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Tunable superconducting neurons for networks based on radial basis functions

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Abstract

The hardware implementation of signal microprocessors based on superconducting technologies seems relevant for a number of niche tasks where performance and energy efficiency are critically important. In this paper, we consider the basic elements for superconducting neural networks on radial basis functions (RBF). We examine the static and dynamic activation functions of the proposed neuron. Special attention is paid to tuning of the activation functions to the Gaussian form with relatively large amplitude. We proposed and investigated heterostructures designed for the implementation of tunable inductors which consist of superconducting, ferromagnetic, and normal layers.

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25 Keywords

²⁶ superconducting electronics; Josephson circuits; spintronics; superconducting neural network; net ²⁷ works on radial-basis functions

Introduction

For modern telecommunications, probabilistic identification of various sources in a broadband group signal is extremely important. Also, the probabilistic analysis is used in the consideration of stochastic processes [1-4], as a popular machine learning method for spatial interpolation of non-stationary and non-Gaussian data [5], as a central part of compensation block to enhance the tracking performance in control systems for a class of nonlinear and non-Gaussian stochastic dynamic processes [6].

An important example for this work is the cognitive radio, which is able to receive information about the features of the "radio-environment" and adjust its operating parameters based on this data [7-13]. Similar problems arise nowadays when reading data in superconducting noisy intermediate-scale quantum (NISQ) computers [14-17]. Here again, we need real-time identification and classification of varying signals from multiple sources (qubits) in a narrow frequency range. When working with large data, it's necessary to create specialized neural networks at the hardware level to effectively solve such problems.

Josephson digital circuits and analog receivers have been used for a long time to create software-41 defined radio-systems [18-25] as well as read-out circuits for quantum computing [26-33]. They 42 realize a unique combination of a wide dynamic range and high sensitivity when receiving signals, 43 with high-performance and energy efficiency at the stage of the processing. It seems reasonable to 44 implement additional processing of incoming data inside the cryo-system using the capabilities of 45 neural network computing [34-43]. The creation of extremely low-dissipating element base for such 46 systems is a very actual scientific and technical task that requires theoretical and experimental studies 47 of the features of macroscopic quantum interference in the complex Josephson circuits. 48

The direct use of the previously proposed superconducting adiabatic neural network (ANN) based on the perceptron [44-48] for probabilistic identification is not possible. In particular, during the

formation of the output signal in the ANN, the so-called global approximation of the input signal 51 is implemented [11,12], in which almost all neurons are included in signal processing. In addition, 52 the perceptron is a fully connected network, which means an abundance of synaptic connections 53 between neurons. These circumstances supposes a highly resource-intensive learning of the network 54 for signal analysis. There is an alternative approach with a representation of the input set of data 55 into the set of output values by using only one hidden layer of neurons. Each of these neurons is 56 responsible for its own area of the parameter space of incoming data. This is the probabilistic or 57 Bayesian approach, where radial-basis functions (for example, Gaussian-like functions) are used as 58 neuron activation functions. 59

The most common networks operating on this principle are radial basis function networks (RBFN) 60 (also known as Bayesian networks). When using such a network, objects are classified on the basis 61 of assessments of their proximity to neighboring samples. For each sample, a decision can be made 62 based on the selection of the most likely class from those to which the sample could belong. Such a 63 solution requires an estimate of the probability density function for each class. This score is obtained 64 by consideration of training data. The formal rule is that the class with the tightest distribution in the 65 scope of the unknown instance will take precedence over other classes. The traditional approach for 66 estimating the probability density for each class is to assume that the density has some definite form. 67 The normal distribution is the most preferred since it allows one to estimate such parameters of the 68 model as the mean and standard deviation analytically. The superconducting implementation of the 69 key elements of the discussed neural networks is the focus of this work. 70

71 **Results and Discussion**

72 Model of tunable Gauss-neuron: numerical simulations

⁷³ A usual architecture of the considered RBFN [49] is presented in figure 1a. These networks have ⁷⁴ only one hidden layer of neurons on which components of the input vector *x* are fed. Every neuron ⁷⁵ of the hidden layer calculates the values of the 1D function $h_k(x)$.

76
$$h_k(\vec{x}) = exp\left\{-\frac{(||x - x_k||)^2}{2\sigma_k^2}\right\},$$
 (1)

⁷⁷ where x_k is a k^{th} reference point, σ_k – scattering parameter for one-dimensional function $h_k(\vec{x})$.

In this paper, we propose a modified tunable neuron circuit [44] for RBFN (see figure 1b), with a Gaussian-like activation function. It consists of two identical Josephson junctions JJ_1 and JJ_2 in the shoulders with input inductances, L, and output inductunce L_{out} . It is also used to set an additional bias magnetic flux, Φ_b . Flux biasing is used to provide a suitable transfer function for asynchronous circulation of currents in the connected circuits. We will further call such a cell a *Gauss-neuron* or a *G-cell/neuron*.



Figure 1: (a) Schematic illustration of a RBF-network. (b) Schematic representation of a Gaussneuron ensured Gauss-like transfer function.

Hereinafter we use normalized values for typical parameters of the circuit: all fluxes (input Φ_{in} and output Φ_{out} , bias Φ_b) are normalized to the flux quantum Φ_0 ; currents are normalized to the critical current of the Josephson junctions I_C ; inductances are normalized to the characteristic inductance $2\pi L I_C / \Phi_0$, times are normalised to the characteristic time $t_C = \Phi_0 / (2\pi V_C)$ (V_C is a characteristic voltage of a Josephson junction). Equations of motion were obtained in terms of half-sum and half-difference of Josephson phases φ_1 , φ_2 ($\theta = (\varphi_1 + \varphi_2)/2$ and $\psi = (\varphi_1 - \varphi_2)/2$):

$$\dot{\theta} = \frac{\varphi_b - \theta}{l + 2l_{out}} - \sin\theta\cos\psi, \tag{2}$$

$$\stackrel{91}{\overset{92}{}} \qquad \dot{\psi} = -\frac{\varphi_{in} + \psi}{l} - \sin\psi\cos\theta.$$
(3)

⁹³ The output magnetic flux obeys the following equation:

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$$\varphi_{out} = \frac{2l_{out}}{l+2l_{out}} \cdot (\theta - \varphi_b).$$
(4)

Figure 2(a,b) below shows the families of transfer functions of a Gauss-neuron at different bias 95 fluxes. They are compared with the radial-basis function taken in the form $g(x) = exp(-x^2/(2\sigma^2))$ 96 (dashed line). All transfer functions were normalized to normalized to their maximum value, since 97 at the first stage we were interested in the shape of the curve itself. It can be seen that the shape 98 of the response meets the requirements; in addition, it can be adjusted using a bias magnetic flux 99 φ_b . An important feature of the system is that it also allows non-volatile tuning with memory using 100 tunable inductances l and l_{out} , see figure 2(c-e). Estimations for different values of φ_b show that the 101 best match (with Gauss-like radial-basis function) can be achieved with $\varphi_b = 0.05\pi$ and inductance 102 values l = 0.1, $l_{out} = 0.1$. Also the investigation of the full width at half maximum (FWHM) and 103 the amplitude of the transfer functions of the Gauss-neuron was carried out for different values of 104 φ_b (figure 2(c-d)) and inductance l (figure 2(e)). It can be seen that an increase in the value of the 105 inductance l decreases FWHM of the transfer function and increases its amplitude. The bias flux is a 106 convenient adjustment of transfer function of the tunable Gauss-neuron; bias flux should vary in the 107 $[0...05]\pi$ range to save the proper form of the transfer function. The mean of the transfer function 108 can be controlled by an additional constant component in the input flux. By selecting the parameters 109 of a configurable G-neuron, we can make the effective field period for the activation function large 110 enough for practical use in the real neural networks (figure 2(e)). 111

We calculated the standard deviation (SD) of the transfer function from the Gaussian-like function g(x) with fixed amplitude. The obtained results are presented in the $\{l, l_{out}\}$ plane. This visualization



Figure 2: Transfer functions (normalised) and its main characteristics for the Gauss-neuron. (a), (b) Families of the normalised transfer functions depending on the magnitude of the bias flux φ_b for various pairs of inductances l and l_{out} : (a) l = 0.1, $l_{out} = 0.1$; (b) l = 0.9, $l_{out} = 0.1$. (c) Dependencies of *full width at half maximum* (FWHM) and *amplitude* on the bias flux φ_b of transfer functions for l = 0.1, 0.5, 0.9 with $l_{out} = 0.1$. d) Dependencies of *FWHM* and *amplitude* on the inductance l for transfer functions of the Gauss-neuron at $l_{out} = 0.1$ and $\varphi_b = 0.05 \cdot \pi$.

allows to find the most proper operating parameters for the considered element. The magnitude of 114 the amplitude of the transfer function was also presented (Figures 3(a,b)). The optimal values of 115 inductance corresponding to the minimum of SD lies in the hollow of the surface, see figure 3(b). 116 The minimum SD value is reached at l = 0.1, $l_{out} = 0.1$. The position of the hollow in figure 3(b) 117 could be expressed as $(l_{out})_{SD} \approx 0.8 - 0.55 \cdot (l)_{SD}$. At the same time, for relatively small φ_b the 118 transfer function amplitude increases with increase of the output and shoulder inductunces, lout and 119 *l*. Thus, the choice between the proximity of the transfer function to a Gaussian-like form and the 120 maximization of the response amplitude is determined by the specifics of the network when solving 121 a specific problem. Once again, we emphasize: variations in the parameters of the circuit within 122

a fairly wide range allows one to change the amplitude and width of the activation function, while
 maintaining its Gaussian-like shape.



Figure 3: Amplitude of the transfer function (a) and its standard deviation from the Gaussian-like function (b) depending on the inductances l and l_{out} of the G-cell. Bias flux is equal to 0.05π .

The dynamic transfer functions of the system were also calculated (figure 4(a)). The input magnetic signal is a smoothed trapezoidal function of time with rise/fall time t_{RF} , see the insert in the figure 4(b). It can be seen that the dynamic activation function of the required type without hysteresis can be obtained with adiabatic operation of the cell (t_{RF} up to $8000t_C$, where t_C is the characteristic time for the Josephson junction).

Realization of tunability: adjustable kinetic inductance

For neural networks based on the considered G-neurons, tunable linear elements (inductors) with memory properties are extremely important. This allows the *in situ* switching between operating modes directly on the chip. The tunable passive devices are usually based on thin superconducting strips, which demonstrate non-linear properties of kinetic inductance at a large current comparable to the critical one [50,51]. Perspective types of controllable devices consist on the hybrid structures



Figure 4: (a) Dynamic transfer function of a Gauss-neuron for a trapezoidal external signal for different values of the rise / fall times of the signal t_{RF} and (b) Energy dissipation, normalised to the characteristic energy $E_0 = \Phi_0 I_C / 2\pi$, by rise-fall time of the input signal for different bias fluxes: $\varphi_b = \{0.01, 0.05, 0.1\} \cdot \pi$. Insert demonstrates the form of temporal dynamic for input flux and dissipation. If the critical current for Josephson junctions I_C is equal to $100\mu A$ and $\varphi_b = 0.05\pi$ than $E_{dis} \approx 0.01 \ aJ$ for $t_{RF} = 6 \ ns$ (corresponds to $\approx 1700 \cdot t_C$).

with semiconductors tunable by gate-voltage [52] or include magnetic layers with different possible
 magnetic states [53].

A relatively simple way to create the required passive element with non-volatile memory is a 138 tunable kinetic inductance [46] with integrated spin-valve structure. The typical spin-valve [54-56] 139 is a hybrid structure containing at least a pair of ferromagnetic FM-layers with different coercive 140 forces. Variations in the relative orientation of their magnetizations change the distribution of the 141 order parameter, that leads to a noticeable change in the kinetic inductance of the layers. The usage 142 of a thin superconducting spacer (s) between FM layers supports superconducting order parameter 143 and increase efficiency of spin-valve effect [57]. In this article, we propose a development of this 144 approach, allowing to significantly increase the effective variations in the kinetic inductance. 145

We study proximity effect and electronic transport in the multi-layer hybrid structures in the frame
 of Usadel equations [58]

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$$\pi T_C \xi^2 \left(G \frac{d^2 F}{dx^2} - F \frac{d^2 G_p}{dx^2} \right) - \widetilde{\omega} F = -G\Delta, \qquad G_{\omega}^2 + F_{\omega} F_{-\omega}^* = 1; \tag{5}$$

$$\Delta \ln \frac{T}{T_C} + \pi T \sum_{\omega = -\infty}^{\infty} \left(\frac{\Delta}{|\omega|} - F \right) = 0, \tag{6}$$

with Kupriyanov-Lukichev boundary conditions [59]

$$\gamma_B \xi_l \left(\frac{dF_l}{dx} - \frac{F_l}{G_l} \frac{dG_l}{dx} \right) = F_r - F_l \frac{G_r}{G_l}$$
(7)

at the S/FM interfaces. Here *G* and *F* are normal and anomalous Green's functions, $\omega = \pi T(2n+1)$ is Matsubara frequency. $\tilde{\omega} = \omega + iH$, where *H* is the exchange energy (*H*=0 in *S* and *N* layers), *l/r* – indexes, which denotes the materials from the left and right side from interface, ξ – the coherence length, ρ – resistivity, $\gamma_B = \frac{R_B A}{\rho_l \xi_l}$ – interface parameter, where $R_B A$ – the resistance per square of the interface.

The calculated distribution of the anomalous Green function, F, permits to estimate the ability to influence the propagation of the superconducting correlations (screening properties) for the hybrid structure. The spatial distribution of the screening length directly depends on the proximization of the superconducting order parameter in the system [60]:

162
$$\lambda(x)^{-2} = \frac{16\pi T^2}{\rho} \sum_{\omega>0}^{Re} \left(F(x)^2 \right).$$
(8)

Hence, the screening length and kinetic inductance of the considered *s*-layers are significantly larger for the parallel orientation of the magnetizations in *FM*- layers (parallel case) in comparison with the anti-parallel case. It leads to redistribution of the current flowing along the multilayer and increase the total kinetic inductance of the structure [61,62]

167
$$L_{K} = \frac{\mu_{0}X}{W} \left[\int_{0}^{d} \lambda(x)^{-2} dx \right]^{-1}$$
(9)

where X is the length of the strip, W – width, and d is the thickness of the multilayer. It can be concluded that small changes in temperature or applied magnetic field [46,63] can significantly change (from zero to relatively large values) the kinetic inductance of thin *s*-layers in the hybrid structures under consideration. In our calculations, we assume that the currents flowing through the system are weak and do not have the effect of coupling, and the structure itself is much thinner than the screening length of the magnetic flux.

We propose a hybrid structure effectively consisting of three parts: a pairing source, a spin valve, 174 and a low inductive current carrier. The pairing source is a superconductor layer slightly thicker than 175 the critical value at which the self-consistency potential appears. This condition usually corresponds 176 to thicknesses of the order of (2...3) ξ . The spin valve is a multilayer structure $(FM)_1 - s - (FM)_2 - s$ 177 $s - (FM)_1 - s - (FM)_2$ with several ferromagnetic layers $(FM)_1$ and $(FM)_2$ of different thicknesses, 178 separated by thin spacers of a superconductor or normal metal. Remagnetization of the structure by 179 fields of different amplitudes changes the relative orientations of the magnetizations between $(FM)_1$ 180 and $(FM)_2$ layers, which leads to a change of the effective exchange field of the multilayer. This 181 effect can change the efficiency of the Cooper pairs penetration through the multilayer in several 182 times. The current carrier is organized on the basis of a thin strip of low-resistance normal metal, 183 which ensures its lower kinetic inductance relative to the rest of the structure, which leads to the flow 184 of current precisely through this layer. 185



Figure 5: Spatial distribution of the pair amplitude in the hybrid structure a) $S - (FM)_1 - s - (FM)_2 - s - (FM)_1 - s - (FM)_2 - s_1 - N$ with additional superconducting layer for parallel (blue solid line) and anti-parallel (red dashed line) mutual orientations of magnetization between FM_1 and FM_2 layers.

Figure 5 shows the spatial distributions of the pairing amplitude over a similar structure for 186 parallel and anti-parallel orientations of the magnetization of the FM_1 - and FM_2 -layers. To enhance 187 the effect, this element can contain an additional superconductor layer s_1 with a thickness less than 188 the critical thickness. In the case of a closed valve, such a structure is in the normal state, and the 189 superconducting correlations in the N-layer are negligible. If the valve is open, the s_1 layer goes over 190 into a superconducting state leading to increase of the amplitude of pair correlations in the N-layer. 191 The spatial distribution of the pairing amplitude in a structure with an additional layer s_1 with similar 192 parameters is shown in the figure 5(b). 193



Figure 6: Kinetic inductance of the hybrid structures $S - (FM)_1 - s - (FM)_2 - s - (FM)_1 - s - (FM)_2 - s - N$ and $S - (FM)_1 - n - (FM)_2 - n - (FM)_1 - n - (FM)_2 - s_1 - N$ for parallel (dark blue solid line and long-dashed green line) and antiparallel (red dashed line and orange dash-dot line) mutual orientations of magnetization between FM_1 and FM_2 layers as functions of spacer thickness.

Figure 6 demonstrates the dependence of the kinetic inductance on the thickness of the intermediate s- or n-layers, which determine the efficiency of the spin valve. At large thicknesses of intermediate layers, the valve loses efficiency. In the case of normal spacers, the transition occurs to a completely normal state, where the kinetic inductance of the entire structure coincides with the kinetic inductance of the source layer S. With a large thickness of superconducting spacers s, the valve system also loses efficiency, transferring the entire structure to a completely superconducting state. However, at thicknesses of the order of $(0.5...1) \xi$, the maximum spin-valve effect appears, and the total kinetic inductance of the structure changes several times during the switch between states with parallel and antiparallel magnetization orientations.

203 Conclusion

We have considered a basic cell for superconducting signal neuro-computers designed for fast pro-204 cessing of a group signal with extremely low energy dissipation. It turned out that for this purpose it 205 is possible to modify the previously discussed element of adiabatic superconducting neural networks. 206 The ability to adjust the parameters of the studied Gauss-cell (with Gaussian-like activation function) 207 is very important for *in situ* switching between operating modes. Using microscopic modeling, we 208 have shown that the desired compact tunable passive element can be implemented in the form of a 209 controllable kinetic inductance. An example is a multilayer structure consisting of a superconducting 210 "source", a current-carrying layer and a spin valve with at least two magnetic layers with different 211 thicknesses. The proposed tunable inductance does not require suppression of superconductivity 212 in the source layer. In this case, the spin-gate effect determines the efficiency of penetration of 213 superconducting correlations into the current-carrying layer, which is the reason for the change in 214 inductance. 215

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