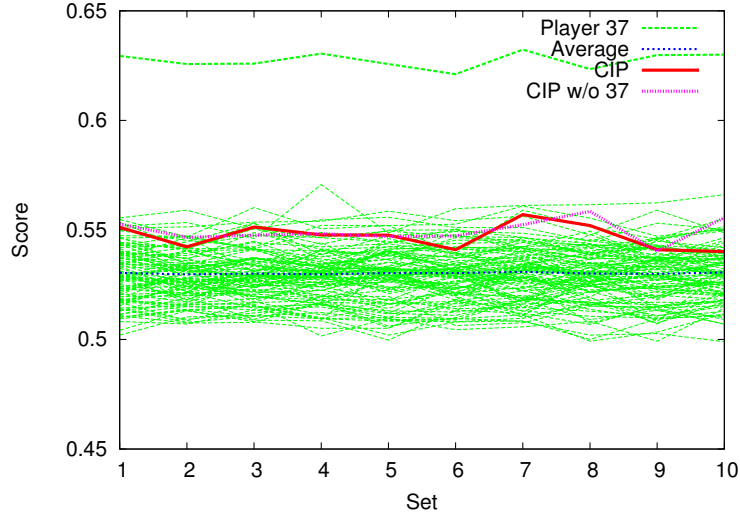


Fig. 6. Score of CIP and all players in the 10 sets.

TABLE V. THE RESULTS IN 10 SETS OF 10,000 GAMES FOR COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE PLAYER AGAINST PLAYER 37

No	set 1	set 2	set 3	set 4	set 5	set 6	set 7	set 8	set 9	set 10	average	std.
CIP	0.5152	0.5101	0.5148	0.5139	0.5054	0.4998	0.5067	0.5009	0.5083	0.4978	0.5073	0.0057
CIP w/o 37	0.5029	0.5102	0.5130	0.5145	0.5079	0.5092	0.4988	0.5198	0.5068	0.5148	0.5098	0.0056
average	0.5091	0.5102	0.5139	0.5142	0.5067	0.5045	0.5028	0.5104	0.5076	0.5063	0.5085	0.0056

strategies by playing with various types of players in a game society. It is interesting to consider the relation between collective intelligence and an artificial game society.

- All players had the same weight to vote the next move in this study. If proper weights for each player can be learned, the performance of collective intelligence will be improved.

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