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Modelling of a Post-combustion CO₂ Capture Process Using Neural Networks

Fei Li¹, Jie Zhang^{1*}, Eni Oko², Meihong Wang²

¹School of Chemical Engineering and Advanced Materials,
Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU, U.K.
e-mail: jie.zhang@newcastle.ac.uk

²School of Engineering, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX, U.K.

Abstract

This paper presents a study of modelling post-combustion CO₂ capture process using bootstrap aggregated neural networks. The neural network models predict CO₂ capture rate and CO₂ capture level using the following variables as model inputs: inlet flue gas flow rate, CO₂ concentration in inlet flue gas, pressure of flue gas, temperature of flue gas, lean solvent flow rate, MEA concentration and temperature of lean solvent. In order to enhance model accuracy and reliability, multiple feedforward neural network models are developed from bootstrap re-sampling replications of the original training data and are combined. Bootstrap aggregated model can offer more accurate predictions than a single neural network, as well as provide model prediction confidence bounds. Simulated CO₂ capture process operation data from gPROMS simulation are used to build and verify neural network models. Both neural network static and dynamic models are developed and they offer accurate predictions on unseen validation data. The developed neural network models can then be used in the optimisation of the CO₂ capture process.

Keywords: CO₂ capture; chemical absorption; neural networks; data-driven modelling.

1 Introduction

Post-combustion CO₂ capture for fossil fuel-fired power plants is attracting more attention as a result of the large amounts of existing fossil fuel-fired power plants and no significant changes to equipment configurations required [1]. For the efficient design and operation of a post-combustion CO₂ capture plant, process optimisation is required. Process optimisation requires reliable and efficient process models. Different modelling technologies, such as first principle models and statistical models, have been studied to investigate the post-combustion

* Corresponding author

36 carbon capture process efficiency. Previous studies showed that the establishment of first
37 principle models is very time consuming and requires extensive knowledge of the underlying
38 physics of the process. Numerical optimisation typically requires thousands of function
39 evaluations. Evaluation of a detailed first principle model is typically computationally very
40 demanding. To overcome this problem, neural network models can be developed from
41 process operational data and used in plant optimization [2]. Neural network models can be
42 developed very quickly from process data and their evaluation is much less computationally
43 demanding compared with a first principle model. Conventional neural networks sometimes
44 suffer from poor generalisation performance due to the limitations in training data and
45 training algorithms. More advanced neural network modelling methods should be utilised [3-
46 6]. This paper uses bootstrap aggregated neural networks to build data-driven models for a
47 CO₂ capture chemical absorption process with solvents.

48

49 The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents an overview of CO₂ capture processes.
50 Section 3 presents bootstrap aggregated neural networks. Modelling of a CO₂ capture process
51 using bootstrap aggregated neural networks and results and discussions are detailed in
52 Section 4. Both steady state and dynamic models are developed. Section 5 draws some
53 concluding remarks.

54

55 **2 An overview of CO₂ capture processes**

56 **2.1 Post-combustion CO₂ capture via chemical absorption**

57 Post-combustion CO₂ capture process removes CO₂ emission after the combustion of fossil
58 fuel in a combustor. It can be retrofitted to existing fossil fuel-fired power plants for CO₂
59 capture. Several separation technologies can be employed in this process and they include
60 adsorption, physical absorption, chemical absorption, cryogenics separation and membrane
61 absorption [1]. Among these methods, chemical absorption is found to be most suitable for
62 CO₂ capture from fossil fuel-fired power plants industrial flue gas due to the high selectivity
63 and final pure CO₂ stream [1].

64

65 As shown in Figure 1, CO₂ capture plant with chemical absorption mainly consists of two
66 packed columns, namely absorber and stripper columns. The flue gas from power plant is fed
67 into the bottom of absorber and contacted counter-currently with lean amine solvent from the
68 top side. The lean amine solvent chemically reacts and absorbs CO₂ in the flue gas. Then the

69 treated gas stream with lower CO₂ concentration leaves from the top of absorber. The amine
70 solution with more CO₂ (now rich amine), coming from the bottom of absorber, is pumped to
71 the stripper after preheating in cross heat exchanger. In the stripper, the rich amine solution is
72 regenerated by heating via a reboiler [7]. The reboiler energy is often provided by low-
73 pressure steam from the steam cycle of the power plant causes large energy consumption.
74 The vapour that results from heating the rich amine is richer in CO₂ than the left over liquid
75 phase (lean amine). The vapour is cooled in a condenser followed by flash separation. The
76 vapour from the flash separator, mostly CO₂ (up to 99%) is compressed and transported to
77 storage sites while the liquid phase from the flash separator is refluxed back to the stripper.
78 Finally, the lean amine is cooled in cross heat exchanger by exchanging heat with rich amine
79 and then pumped back to the absorber.

80

81 A significant portion of operation cost of CO₂ capture with chemical absorption is the energy
82 requirement. In order to make CO₂ capture economically viable, the process operation should
83 be optimised to identify the best process operating conditions such as temperature and
84 pressure in absorber, stripper, reboiler and condenser. A reliable model is essential for
85 carrying out the optimisation tasks.

86

87

88 **2.2 Review of previous studies in modelling post-combustion CO₂ capture**

89

90 Post-combustion CO₂ capture with chemical solvent is a reactive absorption involving
91 simultaneous phenomena. One is mass transfer of CO₂ from the bulk vapour to the liquid
92 solvent and the other is chemical reaction between CO₂ and the solvent. As stated in [8], mass
93 transfer rate contributes a lot to reactive absorption design. The relationship between mass
94 transport and reaction rate will determine where the species can react, such as in the bulk
95 phase, or in the bulk and interfacial regions, or purely in the interfacial layers.

96

97 Mass transfer rates between the vapour and liquid phase can be described using different
98 theories, namely two-film theory and penetration theory among others [1]. Two-film theory is
99 however more commonly used due to its simplicity and ease of application. In two-film
100 theory, the liquid and vapour phases are both assumed to consist of two regions; bulk and
101 film region. The effects of heat and mass transfer resistances are taken into account only in
102 the laminar film regions. In penetration theory on the other hand, it is assumed that the

103 exposure time between every element on surface of the liquid and vapour phase is the same.
104 The exposure time affects mass transfer coefficient significantly because it can imply the
105 effects of hydrodynamic properties of the system.

106

107 In Pintola and Meisen [9], a steady-state model was developed for the absorber. This assumes
108 a rate-based mass transfer with an enhancement factor to estimate the actual absorption rate.
109 The study emphasized that the variation of enhancement along the absorber column is
110 important for model prediction. The evaporation and condensation of water, the variations in
111 physical properties and heat of chemical reaction all play a vital role to provide reliable
112 model prediction. On the other hand, most CO₂ absorption took place in the bottom of the
113 absorber. In the work of Alatiqi *et al.* [10], a further steady-state model involving integrated
114 absorber and stripper columns was developed. The model is similarly rate-based with
115 different enhancement factors to estimate absorption and desorption rates. In the work of
116 Abu-Zahra *et al.* [11], a steady-state model was implemented in Aspen Plus[®] using
117 RADFRAC columns, to study the effects of chemical reaction and mass transfer on the
118 absorption process.

119

120 However, steady-state models are not particularly helpful to understand the impact of the
121 post-combustion capture plant on the operability of the power plant. For instance, what is the
122 response of post-combustion capture plant when the power plant is operating with a varying
123 load? Will flooding occur during transient conditions, such as start-up and shutdown
124 procedures? Therefore, a dynamic model is necessary to answer these questions. In Lawal *et*
125 *al.* [12], a dynamic model of absorber was developed using equilibrium-based approach in
126 Aspen Plus[®] and rate-based mass transfer in gPROMS[®]. They showed that the rate-based
127 approach gives better prediction than the equilibrium-based approach. Kvamsdal *et al.* [13]
128 also developed a dynamic model for an absorption column in gPROMS using rate-based
129 mass transfer approach. In this study, an enhancement factor is used to account for the impact
130 of chemical reactions. In Ziaili *et al.* [14], a dynamic model of stripper was created in Aspen
131 Custom Modeller (ACM) by using rate-based approach. Two operating strategies were
132 carried out in this study: reducing reboiler steam rate with and without adjusting the rich
133 solvent rate. By implementing the ratio of rich solvent rate to steam rate control, the lean
134 loading and temperature remains constant, as well as less response time for the system. The
135 rate-based dynamic model of the amine regeneration unit was also developed in Mores *et al.*

136 [7], with an enhancement factor to represent the influence of the reactions on the CO₂ mass
137 transfer.

138
139 However, these studies only looked at the individual unit (either absorber or stripper). Due to
140 the coupling effect between two columns linked together with a recycle loop, analysis of the
141 stand-alone columns is insufficient to understand the dynamics of the complete post-
142 combustion CO₂ capture process. Therefore, further studies are necessary to investigate the
143 performance of the complete recycling process through dynamic models. Lawal *et al.* [15]
144 carried out a study to compare the accuracy of dynamic models for stand-alone columns and
145 integrated columns using gPROMS[®]. The rate-based models assumed all reactions attained
146 equilibrium. The absorber and stripper units were linked together with heat exchanger. The
147 results showed that the integrated model predicted the temperature profile better than stand-
148 alone models. In Lawal *et al.* [16], a rate-based model was developed to analyse two
149 dynamic cases, including reducing power plant loading and increasing capture level set point
150 to 95%. They summarized that the CO₂ capture plant had a slower response than power plant.
151 They further explored how capture level affects the power plant loading and difficulties to
152 achieve a steady power plant output quickly.

153
154 All these simulation models, relating to chemical, fluid mechanic and thermodynamic laws,
155 require extensive knowledge of the underlying physics of the process. Even though they can
156 provide advanced features such as customizing component models for the application in
157 hand, there is still a limitation to carry out complicated simulations. For instance, it is
158 difficult to identify which underlying theory and assumption result in the rising uncertainties
159 of the simulation model. In addition, the solution of these simulators is very complex and
160 time consuming. Thus, data-driven “black-box” models should be employed as an alternative
161 to first principle models. In Zhou *et al.* [17], a model of the relationship between critical
162 parameters in post-combustion carbon capture was developed by applying multiple
163 regression. However, it is unable to represent the non-linear relationships among the
164 parameters and the selection of input variables strongly relies on the experts’ knowledge.
165 Zhou *et al.* [18] compared three modelling approaches: statistical model, artificial neural
166 network (ANN) model combined with sensitivity analysis (SA), and neuro-fuzzy model.
167 Sipocz *et al.* [19] has developed ANN model with sensitivity analysis for a chemical
168 absorption process, by exploring the relationships between inputs and outputs from data set of
169 integrated post-combustion CO₂ capture process. However, some previous studies pointed out

170 the disadvantages of single ANN model, such as over-fitting of the training data and poor
171 generalisation performance [20]. The combination of different neural network models would
172 overcome the mentioned shortcomings, thereby increasing the prediction accuracy [21, 22].
173 Bootstrap aggregated neural network [22] is used in this study to model the post-combustion
174 CO₂ capture with chemical absorption.

175
176
177

178 **3 Bootstrap aggregated neural networks**

179 Due to the limitations in training data and training algorithms, it is generally not possible to
180 obtain a perfect neural network model. For example, neural network training might be
181 trapped in a poor local minimum or the trained network might over fit noise in the training
182 data. Several techniques have been developed to improve neural network generalisation
183 capability, such as regularisation [23], early stopping [24], Bayesian learning [25], training
184 with both dynamic and static process data [26], and combining multiple networks [27-29]. In
185 training with regularisation, the magnitude of network weights is introduced as a penalty term
186 in the neural network training objective function with the purpose of avoiding unnecessarily
187 large network weights which usually leads to poor generalisation. In training with early
188 stopping, neural network performance on the testing data is continuously monitored during
189 the training process and the training process is terminated when the neural network prediction
190 errors on the testing data start to increase. Among these techniques, combining multiple
191 networks has been shown to be a very promising approach to improving model predictions on
192 unseen data.

193

194 Figure 2 shows a bootstrap aggregated neural network model [22], where several neural
195 network models are developed to model the same relationship and are then combined. These
196 individual networks can be multilayer feedforward neural networks, radial basis function
197 networks, or recurrent neural networks. In this study, the individual networks are single
198 hidden layer feedforward networks. In order for the combined network to give accurate
199 predictions, the individual networks should be different. These individual networks are
200 trained on bootstrap replications of the original training data [30]. These individual networks
201 can have different number of hidden neurons and their training start from different sets of
202 initial weights. Instead of selecting a “best” single neural network model among these
203 individual networks, these individual neural networks are combined together to improve

204 model accuracy and robustness. The terminology “bootstrap aggregation” is originated from
 205 “bagging predictors” introduced by Breiman in [31]. The overall output of the aggregated
 206 neural network is a weighted combination of the individual neural network outputs:

207

$$208 \quad f(X) = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i f_i(X) \quad (1)$$

209

210 where $f(X)$ is the aggregated neural network predictor, $f_i(X)$ is the i th neural network, w_i is the
 211 aggregating weight for combining the i th neural network, n is the number of neural networks
 212 to be combined, and X is a vector of neural network inputs. Since the individual neural
 213 networks are highly correlated, appropriate aggregating weights could be obtained through
 214 principal component regression [29]. Instead of using constant aggregating weights, the
 215 aggregating weights can also dynamically change with the model inputs [32, 33].

216

217 The reason that combing multiple models can improve model prediction accuracy is
 218 illustrated by Perrone and Cooper [34]. Suppose that N independent predictors are combined,
 219 then the combined predictor can reduce the mean squared prediction errors by a factor of N .
 220 Let the error of the i th model $f_i(x)$ be $\varepsilon_i = f(x) - f_i(x)$, where $f(x)$ is the true function to be
 221 approximated, the mean square error can be written as:

$$222 \quad MSE[f_i] = E[\varepsilon_i^2] \quad (2)$$

223 The average mean square error is therefore

$$224 \quad \overline{MSE} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N E[\varepsilon_i^2] \quad (3)$$

225 If the N models are combined through simple averaging, then

$$226 \quad f_{AV}(x) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N f_i(x) = f(x) - \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \varepsilon_i(x) \quad (4)$$

227 If we assume that the $\varepsilon_i(x)$ are mutually independent with zero mean, then the mean square
 228 error for $f_{AV}(x)$ can be calculated as:

$$229 \quad \begin{aligned} MSE[f_{AV}] &= E\left[\left(\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \varepsilon_i\right)^2\right] \\ 230 \quad &= \frac{1}{N^2} E\left[\sum_{i=1}^N \varepsilon_i^2\right] + \frac{1}{N^2} E\left[\sum_{i \neq j} \varepsilon_i \varepsilon_j\right] \\ 231 \quad &= \frac{1}{N} \overline{MSE} + \frac{1}{N^2} \sum_{i \neq j} E[\varepsilon_i] E[\varepsilon_j] \end{aligned}$$

232
$$= \frac{1}{N} \overline{MSE} \quad (5)$$

233

234 It can be seen from Eq(5) that combining N independent model can reduce the mean square
 235 error by N times. An implication of this result is that significant improvement in model
 236 prediction can be obtained if dissimilar models are combined. Zhang et al. [29] propose using
 237 principal component regression to combine neural networks where independent contributions
 238 from individual network predictions are combined.

239

240 Another advantage of bootstrap aggregated neural network is that model prediction
 241 confidence bounds can be calculated from individual network predictions [22]. The standard
 242 error of the i th predicted value is estimated as

243

244
$$\sigma_e = \left\{ \frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{b=1}^n [y(x_i; W^b) - y(x_i; \cdot)]^2 \right\}^{1/2} \quad (6)$$

245

246 where $y(x_i; \cdot) = \sum_{b=1}^n y(x_i; W^b) / n$ and n is the number of neural networks in an aggregated
 247 neural network. Assuming that the individual network prediction errors are normally
 248 distributed, the 95% prediction confidence bounds can be calculated as $y(x_i; \cdot) \pm 1.96\sigma_e$. A
 249 narrower confidence bound, i.e. smaller σ_e , indicates that the associated model prediction is
 250 more reliable. Thus, model prediction associated with a narrow prediction confidence bounds
 251 is preferred and is considered to be reliable. On the other hand, model prediction with a wide
 252 confidence bound is unreliable and should not be trusted.

253

254

255 **4 Modelling of CO₂ capture Process**

256 The CO₂ capture process considered here is through chemical absorption. A detailed first
 257 principle gPROMS dynamic model for absorber was developed in [12] and a gPROMS
 258 dynamic model for the whole process was developed in [15]. Simulators for the absorber and
 259 the whole process based on the first principle models were developed in gPROMS®.
 260 Simulated steady state and dynamic process operation data were generated using the
 261 simulators.

262

263 **4.1 Steady state model for absorber**

264 For the steady state model, only the absorber is modelled. Simulated steady state absorber
265 operation data using first principle model developed in [12] are shown in Figure 3. The
266 process variables selected as model input variables are inlet flue gas flow rate, CO₂
267 concentration in inlet flue gas, pressure of flue gas, temperature of flue gas, lean solvent flow
268 rate, MEA concentration and temperature of lean solvent. They are shown in plots (a) to (g)
269 respectively in Figure 3. CO₂ capture level, shown in plot (h) in Figure 3, is taken as the
270 model output variable. Considering that steady state data is usually not abundant in practice
271 as a process is usually operated in just a few steady states, a small number of data samples are
272 produced as shown in Figure 3.

273

274 The generated steady state data was split into training data (56%), testing data (24%), and
275 unseen validation data (20%). The data were scaled to zero mean and unit variance before
276 they were used for network training. A bootstrap aggregated neural network consisting of 30
277 individual single hidden layer feedforward networks was developed. For the development of
278 an individual network, a replication of the training and testing datasets was generated through
279 bootstrap re-sampling with replacement [30] and the network was developed on the bootstrap
280 replication. The number of hidden neurons in each neural network was determined through
281 cross validation. A number of neural networks with different numbers of hidden neurons
282 (between 3 and 30) were trained on the training data and tested on the testing data. The
283 network with the lowest mean squared errors (MSE) on the testing data was considered to
284 have the appropriate number of hidden neurons. Each network was trained using the
285 Levenberg-Marquardt optimisation algorithm [35] with regularisation and cross-validation
286 based “early-stopping”.

287

288 Figure 4 shows the number of hidden neurons in the individual neural networks. It can be
289 seen that the number of hidden neurons vary a lot with different training and testing data sets.
290 This indicate that the “best” neural network structure depends on the model building data and
291 slight variation in the model building data can lead to different neural network structure. The
292 individual networks are then combined through averaging in this study.

293

294 Figure 5 shows the MSE values on training and testing data (top) and on unseen validation
295 data (bottom) from the 30 different individual neural networks. It is clearly seen that single
296 neural networks give inconsistent performance on the model building data (training and

297 testing data) and on the unseen validation data. For instance, the 14th and 17th networks are
298 among the few best networks in terms of performance on the model building data, but their
299 performance on the unseen validation data is not among the best. The non-robustness of
300 single neural networks is clearly indicated by the difference in performance of individual
301 neural networks on model building data and unseen validation data.

302

303 Figure 6 shows the MSE values on training and testing data (top) and on unseen validation
304 data (bottom) from aggregated neural networks with different numbers of constituent
305 networks. In Figure 6, the first bar in each plot represents the first single neural network
306 shown in Figure 5, the second bar represents combining the first two single neural networks,
307 and the last (30th) bar represents combining all the 30 networks. Figure 6 clearly indicates
308 that the bootstrap aggregated neural networks give consistent performance on the model
309 building data and on the unseen validation data. It can be seen from Figure 6 that as more
310 networks are combined, the MSE values on both model building data and unseen validation
311 data decrease and converge to stable values. Furthermore, bootstrap aggregated neural
312 networks give much more accurate prediction performance than most of the individual
313 networks. This demonstrates that bootstrap aggregated neural networks can give reliable and
314 accurate prediction performance than single neural networks.

315

316 Figure 7 shows the actual values, neural network model predictions, and 95% confidence
317 bounds of CO₂ capture level on the unseen validation data. Clearly, the predictions by using
318 aggregated neural networks are close to the actual values. The prediction confidence bounds
319 offer extra information to the process operators on the prediction reliability. A prediction with
320 narrow prediction confidence bounds is considered to be reliable while, on the other hand, a
321 prediction with wide prediction confidence bounds is considered to be unreliable. Figure 7
322 shows that the model prediction confidence bounds are quite narrow for almost all samples,
323 except for 2nd, 10th, 11th, and 12th samples. Therefore, extra care needs to be taken when using
324 predictions for these samples.

325

326 **4.2 Dynamic model for the whole process**

327

328 Dynamic simulation of the whole process was carried out using the first principle model
329 developed in [15] and the simulated process operation data were sampled using a sampling

330 time of 5s. The generated data were split into training data (56%), testing data (24%), and
331 unseen validation data (20%). The data were scaled to zero mean and unit variance before
332 they were used for neural network training. Two multi-inputs single output (MISO) first order
333 dynamic nonlinear models were developed for CO₂ capture level and CO₂ capture rate using
334 bootstrap aggregated neural networks. The developed dynamic model is of the following
335 form:

$$336 \quad y(t) = f(y(t-1), u_1(t-1), u_2(t-1), \dots, u_8(t-1)) \quad (3)$$

338 where y represents CO₂ capture level or CO₂ capture rate, u_1 to u_8 are, respectively, inlet gas
339 flow rate, CO₂ concentration in inlet flue gas, inlet gas temperature, inlet gas pressure, MEA
340 circulation rate, lean loading, lean solution temperature, and reboiler temperature.
341

342 Each of the nonlinear dynamic models is developed using a bootstrap aggregated neural
343 network consisting of 30 individual neural networks. These individual neural networks are
344 single hidden layer feedforward neural networks. The number of hidden neurons in each
345 network was determined through cross validation. Each network was trained using the
346 Levenberg-Marquardt optimisation algorithm [35] with regularisation and cross-validation
347 based “early-stopping”.
348

349 Figure 8 shows the MSE values on model building (training and testing) data (top) and
350 unseen validation data (bottom) from individual neural networks. It can be seen from Figure
351 8 that the individual networks give various prediction performance. Furthermore, their
352 performance on the training and testing data is not consistent with that on the unseen
353 validation data. For example, network 15 is among the worst performing networks on the
354 training and testing data. However, it offers the best performance on the unseen data. This
355 clearly demonstrates the non-robust nature of single neural networks.
356

357 Figure 9 shows the MSE values on model building data (top) and unseen validation data
358 (bottom) from different aggregated neural networks with different number of constituent
359 neural networks. In Figure 9, the horizontal axes represent the number of individual networks
360 contained in an aggregated neural network. The first bar in Figure 9 represents the first
361 individual neural network shown in Figure 8 and second bar in Figure 9 represents combining
362

363 the first two individual networks shown in Figure 8. The last bar in Figure 9 represents
364 combining all the 30 neural networks. It can be seen from Figure 9 that bootstrap aggregated
365 neural networks give much more consistent performance on model building data and unseen
366 validation data. The MSE values of aggregated neural networks generally decrease as more
367 networks are combined and converge to stable levels. This occurs in both the model building
368 and unseen validation data sets. In addition to robustness, Figure 9 also indicates that
369 aggregated neural networks give more accurate prediction performance than individual neural
370 networks.

371

372 Figure 10 shows the one-step-ahead predictions and multi-step-ahead predictions of CO₂
373 capture rate using aggregated neural networks. In Figure 10, the solid curve is the actual CO₂
374 capture rate, the dashed curve is the one-step-ahead prediction, and the dash dotted curve is
375 multi-step-ahead prediction. In calculating one-step-ahead predictions, the measured process
376 output (CO₂ capture level or CO₂ capture rate) at sampling time t is used as neural network
377 model input to predict the process output at sampling time $t+1$. In calculating multi-step-
378 ahead predictions, the neural network model predicted process output at sampling time t is
379 used as neural network model input to predict the process output at sampling time $t+1$.
380 Accurate multi-step-ahead predictions are hence much more difficult to achieve than accurate
381 one-step-ahead predictions because prediction errors at the previous sampling times are
382 introduced in the model inputs and this could further increase the model prediction errors at
383 future sampling times. It can be clearly seen from Figure 10 that the predictions are very
384 close to the actual values, except for a few samples where the CO₂ capture rates are very high
385 or very low. The slightly larger prediction errors at these samples are likely due to the fact
386 that training data is scarce at these extreme operating points. The accurate multi-step-ahead
387 predictions are very encouraging indicating that the model has captured the underlying
388 dynamics of the process. The long range predictions are very accurate till about 90 step-ahead
389 predictions. Such accurate long range predictions are usually more than sufficient for model
390 predictive control and real-time optimisation applications.

391

392 The neural network dynamic model for CO₂ capture level is also very accurate as shown in
393 Figure 11. In Figure 11, the solid curve is the actual CO₂ capture level, the dashed curve is the
394 one-step-ahead prediction, and the dash dotted curve is multi-step-ahead prediction. It can be
395 seen from Figure 11 that the long range predictions are accurate until 82-steps-ahead
396 predictions. Again such long prediction horizon is generally adequate for many applications

397 such as model predictive control and real-time optimisations, which will be investigated in
398 future studies.

399

400 **5. Conclusions**

401

402 The neural network steady state and dynamic models of CO₂ capture rate and CO₂ capture
403 level are developed and they are shown to be able to give accurate predictions. The
404 aggregated neural networks model is found to be a useful tool to model the post-combustion
405 CO₂ capture process and is more accurate and reliable than the traditional neural network
406 models. Bootstrap aggregated neural networks give consistent performance on the model
407 building data and unseen validation data. Furthermore, bootstrap aggregated neural networks
408 can give model prediction confidence bounds, which are very useful measures on the
409 prediction reliability and can be incorporated in the optimisation framework to give reliable
410 optimisation results [36]. Reliable optimisation of the CO₂ capture process using the
411 developed neural network models will be studied in the future.

412

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414

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419

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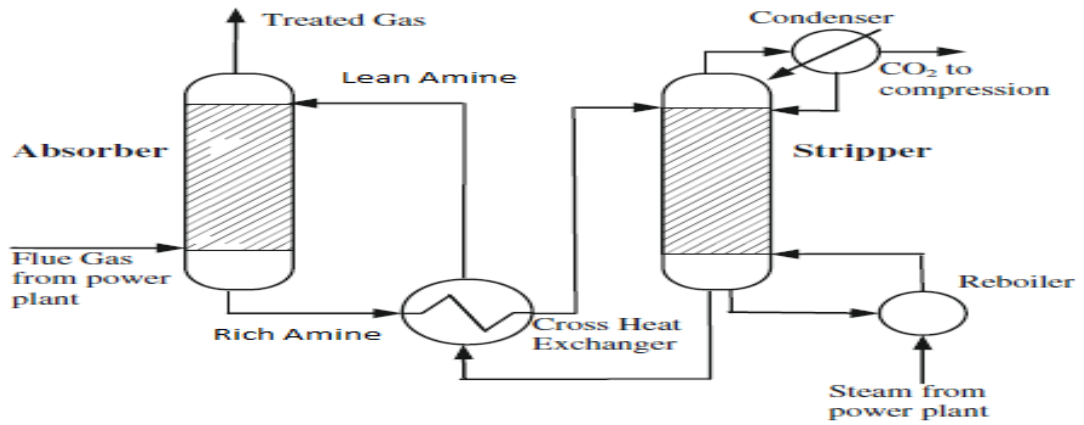
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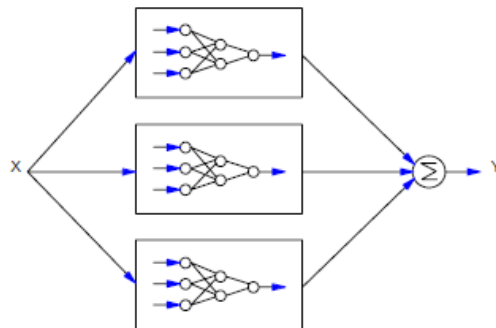
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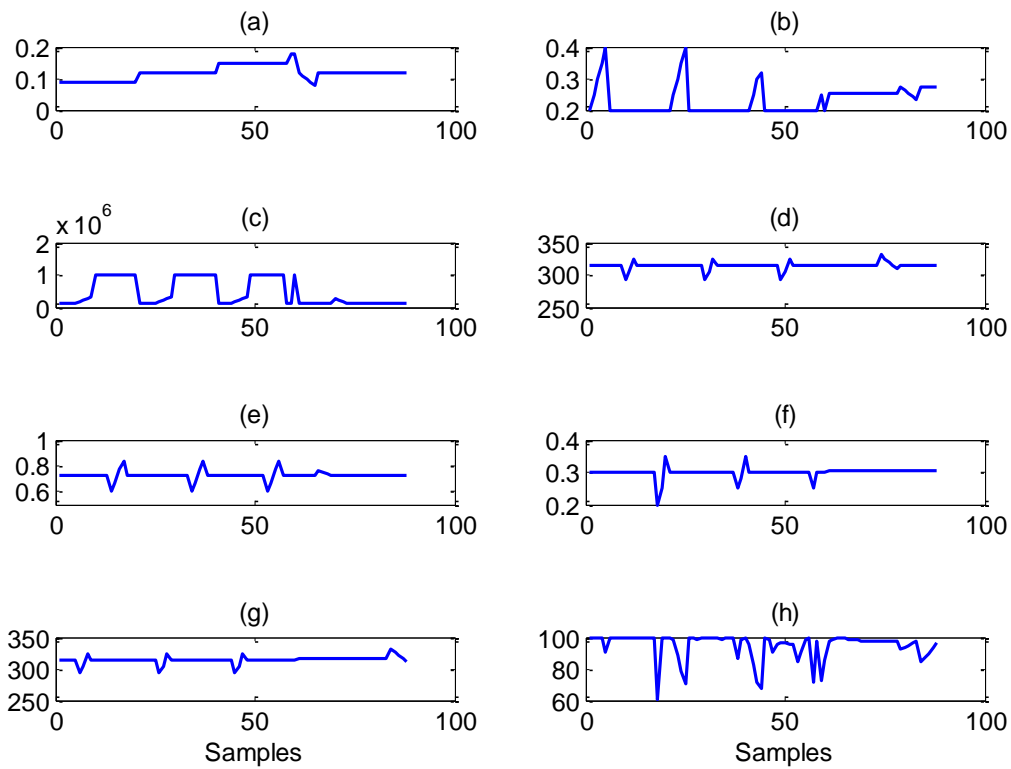
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Figure 1. Simplified process flow diagram of chemical absorption process for post-combustion capture [8]



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Figure 2. A bootstrap aggregated neural network



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530 Figure 3. Steady state absorber operation data: (a). inlet flue gas flow rate (kg/s); (b). CO₂

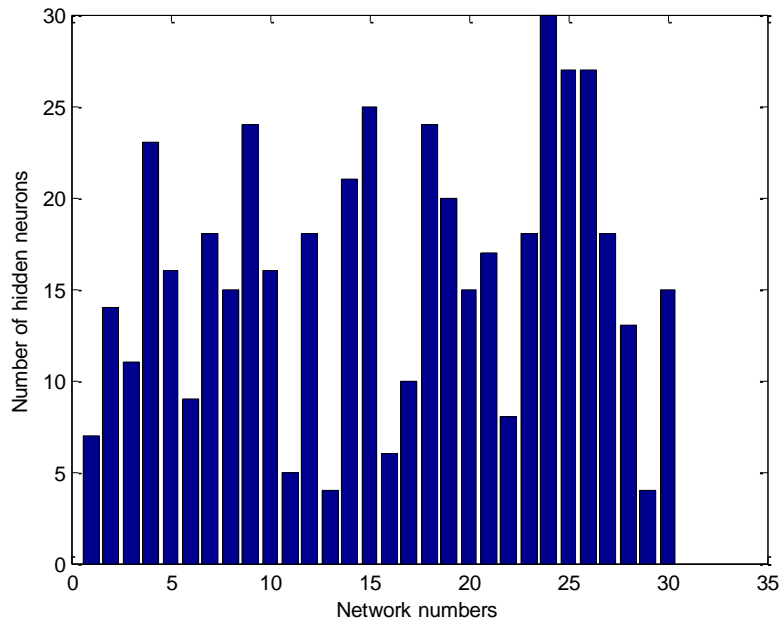
531 concentration in inlet flue gas (mass fraction); (c). pressure of flue gas (Pa); (d). temperature

532 of flue gas (K); (e). lean solvent flow rate (kg/s); (f). MEA concentration (mass fraction); (g).

533 temperature of lean solvent (K); (h). CO₂ capture level (%)

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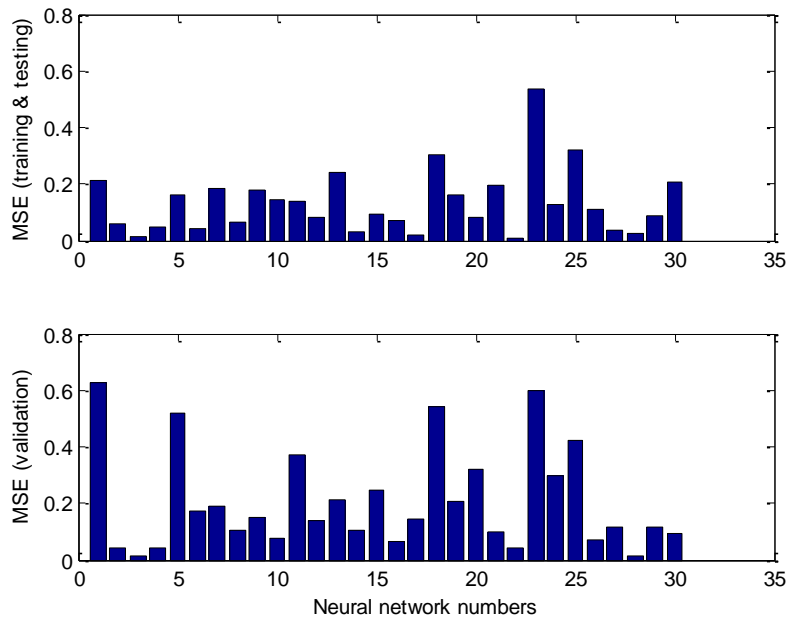
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Figure 4. Number of hidden neurons in individual neural networks

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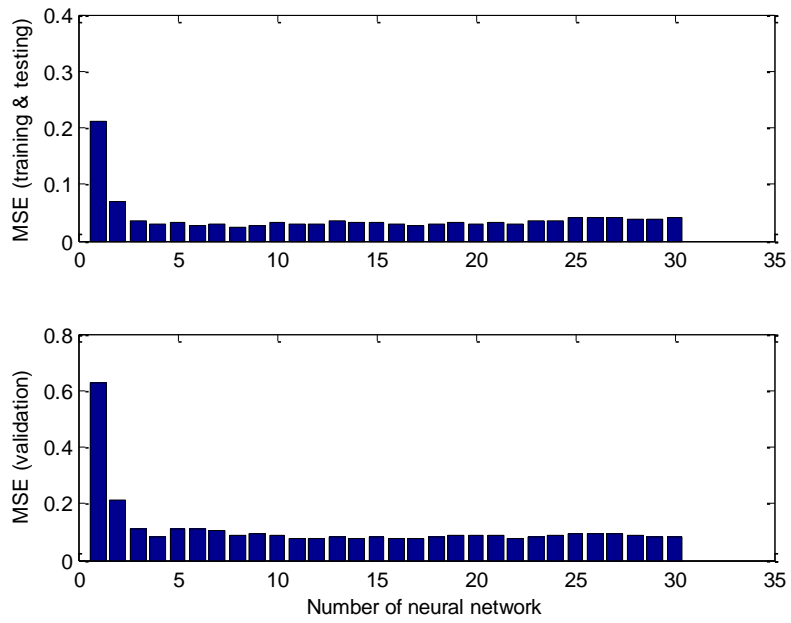


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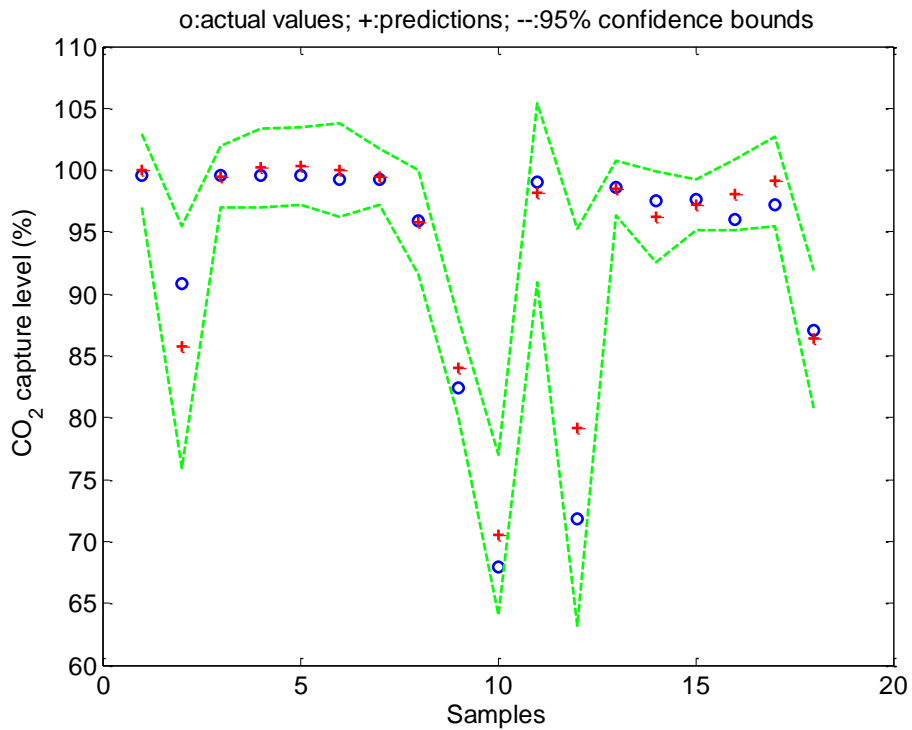
Figure 5. MSE of CO₂ capture level for individual neural networks

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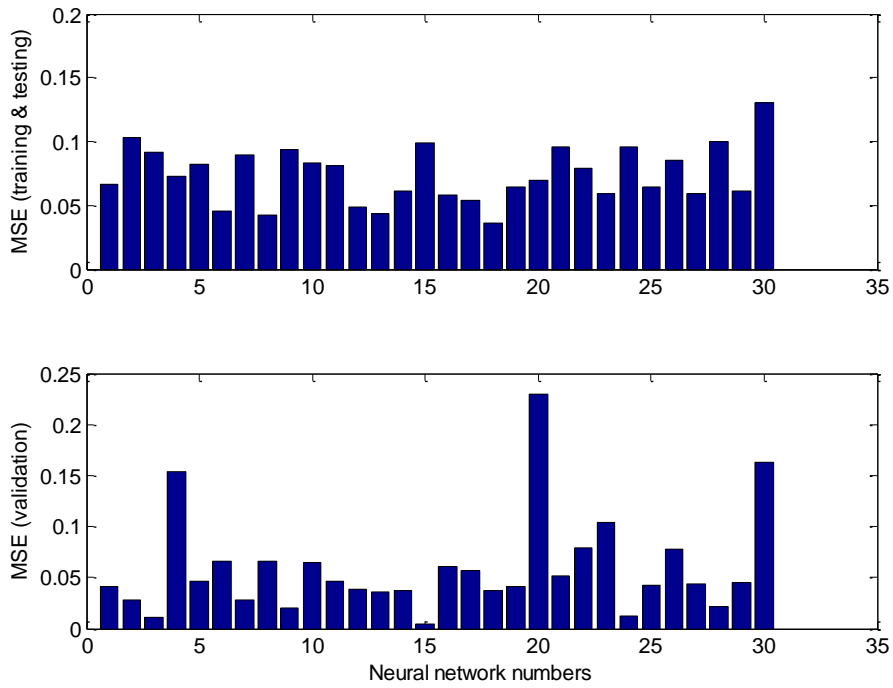
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Figure 6. MSE of CO₂ capture level for aggregated neural networks



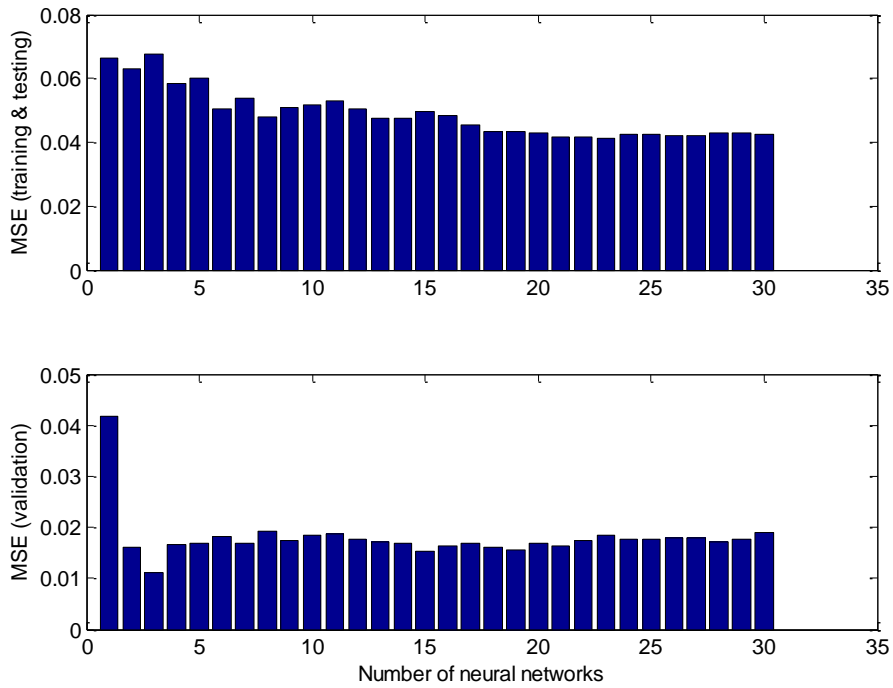
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554 Figure 7. Steady state model predictions for CO₂ capture level on unseen validation data



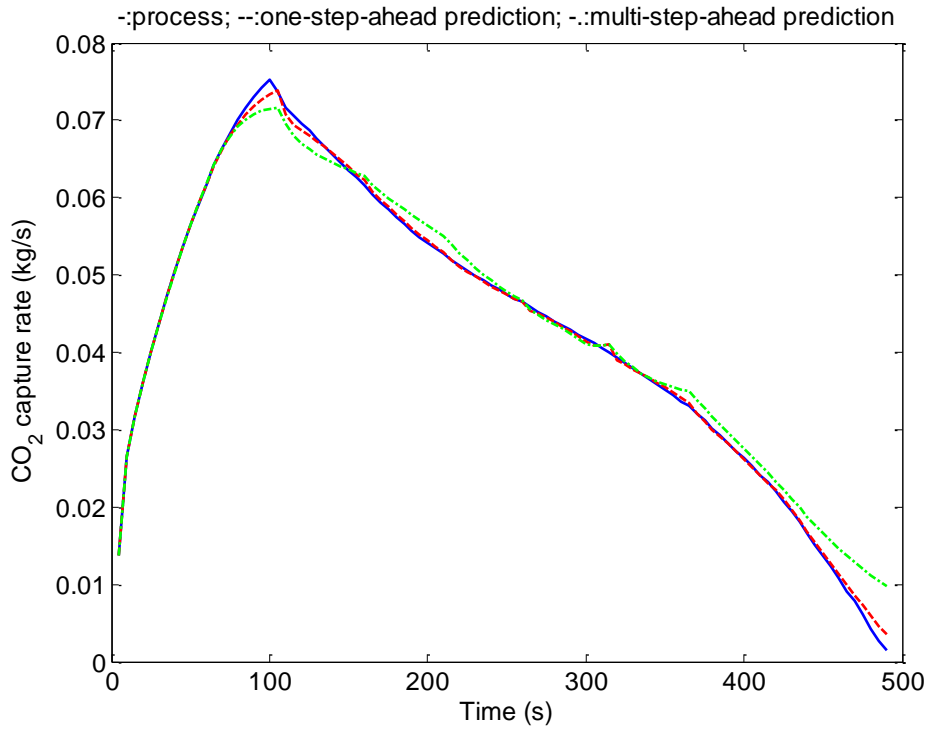
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Figure 8. MSE of CO₂ capture rate for individual neural networks



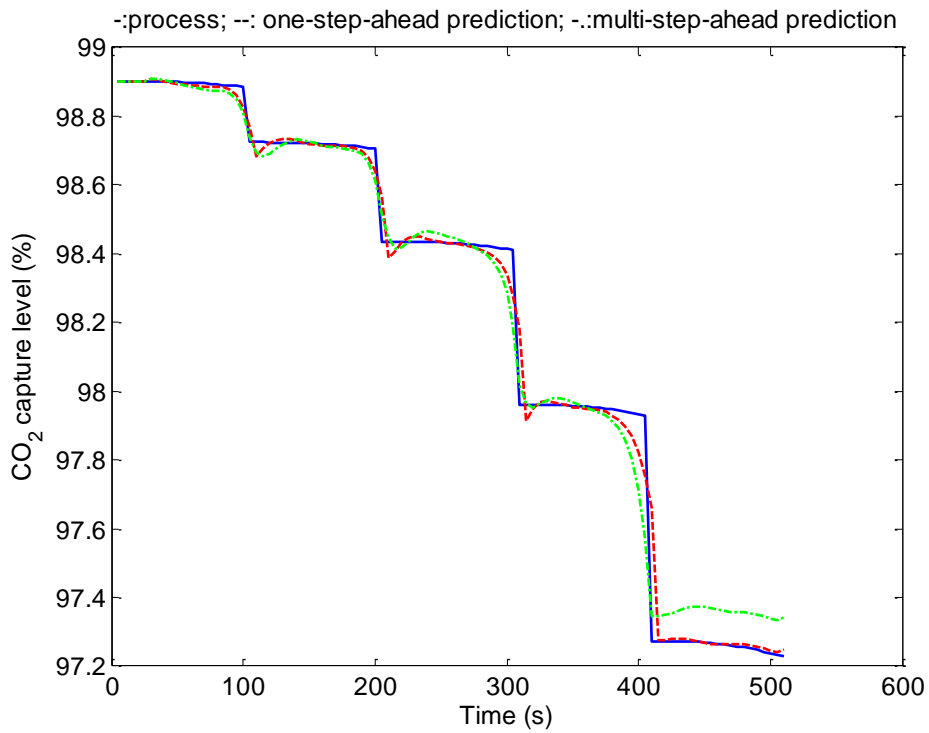
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Figure 9. MSE of CO₂ capture rate for aggregated bootstrap neural networks



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Figure 10. Dynamic model prediction of CO₂ capture rate



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Figure 11. Dynamic model prediction of CO₂ capture level