

EEG P300 wave detection using Emotiv EPOC+: Effects of matrix size, flash duration, and colors

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Objective: The P300 signal is an electroencephalography (EEG) positive deflection observed 300 ms to 600 ms after an infrequent, but expected, stimulus is presented to a subject. The aim of this study was to investigate the capability of Emotiv EPOC+ headset to capture and record the P300 wave. Moreover, the effects of using different matrix sizes, flash duration, and colors were studied.

Methods: Participants attended to one cell of either 6x6 or 3x3 matrix while the rows and columns flashed randomly at different duration (100 ms or 175 ms). The EEG signals were sent wirelessly to OpenViBE software, which is used to run the P300 speller.

Results: The results provide evidence of capability of the Emotiv EPOC+ headset to detect the P300 signals from two channels, O1 and O2. In addition, when the matrix size increases, the P300 amplitude increases. The results also show that longer flash duration resulted in larger P300 amplitude. Also, the effect of using colored matrix was clear on the O2 channel. Furthermore, results show that participants reached accuracy above 70% after three to four training sessions.

Conclusion: The results confirmed the capability of the Emotiv EPOC+ headset for detecting P300 signals. In addition, matrix size, flash duration, and colors can affect the P300 speller performance.

Significance: Such an affordable and portable headset could be utilized to control P300-based BCI or other BCI systems especially for the out-of-the-lab applications.

1 EEG P300 Wave Detection Using Emotiv 2 EPOC+: Effects of Matrix Size, Flash 3 Duration, and Colors

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12 ABSTRACT

13 Objective: The P300 signal is an electroencephalography (EEG) positive deflection observed 300 ms to
14 600 ms after an infrequent, but expected, stimulus is presented to a subject. The aim of this study was to
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20 to detect the P300 signals from two channels, O1 and O2. In addition, when the matrix size increases,
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22 amplitude. Also, the effect of using colored matrix was clear on the O2 channel. Furthermore, results
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27 especially for the out-of-the-lab applications.

28 INTRODUCTION

29 A brain-computer interface (BCI) is a system used to provide a direct form of communication between a
30 brain and an external device (Wolpaw et al., 2002). For patients with devastating neuromuscular disorders
31 such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), brainstem stroke and spinal cord injury, the BCI system
32 may someday restore the function of the muscular system. Many different methods have been used for
33 observing changes in brain activity through noninvasive means. These include electroencephalography
34 (EEG), magnetoencephalography (MEG), positron emission tomography (PET), functional magnetic
35 resonance imaging (fMRI), and optical imaging (Vallabhaneni et al., 2005; Shinkareva et al., 2008; Lal
36 et al., 2005). Among these methods, EEG is considered as the most attractive way to record brain signals
37 due to its simplicity and affordability.

38 Scalp-recorded electroencephalography (EEG) is a non-invasive technique used to monitor and record
39 brain activity (Farwell and Donchin, 1988; Allison et al., 2007). Today, incredibly powerful EEG headsets
40 are available on the market such as g.Tech, Biosemi ActiveTwo, etc. (Nijboer et al., 2015; Noor, 2010).
41 However, few of them are feasible for daily use due to size, price, or difficulty of use. Compared to
42 other commercial EEG recording devices available on the market, the Emotiv EPOC+ headset is the most
43 usable low-cost EEG device according to a comparative study that has been done by Stamps and Hamam
44 (Stamps and Hamam, 2010). The Emotiv headset is designed mainly to allow the user to play video games
45 by merely thinking. Today, much research has utilized the Emotiv headset in different BCI applications.

46 In this paper, we used the Emotiv EPOC+ headset to investigate one of the BCI applications known as
47 P300 speller.

48 With the P300 speller, users can send messages or commands without using any voluntary muscles. In
49 other words, the P300 speller is a communication tool for those who cannot convey their emotions and
50 thoughts by using the conventional methods due to the damage of the region in the brain that is responsible
51 for communication tasks. The P300 wave is the most important and studied component of event-related
52 potentials (ERPs). It can be acquired invasively by implanting ECoG electrodes or non-invasively by
53 placing EEG electrodes around the parietal, central, or occipital lobe (Brunner et al., 2011; Gandhi, 2014).
54 Most often, P300 waves are recorded from central or parietal lobe. However, for Emotiv headset users,
55 the P300 waves are recorded from the occipital lobe since Emotiv system does not provide central or
56 parietal electrodes. And there are by far more P300 studies that use systems other than Emotiv.

57 The P300 is observed in an EEG as a significant positive peak 300 ms to 600 ms after an infrequent, but
58 expected, stimulus is presented to a subject. In 1988, Farwell and Donchin introduced the P300 wave and
59 proposed the P300 matrix speller (Farwell and Donchin, 1988). The conventional P300 speller paradigm
60 is represented by a 6x6 matrix of alphanumeric characters. These characters are intensified in rows and
61 columns in a random sequence. The user is instructed to focus his/her attention to the desired character
62 he/she wishes to spell. To help the user concentrate on the target character, the user is asked to count
63 mentally each time the row or column containing the target letter flashes. The flash of the target row and
64 column that have the desired character elicits the P300 signal. The researchers have developed P300-BCI
65 systems other than the visual P300- BCI such as auditory and tactile P300-BCIs (Furdea et al., 2009;
66 Brouwer and Van Erp, 2010).

67

68 **SYSTEM DESIGN AND METHOD**

69 **0.1 Participants**

70 Five healthy subjects, four males and one female, aged 25-32, mean 24, participated in the study. All
71 subjects' native language was Arabic, and they were familiar with the alphanumeric displayed during
72 the experiment. None of the subjects had previous BCI experience before or had a history of neurological
73 diseases such as ALS or spinal cord injury. All participants gave informed consent prior the experiment.

74 **0.2 Emotiv EPOC+ Headset**

75 Emotiv EPOC+ headset is an affordable and low-cost consumer-grade EEG device used to capture the
76 EEG from the brain and send it wirelessly to a computer via a USB dongle. The Emotiv EPOC+ has 14
77 electrodes (AF3, AF4, F3, F4, FC5, FC6, F7, F8, T7, T8, P7, P8, O1, O2) plus two standard reference
78 electrodes (CMS, DRL) arranged according to the 10-20 international electrode system. The Emotiv
79 EPOC+ connects to the computer wirelessly and has considerable lithium-based battery autonomy of 12
80 hours. Moreover, the Emotiv EPOC+ headset has a gyroscope which provides information about head
81 movements. In this study, the EEG signals were recorded from all 14 electrodes with sampling rate at 128
82 Hz.

83 **0.3 OpenViBE Scenarios**

84 The main purpose of the OpenViBE platform is to design different scenarios for BCI applications such
85 as P300 speller (Renard et al., 2010). In this study, we used three different pre-defined scenarios with
86 some modifications. The first scenario "P300 speller acquisition" was used as a first step to collect some
87 training data. These data will later be used to train the linear discriminant analysis (LDA) classifier for the
88 online scenario. In this scenario, we adjusted the intensification configurations used for the P300 speller
89 such as number of rows, columns, repetitions, and trials. The number of trials and repetitions were fixed
90 at 12 and 10, respectively. However, the number of rows and columns were changed to create either a 3x3
91 or 6x6 matrix. In addition, the flash duration was changed to be 100 ms or 175 ms.

92 The second scenario was used to train the LDA classifier. In this scenario, the EEG data were bandpass-
93 filtered between 0.1 and 30 Hz. Next, the EEG signals were segmented into target and non-targets
94 segments. The target and non-target segments were averaged to increase the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR).
95 The averaged signals then were converted to feature vectors to train the LDA classifier. The LDA classifier
96 was trained with k-fold cross validation which gives an estimation of the classifier accuracy. The idea of
97 the k-fold test is to split the data into training and testing sets then the classification algorithm is trained

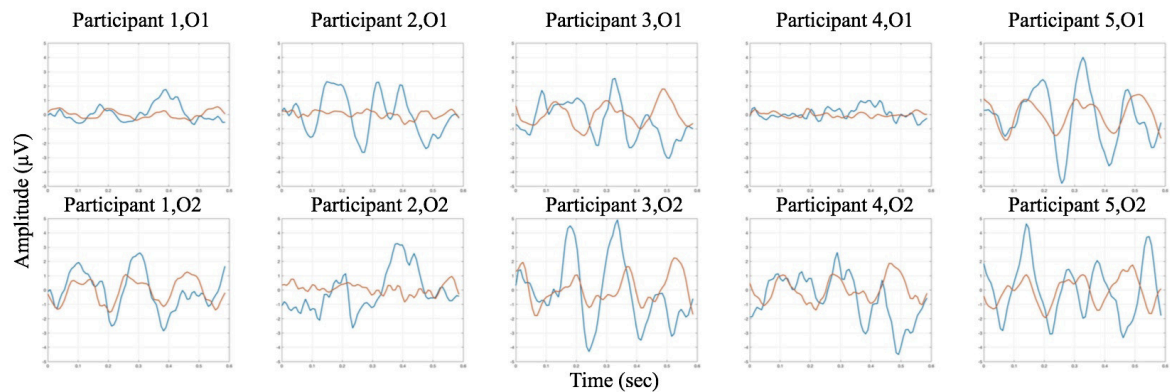


Figure 1. Target (blue) and non-target (red) waveforms versus time at O1 (first row) and O2 (second row) average over 240 trials for target letters and 1200 trials for non-target letters. Each plot is for 6x6 matrix and 100 ms flash duration. For each plot, x-axis represents time (ms) and y-axis represents amplitude (μV). The time length in each plot is 600 ms and the amplitude is $5\mu\text{V}$.

98 on the training sets and then we evaluate the algorithm on the testing sets (Bishop, 2006). The testing is
 99 repeated k times (we selected $k=20$ in this study), and then the accuracies are averaged over the different
 100 partitions. The accuracy here gives a good prediction of how the classification algorithm will work on the
 101 online performance.

102 The last scenario implemented in this study was the online scenario. This scenario allows the subject to
 103 spell some letters or numbers. Moreover, visual feedback was provided after each trail to the subject. If
 104 the results are not good enough, the EEG data recorded in this scenario were sent to the second scenario
 105 to train the LDA classifier again.

106 0.4 Data Acquisition

107 The EEG signals were acquired using Emotiv EPOC+ headset from all 14 channels according to the
 108 extended 10-20 international system. The EEG signals were recorded and sent to the OpenViBE software
 109 wirelessly via a USB dongle. The EEG signals were sampled at 128 Hz. The user was seated in front
 110 of a computer screen. A 6x6 or 3x3 matrix size was presented to the user during the experiment. The
 111 users were instructed to focus their attention to the letter they wished to spell. In addition, the users were
 112 asked to relax and avoid unnecessary movements. A few drops of saline liquid were applied to wet the
 113 sensors and reduce the electrodes impedance. The contact quality was checked through Emotiv Xavier
 114 SDK before starting the acquisition scenario.

115 1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

116 1.1 Most Active Channels

117 One of the aims of this research is to reduce the number of channels employed in the study and use only
 118 the most effective channels. Some studies have shown that using a large number of channels to acquire
 119 the brain signals is a way to increase the P300 speller accuracy (Colwell et al., 2014). However, utilizing
 120 a large number of channels increases the system cost and setup time. Further analysis has been done by
 121 using EEGLab toolbox and the result is shown in Figure 2.

122 Figure 2 shows the topographic distribution of average potential at the specified latencies (300 ms, 328
 123 ms, 430 ms, 500 ms, 560 ms, 600 ms). As it can be seen in Figure 2, the most active channels (in red) are
 124 located on the back of the brain, which are O1 and O2 channels. In other words, O1 and O2 channels
 125 contain the strongest amplitude EEG of those provided by Emotiv, even though central and parietal are
 126 usually found to have the strongest P300s.

127 Figure 1 provides a clear evidence of the capability of Emotiv EPOC+ headset to detect the P300 signal.
 128 The target waves (in blue) are remarkably distinguishable from the non-target wave (in red) for most
 129 subjects. Clearly, participant 2 (2nd column) respond weakly to the visual stimulus, where the amplitude
 130 signal generated from O1 channel is $1.76\mu\text{V}$ and the latency is 390 ms. In addition, the amplitude signal
 131 generated from O2 channel is $1\mu\text{V}$ and the latency is 429.7 ms. In contrast, the response of participant 5

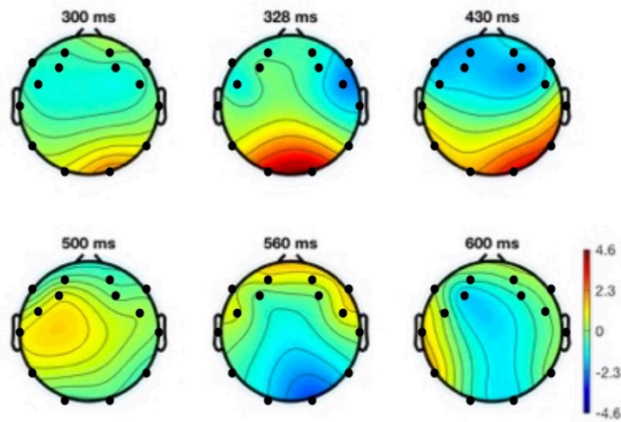


Figure 2. The distribution of the event-related potentials (ERPs) over the scalp of participant 1 at different times after a target visual stimulation. Each dot denotes an EEG sensor.

132 (5th column) to the visual stimulus was the strongest response compared to other participants from both
 133 channels (O1 and O2), where the amplitude signals are $4.01 \mu\text{V}$ and $4.91 \mu\text{V}$, respectively.

134 1.2 Effects of Matrix Size

135 We studied the impact of using different matrix size (6x6 and 3x3) on the P300 amplitude and the online
 136 accuracy. Previous studies have shown that when the probability of the occurrence of the desired character
 137 (the target) decreases, the P300 amplitude increases, and vice versa (Sellers et al., 2006). In a 6x6 matrix,
 138 the probability of the occurrence of the target character is 5.56%, while in a 3x3 matrix the probability of
 139 the occurrence of the target character is 22.22%.

140 Table 1 presents the P300 amplitude obtained from O1 and O2 channels for all the participants where
 141 the flash duration is 100 ms. It can be seen that the P300 amplitudes are larger for 6x6 matrix for all
 142 the participants. These findings are similar to other results from different studies. Allison et al., did an
 143 experiment to assess the effect of three different matrix size (4x4, 8x8, and 12x12) on the P300 speller
 144 performance (Allison and Pineda, 2003). The results showed that larger matrix size produced larger P300
 145 amplitude. In another study [23], the researchers tested two different matrix sizes (3x3 and 6x6). They
 146 found that the P300 amplitude was greater for the 6x6 matrix and the accuracy increased when the matrix
 147 size increased.

148 Figure 3 shows the averaged online accuracy for all participants across six sessions when 6x6 and 3x3
 149 matrix size presented and the flash duration is 100 ms. The classification accuracy of all participants
 150 is increased when a 6x6 matrix is presented. Participants 1, 2, and 5 were able to control the speller
 151 with 90% accuracy after four training sessions. Participant 4 was able to spell 6 letters correctly out of
 152 10 after three training sessions. The lowest performance was obtained by participant 3 where he could
 153 spell 5 letters after five training sessions. The performance of the participants was lower for 3x3 matrix
 154 size. Participants 1 and 2 reached an accuracy of 70% and 80%, respectively, after 4 training sessions.

Table 1. EEG amplitudes at O1 and O2 averaged over 240 target letter trials and 1200 non-target trials for 6x6 and averaged over 240 target letter trials and 480 non-target trials for 3x3 matrix sizes. The flash duration is 100 ms.

Participants	O1 amplitude (μV)		O2 amplitude (μV)	
	6x6	3x3	6x6	3x3
1	2.28	1.96	3.25	3.23
2	1.76	0.35	1.0	0.35
3	2.54	1.60	1.85	1.31
4	2.60	1.54	3.74	1.63
5	4.01	2.13	4.91	1.72

155 Participant 4 could not spell any letter in session 5 and the highest accuracy was 20% after 3 training sessions. Participant 1 reached 50% after just one training session.

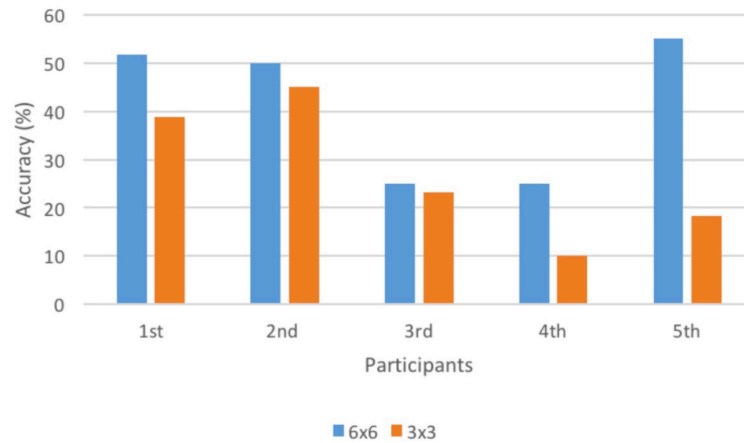


Figure 3. The average online accuracy for all participants for different matrix size 6x6 and 3x3 and flash duration 100 ms.

156

157 1.3 Effects of Flash Duration

158 The effect of the flash duration was studied in this research. The flash duration was manipulated in this
 159 study (either 100 ms or 175 ms) while the no flash duration was fixed at 175 ms. Table 2 presents the
 160 averaged EEG amplitudes at O1 and O2 for participants 3 and 4 at different flash duration (100 ms and
 161 175 ms). The P300 amplitudes are increased with longer inter-stimulus interval (ISI) for both versions of
 162 the matrix size (except amplitude obtained from O1 channel for participant 4 in 6x6 matrix). Lawrence
 163 et al. reported that longer ISI produces larger P300 amplitude (Farwell and Donchin, 1988). Moreover,
 164 six adults participated in a study examining the effect of the stimulus rate (target to target interval) [24].
 165 Four different ISI were tested (31.25 ms, 62.5 ms, 125 ms, and 250 ms). The results showed that the P300
 166 amplitude is increased with larger ISI.

167 Figure 4 shows the average online accuracies for both participants 3 and 4. The results show that the
 168 ISI does impact the performance of the participants. In both participants, the online performance was
 169 better for shorter ISI. In other words, the online accuracy increased as ISI decreased. For 100 ms flash
 170 duration, participant 3 reached an average accuracy of 23.33%, but this accuracy dropped to 16.67% with
 171 175 ms flash duration. Participant 4 as well has better performance with 100 ms flash duration (accuracy
 172 of 25%) than 175 ms flash duration (accuracy of 23.33%).

173 These results are similar to the results in (McFarland et al., 2011; Sellers et al., 2006). In contrast, there



Figure 4. This figure illustrates the average online accuracies for participants 3 and 4 for different matrix sizes: 6x6 (a) and 3x3 (b).

Table 2. A comparison of using different flash duration (100 ms, 175 ms) on the EEG amplitudes for participants 3 and 4. The EEG amplitudes at O1 and O2 averaged over 240 target letter trials and 1200 non-target trials.

Participants	O1 amplitude (μV)				O2 amplitude (μV)			
	6x6		3x3		6x6		3x3	
	100 ms	175 ms	100 ms	175 ms	100 ms	175 ms	100 ms	175 ms
3	2.54	2.93	1.60	2.48	1.60	2.48	1.31	3.33
4	2.60	1.94	1.54	1.56	1.54	1.56	1.63	3.62

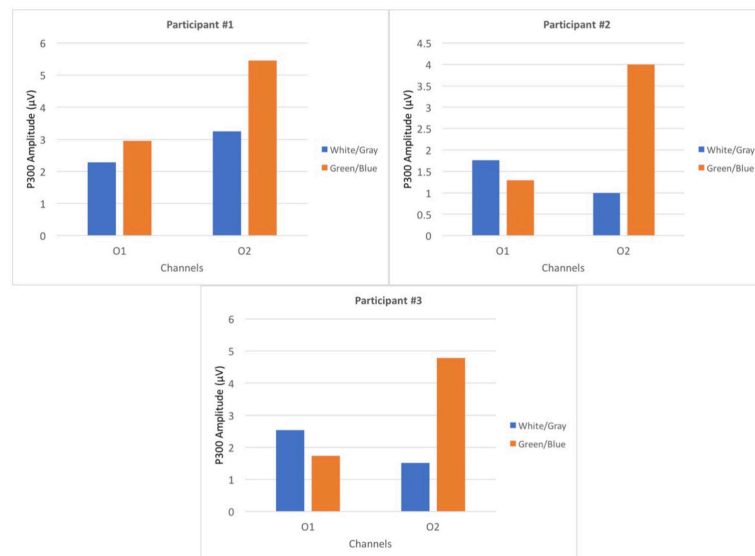


Figure 5. The P300 amplitudes for participants 1, 2, and 3 when using a conventional (white/gray) and colored (green/blue) P300-BCI speller paradigm.

174 are other studies have found that higher accuracy rate can be achieved with longer ISI, as in (Farwell and
 175 Donchin, 1988). As reported in (McFarland et al., 2011), the reasons behind this difference in findings
 176 between studies are unclear.

177 1.4 Effects of Using Colored Matrix

178 Providing a suitable and quiet environment helps the user using the P300 speller more effectively. One of
 179 the factors that makes the user feel relaxed during using P300 speller system is the color of the matrix. The
 180 colors have different wavelengths which affect our brain, especially the visual cortex. Some researchers
 181 have found that the colors that have cool shades such as green and blue can make us feel relaxed and aid
 182 our concentration. The current study investigated the impact of using colored matrix on the amplitude
 183 of the P300 wave. Participants 1, 2 and 3 were invited to use P300 speller system with colored matrix
 184 instead of a conventional P300 speller system which presents white/gray matrix to the user.

185 Figure 5 shows the P300 amplitudes for participants 1, 2, and 3 when using a conventional (white/gray) and
 186 colored (green/blue) P300-BCI speller paradigm. As mentioned previously, the most effective channels
 187 in the P300-BCI system are located on the occipital lobe of the brain which are O1 and O2 channels,
 188 so we tested the effect of the colored (green/blue) matrix on the P300 signals obtained from these two
 189 channels. Participants 2 and 3 produced higher P300 amplitudes from O1 channel when a white/gray
 190 matrix was presented to them during the experiment. In contrast, the P300 amplitude for participant 1
 191 from O1 channel was higher under the green/blue condition (colored matrix). This fluctuation in the
 192 results suggests that the effect of using a colored matrix is unclear and can be different from one person to
 193 another.

194 Various studies have investigated which part of the brain has the function of colors recognition. The
 195 results show that color processing is associated with the right hemisphere (Barnett, 2008; Sasaki et al.,

2007). Our results in Figure 5 suggest that the O2 channel, which is located on the right hemisphere, involved in color processing. For all the participants, the P300 amplitudes obtained from O2 channel are higher under the green/blue condition than under the white/gray condition. At the end of the experiments, all the participants reported that using a colored matrix (green/blue) was more comfortable for their eyes and made them focus and concentrate on the desired characters more than using a conventional matrix (white/gray).

202 2 CONCLUSION

203 BCI applications, such as P300-BCI speller, provide the people with severe neuromuscular disorders a
204 new augmentative communication way so that they can express their wishes and communicate with others.
205 The current study has demonstrated the capability of the Emotiv EPOC+ headset to detect the P300 signals
206 from two channels, O1 and O2. Furthermore, the study investigated the effect of different factors (matrix
207 size, flash duration, colors) on the P300 amplitude and accuracy. The results show that when the matrix
208 size or flash duration increases, the P300 amplitude increases. However, the P300 performance decreases
209 with larger ISI. The effect of using the colored matrix was very clear on the O2 channel since it is located
210 on the right hemisphere which is responsible for color processing. For a more robust evaluation, the next
211 step is to extend the study to a larger group of people with neuromuscular disorders.

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