Neural Tangent Kernel Maximum Mean Discrepancy

Abstract

We present a novel neural network Maximum Mean Discrepancy (MMD) statistic by identifying a new connection between neural tangent kernel (NTK) and MMD statistic. This connection enables us to develop a computationally efficient and memory-efficient approach to compute the MMD statistic and perform NTK based two-sample tests towards addressing the long-standing challenge of memory and computational complexity of the MMD statistic, which is essential for online implementation to assimilating new samples. Theoretically, such a connection allows us to understand the NTK test statistic properties, such as the Type-I error and testing power for performing the two-sample test, by adapting existing theories for kernel MMD. Numerical experiments on synthetic and real-world datasets validate the theory and demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed NTK-MMD statistic.

1 Introduction

Maximum Mean Discrepancy (MMD) statistic is a popular method in machine learning and statistics. In particular, kernel MMD [2, 20] has been applied to evaluating and training neural network generative models [32, 41, 29, 3, 28]. Though a widely used non-parametric test [20], kernel MMD encounters several challenges in practice. The roadblocks for large-scale implementation of kernel MMD involve heavy memory requirement (due to the computation and storage of the Gram matrix, which grows quadratically with the data size) and the choice of a good kernel function high dimensional data. While Gaussian RBF kernel was shown to provide a metric between pairs of probability distributions with infinite data samples, applying isotropic Gaussian kernel to data in applications, such as image data and discrete events data, may invoke issues in terms of kernel expressiveness [22, 27, 34] and sampling complexity [36].

A potential path forward in developing more computationally and memory-efficient testing statistics is to leverage deep neural networks' representation and optimization advantage. For example, the idea of training a classification neural network for testing problems has been revisited recently in [35, 8], and the connection between classification and two-sample testing dates back to earlier works [16, 40, 38]. However, in applying deep models to testing problems, the test consistency analysis is usually incomplete due to the lack of optimization guarantee of the trained network. For one thing, assuming perfect training of a deep network to achieve global minimizer is too strong an assumption to fulfill in practice.

A recent focus of neural network optimization research is the so-called lazy training regime of over-parametrized neural networks [11], where the neural network training dynamics exhibit certain linearized property and provable learning guarantee can be obtained [31, 14, 12, 1]. In this regime, the training time is sufficiently short, and networks are sufficiently parametrized such that network parameters stay close to the randomized initial values over the training process. In particular, the Neural Tangent Kernel (NTK) theory, as firstly described by [26], shows that the network optimization can be well approximated by the Reproducing Kernel Hilbert Space (RKHS) formulation. The NTK

theory has been developed for general neural network architectures, including deep fully connected networks [45], convolutional networks [4, 33], graph neural networks [13], and residual networks [42, 25, 5]. The RKHS approach by NTK has been shown theoretically and empirically to characterize the wide neural network training dynamic in the early stage.

The current work stems from a simple observation that short-time training of a network is approximately equivalent to computing the *witness function* of a kernel MMD with NTK at time zero, when the training objective equals the difference between sample averages of the network function on two samples. The proposed test statistic, called NTK-MMD, approximates the classical kernel MMD with NTK, and the error at training time t can be bounded to be $O(t)$ under the linearization of the NTK theory. The theoretical benefit of translating the network-based statistic into a kernel MMD is that the testing power of the latter can be analyzed based on previous works. Algorithm-wise, the network-based test statistic can be computed on the fly: thanks to the form of linear accumulation of the training objective, the training allows small-batch, e.g., batch size 1 and 1 epoch of training (1 pass of the samples), under the NTK approximation. To calibrate the testing threshold needed to prevent false alarm, we introduce an asymmetric MMD using training-testing split and theoretically prove the testing power where the threshold is estimated from bootstrapping on the test split only and thus avoids retraining network.

Our main contributions include the following: (i) We introduce a neural network-based test statistic called NTK-MMD, which can be computed by a short-time training of a neural network, particularly online learning using one-pass of the training samples and batch size one. The NTK approximation error of the MMD statistic is shown to be linear in training time, which leads to the construction of the NTK-MMD test statistic; (ii) We characterize the statistical properties of the NTK-MMD, including the Type-I error and the testing power, which establish the conditions under which the test is powerful; we further introduce a data split scheme such that the test threshold can be estimated without network retraining with provable testing power guarantee; (iii) The efficiency of the proposed NTK-MMD test is demonstrated on simulated and real-world datasets.

At the same time, we are aware of the limitations of NTK in explaining deep network optimization, expressiveness power, and so on. We discuss limitations and extensions in the last section. In particular, this paper focuses on demonstrating the power of NTK-MMD statistics for the two-sample test, while the proposed computationally and memory-efficient NTK-MMD statistics can also be used for other applications of MMD statistics other than the two-sample testing problem [21].

2 Method

2.1 Preliminary: Kernel MMD

We start by reviewing a few preliminaries. Consider data in $\mathcal{X} \subset \mathbb{R}^d$, sampled from two unknown distributions with densities p and q. Given two data sets

$$X = \{x_i \sim p, \text{ i.i.d.}, i = 1, \cdots, n_X\}, \quad Y = \{y_j \sim q, \text{ i.i.d.}, j = 1, \cdots, n_Y\}, \quad (1)$$

we would like to test whether or not they follow the same distribution. This is equivalent to perform the following hypothesis test $H_0 : p = q$ versus $H_1 : p \neq q$. The classical kernel MMD considers test functions in the RKHS of positive semi-definite kernel $K(x, y)$, which can be, for instance, the Gaussian RBF kernel. The (squared and biased) empirical kernel MMD statistic is given by [20]:

$$\text{MMD}_K^2 = \int_{\mathcal{X}} \int_{\mathcal{X}} K(x, y)(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(x)(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(y)dxdy, \quad \hat{p} = \frac{1}{n_X}\sum_{i=1}^{n_X}\delta_{x_i}, \quad \hat{q} = \frac{1}{n_Y}\sum_{i=1}^{n_Y}\delta_{y_i}. \quad (2)$$

The null hypothesis is rejected if $\text{MMD}_K^2 > t_{\text{thres}}$, where t_{thres} is the user-specified test threshold (usually, chosen to control the false alarm up to certain level). The (empirical) *witness function* of the MMD statistic, $\hat{w}(x) = \int_{\mathcal{X}} K(x, y)(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(y)dy$, indicates where the two densities differ. The Type-I error of the test is defined as $\mathbb{P}[\text{MMD}_K^2 > t_{\text{thres}}]$ under H_0, and the Type-II error as $\mathbb{P}[\text{MMD}_K^2 \leq t_{\text{thres}}]$ under H_1; the power is defined as one minus the Type-II error. For an alternative distribution q of p, the test errors depend on q, the sample sizes n_X and n_Y, as well as the kernel function $K(x, y)$. Theoretically, the test power of kernel MMD has been analyzed in [20], investigated for high dimensional Gaussian data in [36], and for manifold data in [10].

2.2 NTK-MMD statistic

As the proposed NTK-MMD framework can be used on different network architectures, we write the neural network mapping abstractly as $f(x; \theta)$, which maps from input $x \in \mathcal{X}$ to $\mathbb{R}$, and θ is the

network parameters. Use $X \cup Y$ as the training dataset, and let $\hat{p}$ and $\hat{q}$ be as in (2), we choose a particular training objective function is

$$\hat{L}(\theta) = -\int_{\mathcal{X}} f(x;\theta)(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(x)dx = -\frac{1}{n_X}\sum_{i=1}^{n_X} f(x_i;\theta) + \frac{1}{n_Y}\sum_{i=1}^{n_Y} f(y_i;\theta) \tag{3}$$

The choice of this objective function is critical in establishing the connection between NTK and MMD. Optimizing this objective will lead to divergence of the network function if we train for a long time. However, if the training is only for a short time, the network function remains finite. Here we mainly focus on short-time training of the network, and particularly the online training setting where the number of epochs is 1, that is, only 1-pass of the training samples is used. We will also show that the method allows using minimal batch size for online learning without affecting the NTK approximation of the MMD statistic, c.f. Remark 2.2.

Following the convention in NTK literature, below we formulate in terms of continuous-time Gradient Descent (GD) dynamic of the network training. The extension to discrete-time Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD) holds with a small learning rate (Remark 2.2). The network parameter $\theta(t)$ evolves according to $\dot{\theta}(t) = -\partial\hat{L}/\partial\theta$, and we define $u(x,t) := f(x,\theta(t))$, which is the network mapping function at time t. Suppose the network is trained for a short time $t > 0$, we define

$$\hat{g}(x) := \frac{1}{t}(u(x,t) - u(x,0)), \tag{4}$$

and the test statistic, which depends on time t, is

$$\hat{T}_{\text{net}}(t) := \int_{\mathcal{X}} \hat{g}(x)(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(x)dx. \tag{5}$$

The function $\hat{g}$ is the difference of the network mapping after a short-time training from the initial one, and we call it the *witnesses function* of network NTK MMD statistic. We show in next subsection that at small t, the statistic $\hat{T}_{\text{net}}(t)$ approximates the classical MMD statistic with the NTK, i.e. $\hat{T}_{\text{NTK}} = \text{MMD}_K^2(X, Y)$ where K is the NTK at time $t = 0$ as in (8). Thus, we will perform two-sample test using $\hat{T}_{\text{net}}(t)$ by comparing with a threshold t_{thres}.

2.3 NTK approximation of MMD statistic

In the continuous-time training dynamic of the network, we define for $t > 0$,

$$\hat{K}_t(x, x') := \langle \nabla_\theta f(x; \theta(t)), \nabla_\theta f(x'; \theta(t)) \rangle. \tag{6}$$

The following lemma follows directly by construction, and the proof is in the appendix.

Lemma 2.1. *The network function $u(x,t)$ satisfies that for $t > 0$,*

$$u(x,t) - u(x,0) = \int_0^t \int_{\mathcal{X}} \hat{K}_s(x, x')(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(x')dx'ds. \tag{7}$$

It has been studied and shown that for the short-time training (lazy training regime), the kernel (6) can be well-approximated by the kernel at time $t = 0$, namely

$$K_0(x, x') := \langle \nabla_\theta f(x; \theta(0)), \nabla_\theta f(x'; \theta(0)) \rangle, \tag{8}$$

which is only determined by the network weight initialization $\theta(0)$. Assuming $K_0 \approx \hat{K}_t$ in Lemma 2.1, the proposed test statistic $\hat{T}_{net}(t)$ as in (5) can be viewed as

$$\hat{T}_{\text{net}}(t) \approx \hat{T}_{\text{NTK}} := \int_{\mathcal{X}} \int_{\mathcal{X}} K_0(x, x')(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(x)(\hat{p} - \hat{q})(x')dxdx', \tag{9}$$

which is the kernel MMD statistic with NTK. The analysis in below shows that the approximation $\hat{T}_{\text{net}} \approx \hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}$ has $O(t)$ error, and we also experimentally verify the similarity of the two test statistics in Subsection 4.2. Throughout the paper, we compute $\hat{T}_{\text{net}}$ by neural network training, and we call $\hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}$ the *exact* NTK-MMD which is for theoretical analysis. The theoretical benefit of translating

121 $\hat{T}_{\text{net}}$ into $\hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}$ lies in that testing power analysis of $\hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}$ follows existing methods, which is detailed
122 in Section 3.

123 To analyze the NTK approximation error, for vector valued function $g : (\mathcal{X}, \Theta) \to \mathbb{R}^d$ and $U \subset \Theta$,
124 we denote the infinity norm as $\|g\|_{\mathcal{X},U} := \sup_{x \in \mathcal{X}, \theta \in U} \|g(x,\theta)\|$. The test statistic approximation
125 error (Proposition 2.1) directly follows the following lemma concerning the uniform approximation
126 of the kernels. All proofs in the Appendix.

127 **Lemma 2.2** (NTK kernel approximation). *Suppose f is C^2 on $(\mathcal{X}, \Theta)$ and $\|\nabla_\theta f\|_{\mathcal{X},\Theta} \le L_f$ for*
128 *some positive constant L_f. Then for any $r > 0$, when $0 < t < t_{f,r} := r/(2L_f)$,*
129 *(1) $\theta(t)$ stays inside the Euclidean ball $B_r := B(\theta(0), r)$.*
130 *(2) Define $C_{f,r} := 4\|\mathrm{D}_\theta^2 f\|_{\mathcal{X},B_r} \|\nabla_\theta f\|_{\mathcal{X},B_r}^2$, we have that*

$$\sup_{x,x' \in \mathcal{X}} |\hat{K}_t(x,x') - K_0(x,x')| \le C_{f,r} t. \tag{10}$$

131 *Remark* 2.1 (Boundedness of $\|\nabla_\theta f\|_{\mathcal{X},\Theta}$). When p are unbounded density (gaussian), and activation
132 function f is relu or softplus, the uniform boundednesss of $\|\nabla_\theta f\|_{\mathcal{X},\Theta}$ may fail. However, for
133 sub-exponential densities, apply standard truncation argument, and when we restrict to compactly
134 supported distributions. In practice, we standardize the data to be on a compact domain in $\mathbb{R}^d$.

135 **Proposition 2.1** (Test statistic approximation). *The condition on $f(x,\theta)$ is the same as in Lemma*
136 *2.2, and for $r > 0$, the constants $t_{f,r}$ and $C_{f,r}$ are as therein. Then, when $0 < t < t_{f,r}$, we have that*

$$|\hat{T}_{\text{net}}(t) - \hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}| \le 2C_{f,r} t.$$

137 *Remark* 2.2 (SGD and online training). . The above error bound analysis based on Taylor expansion
138 can extend to discrete-time GD dynamic by showing that the time discretization introduces higher-
139 order error when t is small. In the SGD setting, e.g., the online learning of 1 epoch, batch size one,
140 and learning rate α, the network parameters are updated after scanning each training sample on the fly.
141 Let θ_k be the network after scanning k many samples, we show in Appendix A.2 that the difference
142 $\|\theta_k - \theta_0\|$ can be bounded by $O(\alpha k/n)$, and the trained network witness function after 1 epoch
143 approximates the witness function with the zero-time NTK kernel up to an $O(\alpha)$ error. The learning
144 rate α has the role of training time t. The fact that batch size will not affect the NTK approximation
145 of the network training is a result of that the loss (3) is a linear accumulation over samples, which
146 may not hold for other loss types. The compatibility with online learning and training with very small
147 batch size of NTK-MMD statistic makes it convenient for deep network training, especially under
148 memory constraints.

3 Theoretical properties of NTK-MMD

150 In this section, we prove the testing size and power of the NTK MMD statistic $\hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}$ as in (9) with
151 large enough finite samples. We also introduce an asymmetric version of the MMD statistic using
152 training-testing dataset splitting, which enables the bootstrap estimation of the threshold of the test
153 t_{thres} without retraining of the neural network.

3.1 NTK-MMD without data splitting

155 We write the NTK kernel $K_0(x,x')$ as $K(x,x')$ omitting the $_{NT}$ subscript, and assume that $K(x,x')$
156 is uniformly bounded, that is, $\sup_{x \in \mathcal{X}} K(x,x) \le B < \infty$ for some positive constant B. Without
157 loss of generality, we can assume that $B = 1$, because a global constant normalization of the kernel
158 does not change the testing. By that the kernel is PSD, we thus have that

$$\sup_{x', x \in \mathcal{X}} |K(x,x')| \le 1. \tag{11}$$

159 We omit the $_{NTK}$ subscript and denote the MMD statistic (9) as $\hat{T}$. The corresponding population
160 statistic is the squared MMD of kernel $K(x,y)$

$$\delta_K := \mathrm{MMD}_K^2(p,q) = \int_{\mathcal{X}} \int_{\mathcal{X}} K(x,y)(p-q)(x)(p-q)(y)dxdy. \tag{12}$$

161 By the uniform boundedness (11), the kernel $K(x,x')$ is in $L^2(\mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{X}, (p+q)(x)(p+q)(x')dxdx')$.
162 We define the squared integrals of the kernel

$$\nu_{pp} := \mathbb{E}_{x \sim p, y \sim q} K(x,y)^2, \quad \nu_{pq} := \mathbb{E}_{x \sim p, y \sim q} K(x,y)^2, \quad \nu_{qq} := \mathbb{E}_{x \sim q, y \sim q} K(x,y)^2. \tag{13}$$

In addition, we assume that as $n := n_X + n_Y$ increases, n_X/n stay bounded and approaches $\rho_X \in (0, 1)$. Equivalently, there is some constant $0 < c < 1$ such that for large enough n,

$$cn + 1 \leq n_X, n_Y \leq n, \quad i = 1, 2. \tag{14}$$

Without loss of generality, we assume that (14) always holds for the n considered.

Theorem 3.1 (Test power of $\hat{T}_{\mathrm{NTK}}$). *Suppose* (11) *and* (14) *hold, and*

(i) Under H_1, $p \neq q$, the squared population kernel MMD δ_K as in (12) *is strictly positive,*

(ii) The three integrals as in (13)*, $\nu_{pp}, \nu_{pq}, \nu_{qq}$, are all bounded by a constant $\nu \leq 1$.*

Define $\lambda_1 := \sqrt{8 \log(4/\alpha_{\mathrm{level}})}$, and let the threshold for the test be $t_{\mathrm{thres}} = 4/(cn) + 4\lambda_1 \sqrt{\nu/cn}$. Then, if for some $\lambda_2 > 0$, n is large enough such that

$$n > \frac{1}{c} \max \left\{ \frac{1}{9\nu} \max\{\lambda_1, \lambda_2\}^2, \frac{8}{\delta_K}, \frac{\nu}{\delta_K^2} \left(8(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2)\right)^2 \right\}, \tag{15}$$

then under H_0, $\mathbb{P}[\hat{T} > t_{\mathrm{thres}}] \leq \alpha_{\mathrm{level}}$; and under H_1, $\mathbb{P}[\hat{T} \leq t_{\mathrm{thres}}] \leq 3e^{-\lambda_2^2/8}$.

The proof uses the U-statistic concentration analysis, which was used in Theorem 3.5 in [10]. The analysis in [10] is for the local RBF kernel, and we need to extend to the general PSD kernel here. The concentration argument is by Proposition B.1. Note that the concentration can be derived using the boundedness (11) alone, while the Bernstein-type control here is sharper when the squared integrals upper bound ν is much smaller than 1.

The choice of t_{thres} in the above theorem is a theoretical one and may not be optimal. This is due to the use of concentration inequality and the relaxation of the bounds by using constants ν and c. By definition, the optimal value of t_{thres} is the $(1 - \alpha_{level})$-quantile of the distribution of $\hat{T}$ under H_0. This can be obtained potentially analytically according to the limiting distribution of the MMD statistic: The asymptotic distribution of (squared) empirical MMD statistic has been derived using the spectral decomposition of the (centered) kernel function $\tilde{k}(x, x') := K(x, x') - \mathbb{E}_{y \sim p} K(x, y) - \mathbb{E}_{y \sim p} K(y, x') + \mathbb{E}_{y,y' \sim p} K(y, y')$ in [20, 9], among others, following techniques in Chapter 6 in [39]. Specifically, by Theorem 3.3 in [9], as $n = n_X + n_Y \to \infty$ and $n_X/n \to \rho_X \in (0, 1)$, $n\hat{T}$ under H_0, $q = p$, converges in distribution to the weighted χ^2 distribution $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \tilde{\lambda}_k \xi_k^2$, where $\xi_k \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1/\rho_X + 1/(1 - \rho_X))$ i.i.d, and $\tilde{\lambda}_k \geq 0$ are the eigenvalues of the integral operator with kernel $\tilde{k}(x, x')$ in $L^2(\mathcal{X}, p(x)dx)$. This provides the asymptotic value of the quantile of $\hat{T}$ under H_0, when the eigenvalues are computable, which can be useful, e.g., for low-dimensional data.

The threshold t_{thres} is also computed by a bootstrap strategy in practice (called "permutation test" in statistical literature [23, 20]), c.f. (18) in below. However, since in $\hat{T}_{net}$ the witness function $\hat{g}(x)$ is computed by neural network training, permuting the labels in data sets X and Y would involve the retrain of the network. A solution is by adopting a test set for bootstrap estimation of t_{thres} as will be explained in next subsection.

3.2 Threshold calibration by data splitting

In the previous section, we have theoretically characterized the significance level and test power, where the test threshold plays a critical role. In practice, we need a more precise threshold to exactly control the false alarm under the null hypothesis. In this section, we discuss how to set the threshold in two settings: fixed-sample and pilot-data. Nevertheless, we would like to mention that there exist applications where the threshold is not needed, and the symmetric MMD $\hat{T}_{\mathrm{NTK}}$ can be used as a measurement of density divergence.

Fixed-sample setting. We first consider the setting where we have a fixed number of samples from p and q. To obtain a precise threshold to control the false alarm, we need to split data into two non-overlapping parts: one part for training neural networks (compute the witness function) and one part data for bootstrapping and calibrating the threshold. We want to highlight that here we develop a scheme for threshold calibration such that no re-training of the witness function is necessary.

We randomly split the datasets X and Y into training and testing sets, $X = X_{(1)} \cup X_{(2)}$ and $Y = Y_{(1)} \cup Y_{(2)}$, and compute an asymmetric version of kernel MMD (the subscript $_a$ is for "asymmetric")

$$\hat{T}_a := \int_{\mathcal{X}} \int_{\mathcal{X}} K(x, x')(\hat{p}_{(1)} - \hat{q}_{(1)})(x')(\hat{p}_{(2)} - \hat{q}_{(2)})(x) dx dx', \tag{16}$$

where $\hat{p}_{(i)}$ and $\hat{q}_{(i)}$ are the empirical measures of datasets $X_{(i)}$ and $Y_{(i)}$ respectively, $i = 1, 2$. Define $n_{X,(i)} = |X_{(i)}|$ and $n_{Y,(i)} = |Y_{(i)}|$, $i = 1, 2$. Similarly as in Section 2, the MMD statistic (16) with $K(x, y) = K_0(x, y)$, the zero-time NTK, can be approximated by

$$\hat{T}_{a,\text{net}}(t) = \int_{\mathcal{X}} \hat{g}_{(1)}(x)(\hat{p}_{(2)} - \hat{q}_{(2)})(x)dx, \quad \hat{g}_{(1)}(x) = \frac{1}{t}(\hat{u}(x, t) - \hat{u}(x, 0)), \tag{17}$$

for a small time t, where $\hat{u}(x, t)$ is the network function trained by minimizing $\hat{L}(\theta) := -\int_{\mathcal{X}} f(x; \theta)(\hat{p}_{(1)} - \hat{q}_{(1)})(x)dx$ on the training set $\mathcal{D}_{tr} = \{X^{(1)}, Y^{(1)}\}$ with binary labels $\{1, 2\}$. Same as in Lemma 2.2 Proposition 2.1, the difference $|\hat{T}_a - \hat{T}_{a,\text{net}}(t)|$ can be bounded to be $O(t)$. We theoretically analyze the testing power of $\hat{T}_a$ where $K(x, y) = K_0(x, y)$ in below.

The benefit of splitting the test set lies in that once the witness function $\hat{g}_{(1)}(x)$ is trained from $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$, one can do a *test-only bootstrap* which is to compute

$$\hat{T}_{a,\text{null}} = \int_{\mathcal{X}} \hat{g}_{(1)}(x)(\hat{p}'_{(2)} - \hat{q}'_{(2)})(x)dx, \tag{18}$$

where $\hat{p}'_{(2)}$ and $\hat{q}'_{(2)}$ are empirical measure of samples in $\mathcal{D}_{te} = \{X^{(2)}, Y^{(2)}\}$ by randomly permute the $n_{X,(2)} + n_{Y,(2)}$ many binary class labels. The test-only bootstrap does not require retraining of the network, while, in contrast, one can permute the binary class labels in both $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$ and $\mathcal{D}_{te}$, and will require to retain the neural network to obtain the new witness function $\hat{g}_{(1)}$ given the new class labels of $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$. We call such a bootstrap the *full-bootstrap*. The full-bootstrap can be applied to the symmetric MMD statistic without test set splitting as well, which will identify a t_{thres} to give potentially better testing power than what has been proved in Theorem 3.1.

We give two theoretical results on the testing power guarantee of the asymmetric NTK MMD statistic (16): For *test-only bootstrap*, Theorem 3.2 proves testing power by restricting to good events over the randomness of $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$; For *full bootstrap*, the guarantee is provided in Theorem 3.3, which is the counterpart of Theorem 3.1. All proofs are in Appendix.

We assume the balance-ness of the two samples as well as the training and testing splitting, that is, $n_{X,(1)}/n_X \to \rho_{X,(1)}$, $n_{Y,(1)}/n_Y \to \rho_{Y,(1)}$ $n_X/n \to \rho_X$, and the three constants are all in $(0, 1)$. With $n = n_X + n_Y$, we assume for constant $0 < c < 1$.

$$c_a n \le n_{X,(i)}, n_{Y,(i)} \le n, \quad i = 1, 2. \tag{19}$$

We denote by $\mathbb{P}_{(1)}$ the randomness over $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$, and $\mathbb{P}_{(2)}$ that over $\mathcal{D}_{te}$.

Theorem 3.2 (Test power of $\hat{T}_a$, test-only bootstrap). *Suppose that* (11), (19) *and the conditions (i) and (ii) in Theorem 3.1 hold, and $0 < \gamma < 1$ is a small number. Define $\lambda_{(2),1} := \sqrt{4\log(4/\alpha_{\text{level}})}$, $\lambda_{(1)} := \sqrt{4\log(8/\gamma)}$, and set the threshold as $t_{\text{thres}} = 4(\sqrt{1.1}\lambda_{(2),1} + \lambda_{(1)})\sqrt{\nu/(c_a n)}$. If n is large enough such that $n > (\frac{\lambda_{(1)}}{0.1\nu})^2/(8c_a)$, and for some $\lambda_{(2),2} > 0$,*

$$n > \frac{1}{c_a} \max\left\{ \frac{1}{9\nu} \max\{\lambda_{(1)}, \lambda_{(2),1}, \lambda_{(2),2}\}^2, \frac{16\nu}{\delta_K^2} \left(2\lambda_{(1)} + \sqrt{1.1}(\lambda_{(2),1} + \lambda_{(2),2})\right)^2 \right\}, \tag{20}$$

then, under both H_0 and H_1 there is a good event over the randomness of $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$ which happens w.p.$\ge 1 - \gamma$, under which, conditioning on $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$, $\mathbb{P}_{(2)}[\hat{T}_a > t_{\text{thres}}] \le \alpha_{\text{level}}$ under H_0, and $\mathbb{P}_{(2)}[\hat{T} \le t_{\text{thres}}] \le 4e^{-\lambda_{(2),2}^2/4}$ under H_1.

Remark 3.1. The constant γ controls the good event probability over the randomness of $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$. If γ can be chosen to be of the same order as α_{level}, then $\lambda_{(1)}$ has the same order as $\lambda_{(2),1}$. Compared to the full-bootstrap result Theorem 3.3, the additional requirement on n is that $c_a n$ needs to be greater than $(\lambda_{(1)}/\nu)^2$ up to absolute constant, and thus when $\nu/\delta_K^2 \gg \nu^{-2}$, the (ν/δ_K^2)-term still dominates the needed lower bound of n, same as in Theorems 3.1 and 3.3. The result shows that with test split and test-only bootstrap (avoiding re-training), the test power has the same rate of needed sampling complexity as full bootstrap, with high probability and for large enough n.

Theorem 3.2 is based on Lemma B.1 which establishes the concentration of the conditional expectation $\mathbb{E}[\hat{T}_a|\mathcal{D}_{tr}]$, and Proposition B.2 on the concentration of $\hat{T}_a$ under good events of $\mathcal{D}_{tr}$.

Figure 1: (Left two plots) Estimated testing power on Gaussian mean shift (change size is δ) and Gaussian covariance shift (change size is ρ) in $\mathbb{R}^{100}$, where datasets X and Y have 200 samples respectively, and the training and testing splitting is half-half, i.e. $n_{tr} = n_{te} = 200$. Test power is estimated from $n_{run} = 500$. (Right two plots) Estimated testing power as a function of the number of samples processed in the 1-pass of the training set (batch size =1) and over varying values of ρ, also plotted as a color field.

Theorem 3.3 (Test power of $\hat{T}_a$, full bootstrap). *Suppose that* (11), (19) *and the conditions (i) and (ii) in Theorem 3.1 hold. Define* $\lambda_1 := \sqrt{8 \log(4/\alpha_{\text{level}})}$, *and let the threshold for the test be* $t_{\text{thres}} = 4\lambda_1 \sqrt{\frac{\nu}{c_a n}}$. *Then, if for some* $\lambda_2 > 0$, *n is large enough such that*

$$n > \frac{1}{c_a} \max\left\{ \frac{1}{9\nu} \max\{\lambda_1, \lambda_2\}^2, \frac{\nu}{\delta_K^2} \left(4(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2)\right)^2 \right\}, \tag{21}$$

then under H_0, $\mathbb{P}[\hat{T} > t_{\text{thres}}] \leq \alpha_{\text{level}}$; *and under* H_1, $\mathbb{P}[\hat{T} \leq t_{\text{thres}}] \leq 4e^{-\lambda_2^2/8}$.

Pilot data setting. This section considers the setting where we may have many samples for one distribution, e.g., the p. For instance, in change-point detection, where we are interested in detecting a shift in the underlying data distribution, there can be a large pool of pilot data before the change happens, collected historically and representing the normal status. We may have fewer data samples for the distribution q. For such a case, we can use data from the reference pool represent distribution p to train the model and calibrate the threshold, e.g., using bootstrap. Since such "training" is done offline, we can afford the higher computational cost associated with training the model multiple times. In short, our strategy is to pre-compute the detector (re-train multiple times) and then use boostrap to obtain the threshold t_{thres} for detector: (i) compute the symmetric MMD $\hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}$ on $\{\hat{p}, \hat{q}\}$, where $\hat{q}$ is the new coming test samples (e.g. in change-point detection), and $\hat{p}$ is from the pool. (ii) pre-compute the symmetric MMD $\hat{T}_{\text{null}}$ on $\{\hat{p}_2, \hat{p}_2'\}$ from the pool of samples, with retrain, and obtain the "true" threshold for $\hat{T}_{\text{NTK}}$. Re-training of the network is expensive, but this is pre-computation and not counted in the online computation.

4 Numerical experiments

4.1 Gaussian mean and covariance shifts

Set-up. Consider Gaussian mean shift and covariance shift in $\mathbb{R}^{100}$, where $n_X = n_Y = 200$; p is the distribution of $\mathcal{N}(0, I_d)$, $d = 100$: (i) Mean-shift: q is the distribution of $\mathcal{N}(\mu, I_d)$, where $\|\mu\|_2 = \delta$ which varies from 0 to 0.8. and (ii) Covariance-shift: q is the distribution of $\mathcal{N}(0, I_d + \rho E)$, where E is an d-by-d all-ones matrix, and ρ changes from 0 to 0.16.

Results. We split training and test sets into halves, and compute the asymmetric network approximated NTK MMD statistic $\hat{T}_{a,\text{net}}$ (17), and estimate the test threshold by the quantile of (18). H_0 is rejected if $\hat{T}_{a,\text{net}} > t_{\text{thres}}$. We use a 2-layer network (1 hidden layer) with soft-plus activation. The online training is of 1 epoch (1 pass over the training set) with batch-size = 1. The bootstrap estimate of test threshold uses $n_{\text{boot}} = 400$ permutations. The testing power is approximated by $n_{\text{run}} = 500$ Monte Carlo replicas, and we compare with the benchmarks by (i) Hotelling's T-test, and (ii) Gaussian kernel MMD test (median distance bandwidth) [20]. The median distance bandwidth is a reasonable choice for detecting high dimensional Gaussian mean shift [36]. Both Gaussian kernel MMD and Hotelling's Test have access to all the samples $\mathcal{D}_{tr} \cup \mathcal{D}_{te}$. The results are shown in the left two plots in Fig. 1. The NTK MMD test gives comparable but slightly worse power than the other two benchmarks on the mean shift. On the covariance shift test, the network MMD test gives equally good power as the Gaussian MMD.

For the Gaussian covariance shift case, we also compute the testing power when only part of the training samples are used in the online training, and the results are shown in the right two plots in

Figure 2: (Left two plots) Estimated testing power from $n_{\mathrm{run}} = 500$ of the covariance shift test in Fig. 1 in $\mathbb{R}^{100}$ and $\mathbb{R}^2$. $n_X = n_Y = 200$, using three statistics: $\hat{T}_{\mathrm{net}}$ (net), $\hat{T}_{\mathrm{NTK}}$ with test set only bootstrap (ntk1) and with full bootstrap (ntk2) the training and testing splitting is half-half. (Right two plots) Test statistics $\hat{T}_a$ (red cross), the empirical distribution of $\hat{T}_{a,\mathrm{null}}$ using the test-only bootstrap and the full bootstrap (blue bars), and the estimated threshold (green circle). Computed from NTK kernel at $t = 0$ and $n_{\mathrm{boot}} = 400$.

Figure 3: NTK MMD statistic to detect distribution abundance change in MNIST digit image data; $n_{tr} = 2000$ and nte is about 4000. (Top) Most left: Change of the statistic over the number of samples in the online training (batch size =1) of a 2-layer convolutional network. From 2nd-5th columns: The MMD statistic $\hat{T}_a$ compared with the empirical distribution under H_0 via test-only bootstrap, at four times along the online training (red circles on the left plot). (Bottom) Most left: The change of distribution of MNIST dataset embedded in 2D by tSNE [43]. From 2nd-5th columns: The witness function $\hat{g}$ plotted as a color field over the samples, at the four times corresponding to the upper panel plots.

Fig. 1. Testing power increases as the neural network scans more training samples, and the transition becomes sharper when the covariance shifts are larger.

4.2 Comparison of $\hat{T}_{\mathrm{net}}$ and $\hat{T}_{\mathrm{NTK}}$

Set-up. Since we use a 2-layer fully-connected network, the finite-width NTK at $t = 0$ (using initialized neural network parameters) can be analytically computed, which gives an n_{te}-by-n_{tr} asymmetric kernel matrix K. The expression of K and more details are left to the Appendix. This allows computing the exact NTK MMD (16), as well as the (i) full bootstrap and (i) the test-only bootstrap of the MMD statistic under H_0 by (i) permuting both rows and columns simultaneously and (ii) only permuting rows of the matrix K. The network training experimental setting is the same as in Subsection 4.1.

Results. The comparison of the network approximate NTK statistic and the exact NTK statistic tests are shown in Fig. 2. In the high dimensional Gaussian covariance shift test ($d = 100$), the powers of the three tests are similar. When reducing dimension to $d = 2$, the full-bootstrap NTK tests show slightly different testing power than the other two. The network approximate NTK and NTK with test-only bootstrap always show almost the same testing power, consistent with the theory in Subsection 2.3. In the experiment on $\mathbb{R}^2$ data, the estimated threshold by full-bootstrap is smaller than by test-only bootstrap (right two plots), which explains it possibly better-testing power.

4.3 MNIST distribution abundance change

Dataset. We take the original MNIST dataset, which contains 28×28 gray-scale images, and construct two densities p and q by subsampling from the 70000 images in 10 classes, following [10]: p is uniformly subsampled from the MNIST dataset, $p = p_{\mathrm{data}}$, and q has a change of abundance $q = 0.85p_{\mathrm{data}} + 0.15p_{\mathrm{cohort}}$, where p_{cohort} is the distribution of a subset of the class of digit "1" having about 1900 samples. The p_{cohort} is illustrated in the left bottom plot in Fig. 3. The two

Figure 4: (Left) Example data sequence in the human activity dataset: before and after the change-point. (Right) Detection statistics computed by Hotelling's T statistic, Gaussian MMD, and NTK MMD, on human action trajectory dataset, using window size 100 (blue), 150 (red), and 200 (yellow), respectively. The change point is at time index 550 (dotted black).

samples X and Y have $n_X = 3000$, $n_Y = 2981$, and we randomly split X and Y make the training set $\mathcal{D}_{tr} = \{X_{(1)}, Y_{(1)}\}$, $n_{X,(1)} = n_{Y,(1)} = 1000$, and the rest is the test set $\mathcal{D}_{te}$.

Results. Using a 2-layer convolutional nerual network, we compute the network MMD statistic $\hat{T}_{a,\text{net}}$ (17) and the test-only bootstrap (18). The online training uses batch size =1 and one epoch, and more experimental details are in Appendix. The results are shown in Fig. 3. The NTK-MMD statistic already shows testing power after being trained on 50 samples, and in the later stage of training, the NTK witness function $\hat{g}_{(1)}$ identifies the region of the abundance change.

4.4 Online human activity change-point detection

This section presents an illustrative example using NTK-MMD test statistic to perform online change-point detection: detecting human activity transition detection. We consider a real-world dataset: the Microsoft Research Cambridge-12 (MSRC-12) Kinect gesture dataset [15]. More description of the dataset and experimental details are in Appendix. After preprocessing, the sequential data contains 1192 frames (samples) in $\mathbb{R}^{54}$ and 54 attributes, with a change of action from "bending" to "throwing" at time index 550. Example samples before and after the change point are shown in the left of Fig. 4.

The change-point detection problem is as follows. In the data sequence, before the change happens, the data records a human object repetitively bending her body, and after the change happens, the data records a human object repetitively picking up and throwing a ball. The goal is to detect the change of human activity from sequential data. To achieve this goal, we construct a sliding window procedure; the sliding window moves forward with time, and we compute the detection statistic within the sliding window every ten samples; such a procedure can be viewed as the Shewhart Chart in the literature [44]; scanning MMD statistic has been used in [30]. The window size is chosen to be 100 and 150, respectively. We take a block of data (same size as the window) before the change (to use as the pilot samples) and compare with the distribution of data the sliding window for computing the two-sample test statistic. If there is a change-point, then the distributions of the two parts will be different).

In computing the network test statistic, we use a 2-layer network (1 hidden layer) and the training is online. The other two detection statistics are computed by (i) Gaussian MMD (with bandwidth chosen to be median distance) and (ii) Hotelling's T statistics. The results are shown in Fig. 4, showing that both the Gaussian MMD and the NTK-MMD statistics can detect the change: the detection statistic value remains low before the change and remains high after the change point. Both are better than the Hotelling statistic (one of the most commonly used classic non-parametric statistics for a two-sample test). Further evaluation of NTK-MMD for online change-point detection on larger scale datasets is left for future work.

5 Discussion

The current work can naturally be extended in several aspects. First, the testing power theory for the neural network statistic can be developed by combining the theory for exact NTK-MMD in this paper and possibly improved analysis of the NTK approximation error. Second, other training objectives can be investigated, which may also be analyzed within the NTK framework and lazy training regime. In addition, the limitation of lazy-regime training has been studied in [18, 19, 37], which indicates that NTK theory cannot fully characterize the modeling ability of deep networks. It has also been shown that the expressiveness of the NTK kernel may be restricted to certain rotation invariant and homogenous kernels [6, 17, 7]. Higher-order extension of NTK has been studied in [24]. We thus view the NTK MMD studied in the current work as a first step towards understanding the role and potential of trained neural networks in testing problems and applications.

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