

Interactive comment on “Does discharge time source correspond to its geographic source in hydrograph separations? Toward identification of dominant runoff processes in a 300 square kilometer watershed” by Y. Yokoo

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Received and published: 22 November 2014

Thank you for your review and my responses are in the followings.

The study compares a numerical separation of streamflow (called time source) with a separation employing EMMA (geographic source) in a 3000 km² watershed, a part of the Abukuma river, Japan. The paper is well written and very well structured, and I think that comparison between tracer based mathematically based hydrograph separation are urgently needed and thus of general interest to the reader of HESS. That said,

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I think that the manuscript suffers from several methodological shortcomings, and does not hold what was promised in the title and introduction. I will aim to outline my concerns in the following also accounting for some recent work that seems to go beyond the presented work here. Also I am aware of the challenges that come with the scale of the investigated watershed.

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your interests on this topic. My responses for your major concerns are summarized in the followings.

The first major concern is the application of the EMMA method. i) At first we need to be very carefully, since Uhlenbrook and Hoeg (2003) outlined the strong limitations of hydrograph separations on mesoscale (their catchment was one order of magnitude smaller than the one in this manuscript). Uhlenbrook and Hoeg doubt and clearly reason their doubt that the separation can give qualitative results. So I am already concerned about the scale

RESPONSE:

We agree with you. Therefore, I needed averaging to overcome the problem of scale. I would discuss it in the revised manuscript.

ii) The use of turbidity as a hydrological tracer: The author reports that 5 parameters were measured hourly, and never outlines why he decided for EC and turbidity. I do not see how a separation based on turbidity would be possible, since its behavior is not close to be conservative. There can be sediment deposition, and erosion even within the streambed, decreasing or increasing the observed turbidity not allowing any inference about the mixing of different end-members. Which would then in turn invalidate both, the EMMA and the comparison of its results to the filtering.

RESPONSE:

I would explain why I selected EC and turbidity in the revised manuscript: Other param-

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eters could not explain characteristics of stream flow data. You doubt my use of turbidity, but it is effective parameter as you see in the separation result at a 3000 square km watershed. Surely there is such detailed processes controlling the magnitude of turbidity, but rather I realize it is more general signature of mixing of near surface water within the total flow at this scale. If we see the flooding river, turbidity seems very high because of the color of river water. Also, turbidity should be chemically conservative at a watershed scale allowing uncertainty to some level, because

iii) Identification/Defining of End-members: I do admit the challenge of measuring and defining end-member event in small headwater catchments, and it is a crucial (and cruel) task on the scale of this work. On first sight the use of an area minimized triangle seems to be a very appealing quick-fix. Nevertheless as stated by the author on page 10939 L13, this method has never been tested, so we simply cannot assume it is appropriate. The author argues that this testing is not in the scope of the current work, but I strongly disagree in this point, if we do not know if this is an acceptable assumption, the application to the dataset cannot be analyzed as done here. Further, when applying EMMA on longer time series, accounting for dynamic end-member would be necessary.

RESPONSE:

You are completely right, if we do not challenge new approaches. We have used a data set as long as one year that covers most of the watershed behaviors, which is much longer and rich in its variability compared to studies based on the data from well gauged basins. My words were reserved a little, but this new approach is quite useful in defining end-members from a long data set. If we want to be safer, we can take a little bigger triangle. But then how much should we make it bigger? It is almost endless question. I would rather want to argue that we should not be so strict for the value of end members. Important thing should not be the accuracy of end member values and separation results, but important questions should be “how many dominant processes are there?”, “how can their contributions change in time?”, and, in this study,

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“Can discharge sub-components separated by EMMA comparable with those by filter separation?”. But these opinions are not well written, I would add these in the revised manuscript.

Second point of major concern is the numerical-filter separation: i) It needs to be better outlined why exactly the filter-separation autoregressive method was chosen of all available methods. E.g. Gonzales et al. (2009) used 9 different methods and compared that to the results of EMMA based separation, although they only did a separation in two components. Also Rimmer and Hartman (2014) used different separation methods and even used the hydrochemistry to constrain the method and the chosen parameters.

RESPONSE:

I think filter-separation autoregressive method is one of the best separation method, because it is compatible with data-based modeling approach. Based on the recession analysis of hydrograph, we can decide the key parameter of the filter and only one single parameter must be fixed. Most important feature of this method is we can apply the filter repeatedly to separate hydrograph into several discharge sub-components where the key parameter “recession time constant” can be decided solely from the recession analysis of hydrograph. Therefore this method best fits to this study. I would mention above points in the revised manuscript.

ii) The choice of the parameters and the effect of the choice need to be outlined better, it seems somewhat arbitrarily. The same holds true for the separation in 5 components. Why 5 when comparing to three components from EMMA? Can the method identify the maximum number of active components?

RESPONSE:

I did not explain well. I have already developed a methodology to decide the maximum number of active components in Nishiyama and Yokoo (2013) and I would explain it in the revised manuscript. We decide recession time constant from hydrograph from

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the longer time constant. To move the next recession time constant, we search more steep recession part on a logarithmic plot of discharge. When we calculate $\log_6 T_c$ and if it is different from that of the time constant found first, then we employ the T_c as the second T_c . Same are repeated until we can not find any steeper recession part. Only the parameter f_w must be fixed by model user, but it is easy to fix manually. I would explain the above in the revised manuscript.

Third point of major concerns is the comparison of EMMA and Numerical-filtering: i) How was the correlating on P.10941 L11ff done? What means "best correlated"? Was there a subjective criterion?

RESPONSE:

I used correlation coefficient and I would mention it in the revised manuscript.

ii) It seems that a liner fit in figure 6a is not the best fit. It does even seem that the values of Q_a decrease until Q_5 reaches values of $1E-2$. It also seems that the majority of points is located below the indicated regression line in figure 6a. How is the regression calculated? Please give the regression equation for figures 6-8 including the p-value.

RESPONSE:

I should have explain that we selected the regression equation assuming that the equations should be linear without intercepts. On such assumptions, we obtained the best fit linear function. The point was not the accuracy of the correlation, but it was finding the most close relationships between discharge sub-components derived by EMMA and filtering. I would mention it in the revised manuscript.

iii) I am concerned about the smoothing of component Q_1 . The smooting window is over 2 month, and I highly doubt that the instream transport of water can be that long on the actual scale, if we regard the in stream transport usually be less than 2 weeks even in the world's largest river basins. So I would argue that this explanation falls short, and there is either a serious problem with the determination of Q_1 or the determination

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of Q_c .

RESPONSE:

I am not sure if I could understand correctly, but, first of all, let me clarify that I did not smooth Q_1 but I smoothed Q_c only. Hence, there is no problem with Q_1 . Q_1 is correspond to baseflow and Q_1 was compared with Q_c that is characterized by high EC and zero turbidity. Travel time of Q_c in streams could be short, but this components is regarded as ground water type flow because of high EC and zero turbidity. Therefore, the long smoothing window over 2month should be acceptable. My explanation might be surely short, and I would carefully explain these points in the revised manuscript.

iiii) The comparison of EMMA versus numerical separation should also be done for both, exemplified events and the long term behavior. I.e. what are the differences in discharge volume for the individual events, and on the long term?

RESPONSE:

I would add figures to meet your request in the revised manuscript.

These methodological issues make the final results relatively vague and speculative. I also do not see the general novelty of this work as it might be too much focused on a single filtering method, although the general idea behind the work, combining numerical-filtering and tracer based hydrograph separation is indeed an important topic in watershed hydrolog. This is especially true if we consider the challenges of long term measurement programs of hydro-chemistry. The manuscript is, in my opinion, not acceptable in its current version, because of the fundamental limitations regarding the methods. This limitations leave doubt whether the results would have been similar when the methods would be more sound. I am not sure, if a revision is feasible for the current manuscript, although the topic is of interest.

RESPONSE:

I think only using multiple filtering or other separation techniques can be novelty. I

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am sure that I have selected one of the best existing numerical separation method. Manybe, I did not discuss this point well and I would discuss it in the revised manuscript. I admit my explanations are not enough, which caused misunderstandings on the part of original manuscript. Although there are difference in our opinions, yet it must not be equivalent to reject my challenge with new approach.

Minor comments: Title: there seems to be a typo in the title, the catchment area should be 3000 sqare kilometer not 300. I am also not sure if it would be better to say that it compares numerical separation with tracer based separation? Since the definition of time source for the numerical separation might be misleading? I.e. is an arbitrarily mathematical separation really time sources? There are also some typos of authors names: "McNamura" should be "McNamara", "Klause and McDonnell" should be "Klaus and McDonnell". Maybe use the reference manager to directly place the citation in the text to avoid typos, since the references are cited in the right way in the reference list. If not, please rigorously check the citations.

P10933L4: Please clarify hpw Barnes (1940) did this exactly.

P10933L16ff: See work by Rimmer and Hartmann (2014)

P10934L1-5: Define "similar". Also if they did not verify their estimates how were they able to determine similarity?

P10934L25: Does this mean the work of Haga and Yokoo (2011) did this separation only for events or they did not verify their results at all? Please clarify.

P10935L2-4: Please rewrite the sentence "Their discussion. . ." it reads confusing. At the end of the introduction I was still missing what was actually achieve by comparing mathematical and chemical hydrograph separation (I also missed some references to papers I am aware of e.g. Gonzales et al. (2009)) and was not completely sure what the research need is. This needs to be made stronger

P10935L15ff. I miss physiographic information of the catchment. Please add.

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P10936L3ff. No need to report unused data, e.g. dissolved oxygen.

P10936L11: "Time source". I am not sure of that really is a time source, or simply a distinc flow path. Time source can easily be misinterpret as event and pre-event water (from isotope based separations)

P10937L23ff. This seems arbitrarily.

P10939L8ff. The author needs to outline the choice of the chemical parameters used. Following my major comments I do have serious doubts regarding the use of turbidity. Further comments see above.

P10940L23. The behavior of the groundwater contributions is indeed very uncommon. I think it is too simple to say that this is how EMMA behaves in watershed of this scale. I would argue that this is a relic of the choice of the endmembers and the use of turbidity.

P10941L10ff. See major comments. How was the correlation done etc., linear regression maybe not best fit.

P10942L9ff. Known latest since Uhlenbrook and Hoeg (2003).

P10943L2: I still think this agreement is vague, and uncertain to the method limitations. I would want to see, volumes and how are the different from each other (also in percentage), for baseflow and events.

P10943L14-19. Figure 9 seems to be unnecessary, in my opinion.

P10944L4-7: I still miss reasoning why the chosen way of describing endmember is a valid assumption.

P10945L1: This is speculative (again considering the amount of assumptions made in EMMA).

P10945L17: I am not sure if a 2 month time delay (1585h) is realistic?

P10946L4ff. A quick search shows that this was already done in earlier work (Gonzales

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et al., 2009, Rimmer and Hartmann, 2014). There might be more. So the author needs to be more convincing.

P10946L19: Installing and automatic sampler can be possible, no need to start high frequency observations.

P10946L20: Typo "luquid"

P10947L13-17: Same issue, if a delay model would be needed this makes no sense from two points: At first: 66 days is too long. Second that would change the mixing at the catchment outlet, thus the EMMA would need to create different results. Figures: 4-8 are relatively small in the printout, figure 9 is not necessary as it does not present novelty

References Optimal hydrograph separation filter to evaluate transport routines of hydrological models A Rimmer, A Hartmann *Journal of Hydrology* 514, 249-257

Comparison of different base flow separation methods in a lowland catchment AL Gonzales, J Nonner, J Heijkers, S Uhlenbrook - *Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.*, 13, 2055-2068, 2009

Quantifying uncertainties in tracer-based hydrograph separations: a case study for two-, three- and five-component hydrograph separations in a mountainous catchment S Uhlenbrook, S Hoeg *Hydrological Processes* 17 (2), 431-453

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your careful readings and suggestions. I would carefully correct the manuscript along your suggestions listed in your "minor comments". As for the title, I would try to change it better as much as possible.

Interactive comment on *Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss.*, 11, 10931, 2014.

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