# **The Development and Deployment of Machine Learning Models for Aircraft Engine Concept Assessment**

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# **ABSTRACT**

In today's competitive landscape, the effective development and utilization of machinelearning (ML) applications have become imperative across various sectors. This study presents an outline of the procedure involved in creating and implementing ML models for conceptualizing and evaluating aircraft engines. These models leverage supervised deep-learning algorithms to analyze patterns within an open-source repository containing data on both production and research conventional turbofan engines. The main areas of focus encompass crucial engine parameters like thrust-specific fuel consumption (TSFC), engine weight, engine diameter, and turbomachinery stage counts. While the creation of ML models is fundamental for their utilization, ensuring their seamless deployment holds equal significance. To address this aspect, a conversational AI chatbot that specifically focuses on propulsion has been developed. Leveraging natural language processing (NLP) techniques, this chatbot streamlines the deployment of machine learning (ML) models. The comprehensive workflow encompasses several key stages: gathering and enhancing engine data, training and cross validating the ML models, testing and evaluating their performance, and finally, deploying, monitoring, and updating the ML models. By following this systematic approach, the aim is to streamline the development and deployment process of ML models tailored for aircraft engine assessment.

**Keywords:** Deep Learning; Aircraft Engine Conceptual Design; Python; AI Chatbot

# **NOMENCLATURE**



# **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the accessibility of big data and the growing emphasis on data-driven decision-making have fueled a surge of interest in applying machine learning (ML) techniques across various industrial sectors. One such sector witnessing significant traction in ML adoption is the aircraft engine industry. Over time, this industry has amassed substantial datasets from diverse sources, ranging from databases housing current engine models to records from ongoing and completed development projects, as well as conceptual designs. These datasets represent a trove of valuable information that holds immense potential as a knowledge asset for shaping the future of engine development.

Designing an aircraft engine is a complex and labor-intensive process, marked by interdisciplinary considerations and significant time investments. A critical challenge faced by engine designers, particularly during the conceptual design phase, is the rapid and accurate evaluation of engine performance against mission requirements and design parameters. Given the vast array of potential engine configurations, designers often resort to system analysis and simulation techniques to estimate performance, necessitating exhaustive propulsion system studies for each configuration. This process can be exceedingly time-consuming, especially when dealing with expansive design spaces.

The advent of advanced data science techniques and ML algorithms presents a promising avenue for addressing these challenges. By leveraging existing and historical engine datasets, ML models can be trained to assess new aircraft engine concepts swiftly and accurately, offering insights that may elude conventional analysis methods. These models have the capacity to discern intricate patterns and trends within the data, thereby enabling more informed decision-making and expediting the engine design process. The ability to rapidly evaluate new engine concepts not only enhances efficiency but also confers a competitive edge in the highly dynamic landscape of aircraft engine development.

However, the efficacy of ML models hinges not only on their development but also on their seamless deployment in production environments. Effective deployment strategies, such as user-friendly interfaces or conversational AI platforms, are essential to ensure practical utilization of these models in real-world scenarios.

Furthermore, the dynamic nature of data necessitates ongoing assessment and updating of deployed ML models to maintain their relevance and predictive accuracy. Regular integration of fresh engine data into the models facilitates adaptation to evolving industry trends and patterns, ensuring continued effectiveness over time.

This paper outlines the methodology for creating and implementing machine learning (ML) models to evaluate aircraft engine concepts. The process is divided into two main sections: the frontend and the backend. The frontend focuses on constructing a

conversational AI platform, *Aero-Engines Chatbot*, utilizing natural language processing (NLP). This chatbot is crafted to simulate human conversation via textual interactions and serves to involve users in the deployment of the ML models.

Conversely, the backend involves developing ML models using supervised deep-learning algorithms. These models analyze patterns in an open-source database covering both production and research conventional turbofan engines. Key engine parameters, such as thrust-specific fuel consumption (TSFC), engine weight, diameter, and turbomachinery stage counts, are primary areas of analysis. The workflow includes data collection, augmentation, and preparation; training and cross-validation of ML models; testing and evaluation; as well as continuous monitoring and updating of the models. The ML model development process, previously described by the author [1,2,3], is summarized in this paper.

The author had earlier developed an easy-to-use application interface, an app, that facilitated the deployment of pre-trained ML models for the evaluation of aircraft engine concepts. The app design aimed to provide a user-friendly experience with a simple point-and-click feature. It is described in detail in Reference 1. The present study explores an alternative approach of integrating established machine learning (ML) models within a conversational interface, named *Aero-Engines Chatbot*. Figure 1 illustrates the systematic workflow for deploying ML models using the chatbot.



Figure 1 – Workflow process of ML models deployment via *Aero-Engines Chatbot*

# **2.0 AI CHATBOT FOR ML MODEL DEPLOYMENT**

An AI chatbot, *Aero-Engines chatbot*, is employed to implement the ML models developed for assessing aero-engines concepts. Originally created to facilitate the exchange of aeropropulsion expertise among peers within the department at the author's organization, this interactive chatbot, has been enhanced to support the deployment of the ML models. Unlike generative AI, which learns from data and adapts its behaviour based on discovered patterns, this chatbot operates using explicitly programmed rules - a rulebased approach. This design choice helps save computing power and memory usage, as it does not require a GPU. The chatbot was built through natural language processing (NLP) using Python's NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit) library [4] and Keras [5]. NLTK is an open-source Python library for Natural Language Processing.

NLTK provides essential tools for working with human language data, while Keras offers a high-level neural networks API for building and training deep learning models. automate conversations and interact with people through messaging platforms. The chatbot automates conversations and interact with people through messaging platforms. Here's an overview of the chatbot-building process:

- **Data Collection and Preprocessing**: The first step is to gather conversational data or a corpus. This corpus can be in the form of chat logs, customer service interactions, or any other text-based conversations. In this work, a data file in JSON format, was created to list the intents, tags and words or phrases related to aircraft engine design input parameters, that the Chatbot would be responding to. Once created, the data needs preprocessing, which includes tokenization (splitting text into words or phrases), removing stop words (commonly used words like "and," "the," etc.), and stemming or lemmatization (reducing words to their root form). NLTK provides functions for these tasks.
- **Feature Extraction**: After preprocessing, the text data needs to be converted into numerical vectors that can be fed into a machine learning model. In this work, Bag-of-Words (BoW) technique was used for this purpose. The BoW model works on the principle of representing text data as a bag of words, ignoring grammar and word order while preserving the frequency of each word. Essentially, it converts a text document into a numerical feature vector where each unique word in the text corresponds to a feature and the value represents the frequency of the word. NLTK provides functions to implement this technique.
- **Model Building**: Once the data was preprocessed and features were extracted, the next step was to build the chatbot model. In this case, Keras [5] came into play. Keras is an open-source neural networks API written in Python. A neural networks architecture was constructed to train the chatbot.
- **Training**: With the model architecture defined, it's time to train the model using the preprocessed data. During training, the model learns to map input text sequences to appropriate responses. Keras provides easy-to-use APIs for training neural networks, with TensorFlow [6] as the backend engine. Keras allows one to specify parameters such as the number of epochs, batch size, and optimizer choice.
- **Evaluation and Testing**: After training, it's crucial to evaluate the performance of the chatbot model. This involves testing the chatbot with unseen data or human evaluators to assess its ability to generate meaningful and contextually appropriate responses. NLTK can be used to calculate metrics like BLEU score (a measure of machine-generated text's similarity to humangenerated text) for evaluation.
- **Deployment**: Once the model performs satisfactorily, it can be deployed into production as a chatbot application. This involves integrating the ML models into a chat interface where users can interact with it in real-time. Figure 2 on page 7 depicts the deployment of *Aero-Engines chatbot*, showcasing an example conceptual design output for an engine.

By leveraging NLTK for text pre-processing and feature extraction and Keras for building and training the deep learning model, the *Aero-Engines chatbot* is capable of understanding and generating human-like responses based on natural language input.

# **3.0 ML MODELS DEVELOPMENT**

The current development of machine learning models focuses on axial-compressor turbofan engines, with plans for future expansions to include other engine types like turboshaft and hybrid-turbofan. Our engine database comprises a rich collection of 145 manufactured engines [7 to 12], supplemented by 39 engines previously examined in various NASA aeronautics projects [13 to 18]. These engines, spanning from the mid-1960s to the mid-2010s, encapsulate over fifty years of technological advancements and insights, providing a robust foundation for predictive analytics. The NASA engine data, derived from system studies across multiple aeronautics projects [13 to 18], are included in the database, as detailed in Appendix A. The development process consists of the following steps:

- Engine data collection, augmentation, and preparation
- ML models training
- ML models testing and evaluation
- Monitoring and updating

#### **3.1 ENGINE DATA COLLECTION, AUGMENTATION, AND PREPARATION**

• Engine data collection

Our database primarily comprises 145 commercial engines [7 to 12] and 39 engines from NASA aeronautics projects [13 to 18]. These commercial engines represent a broad spectrum of advancements and insights into engine technology over the past five decades, thereby providing a robust foundation for our machine learning models.

Data augmentation

Data augmentation is a crucial technique employed in machine learning to enhance model performance and generalization. By augmenting existing data through various transformations and modifications, we increase the diversity and quantity of training data, thereby improving the model's adaptability and performance. In our study, we augmented the data by scaling up current engines by 10%, while maintaining key operating parameters such as bypass ratio, overall pressure ratio, and others, as shown below:



With data augmentation, our database expanded as follows:



Following data collection and augmentation, the next step involved preparing the data for training our machine learning models. This process entailed cleaning, preprocessing, normalization, and random shuffling of the dataset. The dataset was then split into training and testing sets for model training and evaluation, respectively.

#### • Dataset preparation

The next step was to prepare the data that would be used to train the ML models. It involved cleaning and preprocessing the data to remove errors or inconsistencies and organizing the data into a format that could be used for the training. The engine dataset was normalized and shuffled randomly (using pseudo-random number generator) and divided into two datasets: the training set and the testing set. The training set was used to train, cross-validate, and build predictive models. The testing set consisted of the remaining engines that were unseen by the training models and was retained for the

final evaluation of the predictive analytics. The dataset preparation is described in detail in [1, 2, and 3].

#### **3.2 ML MODELS TRAINING**

Once the data was prepared, we selected appropriate algorithms for training our machine learning models. Supervised deep-learning and K-nearest neighbor algorithms [19] were utilized for constructing models predicting TSFC, engine weight, core size, fan diameter, and turbomachinery stage count.

These models were developed and trained using Keras, an open-source neural networks API, with TensorFlow as the backend engine. Regularization techniques such as L2 and Dropout [20 and 21] were employed to prevent overfitting, and optimization was performed using the Adam optimization algorithm [22]. A grid-search routine was utilized for hyperparameter tuning, ensuring optimal model performance.

A total of nine ML models were trained and cross-validated for various engine parameters. The training and cross validation of these ML models are described in detail in [1, 2, and 3].

#### **3.3 ML MODELS TESTING**

Following model training, the next step involved testing and evaluating their performance using a separate testing dataset, described in detail in  $[1, 2, 3]$ . The results indicated high accuracy levels across all models, as summarized below:



Notes: \*based on the current database

1-stage fan is assumed for all the engines

#### **3.4 MONITORING AND UPDATING**

Continuous monitoring and updates are vital for ensuring the sustained performance of our machine learning models. While the commercial engine data remain static, the NASA engine data are subject to revisions over time as aeronautics research progresses. It's imperative to periodically update our models to incorporate these changes and maintain their accuracy and effectiveness. As NASA's research evolves through different aircraft generations (labeled  $N+1$ ,  $N+2$ ,  $N+3$ ), corresponding updates to our models will be crucial to align with evolving technological objectives and advancements.



Figure 2 – An example engine design output

# **4.0 SUMMARY**

This paper presents a comprehensive methodology for the development and deployment of machine learning (ML) models aimed at assessing aircraft engine concepts. The approach is bifurcated into two core components: the frontend and the backend.

At the frontend is the *Aero-Engines Chatbot*, an AI-driven conversational platform powered by advanced natural language processing (NLP) techniques. Designed to emulate interactive human dialogue through text, the chatbot engages users in the practical application of ML models, thereby enhancing user experience and involvement in the engine evaluation process.

In contrast, the backend is dedicated to the construction of robust ML models utilizing supervised deep-learning algorithms. These models meticulously scrutinize data from an extensive open-source repository that encompasses a wide array of both operational and experimental turbofan engines. The analysis predominantly focuses on critical engine metrics such as thrust-specific fuel consumption (TSFC), engine weight, diameter, and turbomachinery stage counts. The comprehensive workflow encompasses data collection, augmentation, preparation, followed by the training, cross-validation, testing, and evaluation of the ML models, culminating in their ongoing refinement and enhancement.

This study shows that the integration of AI-powered chatbot to deploy ML-based predictive analytics offers a promising opportunity for the exploration of aircraft engine design concepts.

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## **Appendix A**

#### **Engine database**



System type: DD = direct-drive system  $G =$  geared system

## **Appendix A (cont'd)**

#### **Engine database**



System type:  $DD =$  direct-drive system  $G =$  geared system

#### **Appendix A (cont'd)**

#### **Engine Database**



System type:  $DD =$  direct-drive system<br> $G =$  geared system

 $G =$  geared system ERA – Environmentally Responsible Aviation project AATT – Advanced Air Transport Technology project