Universal and original-preserving quantum copying is impossible

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Received 27 February 2002; received in revised form 17 March 2002; accepted 20 March 2002

Communicated by J.P. Vigier

Abstract

We show that an arbitrary quantum state cannot be universally 1 → 2 copied keeping the original copy unchanged. Indeed, the density operator of the additional copy after the copying transformation is nothing but the scale product of the identity matrix with factor 1/2, which involves no information of the original state. © 2002 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

In quantum mechanics, the no-cloning theorem [1, 2] which tells us an unknown quantum state cannot be cloned perfectly puts a restriction on getting information from an arbitrary unknown quantum state. However, imperfect copying is not forbidden. Buzek and Hillery [3] constructed a universal 1 → 2 quantum copying machine (UQCM) which, taking an arbitrary pure state as input, can produce two identical copies with certain quality independent of the input state. Indeed, Buzek and Hillery’s UQCM is also the optimal one with type 1 → 2 when the fidelity serves as the measure of closeness between quantum states [4–7].

The imperfect copying transformations considered in the previous literature will change the input states while it is not always what we expect. In many cases, not to destroy the states we copy is more important than to copy information with a higher quality, especially when the copying process is secret. A natural question arises here is whether we can copy a state with certain quality keeping the original one unchanged. Unfortunately, the answer is no. In this short Letter, we construct such a universal original-preserving copying machine with type 1 → 2 and prove that it cannot actually copy any information of the input state by showing that the density operator of the additional copy is just 1/2 * I, where I denotes the identity matrix.

The most general 1 → 2 quantum copying transformation on a two-dimensional Hilbert space which keeps the original copy unchanged can be written as

\begin{align}
U|0\rangle|\Sigma\rangle|X\rangle = a|0\rangle|0\rangle|A\rangle + b|0\rangle|1\rangle|B\rangle,
\end{align}

\begin{align}
U|1\rangle|\Sigma\rangle|X\rangle = \tilde{a}|1\rangle|1\rangle|\tilde{A}\rangle + \tilde{b}|1\rangle|0\rangle|\tilde{B}\rangle,
\end{align}

where |\Sigma\rangle is the input state of the ancillary system, normalized states |X\rangle and |A\rangle, |B\rangle, |\tilde{A}\rangle, |\tilde{B}\rangle denote the initial and final states of the copying apparatus, respectively.

Due to the unitarity of the transformations in (1), the coefficients must satisfy the following relations

\begin{align}
|a|^2 + |b|^2 = 1, \quad |\tilde{a}|^2 + |\tilde{b}|^2 = 1.
\end{align}
Suppose \(|\psi\rangle = \alpha|0\rangle + \beta|1\rangle\) is an arbitrary state and \(|\alpha|^2 + |\beta|^2 = 1\). Applying the transformation (1) to \(|\psi\rangle\) we find that the density operators of the original and additional copies are

\[
\rho_{\psi,1}^{(\text{out})} = |\alpha|^2|0\rangle\langle 0| + \alpha^* \beta (\alpha^* \hat{b}|A\rangle \hat{b}^*|A\rangle + b^* \tilde{a}|\tilde{A}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}|0\rangle \langle 1| + |\beta|^2|1\rangle\langle 1| + \alpha \beta^* (\alpha^* b|A\rangle \hat{A}^* + b^* \alpha|\tilde{A}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}|)\langle 1|0\rangle ,
\]

respectively. Imposing again the original-preserving condition (i.e., \(\rho_{\psi,1}^{(\text{out})} = |\psi\rangle\langle \psi|\)), we have

\[
a^* \hat{b}|A\rangle \hat{A}^* + b^* \tilde{a}|\tilde{A}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}| = 1 .
\]

We now turn to use the universality condition. First, the fidelity describing the difference between the original copy and the additional one reads

\[
F = \langle \psi|\rho_{\psi,1}^{(\text{out})}|\psi\rangle = |\alpha|^2 (|\alpha|^2 |a|^2 + |\beta|^2 |\hat{b}|^2) + |\beta|^2 (|\alpha|^2 |b|^2 + |\beta|^2 |\tilde{a}|^2) + 2 \Re[\alpha^* \beta (|\alpha|^2 \alpha^* b|A\rangle \hat{A}^* + |\beta|^2 \beta^* b^* \tilde{a}|\tilde{A}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}|)] .
\]

Let \(\alpha = |\alpha| e^{i \delta_\alpha}\) and \(\beta = |\beta| e^{i \delta_\beta}\), then \(\alpha^* \beta = |\alpha||\beta| e^{i(\delta_\beta - \delta_\alpha)} = \sqrt{|\alpha|^2 (1 - |\alpha|^2)} e^{i(\delta_\beta - \delta_\alpha)}\). The universality condition requires that the expression of \(F\) given in (6) be independent of \(|\alpha|^2\), which means

\[
\frac{\partial F}{\partial t} = (2|\alpha|^2 + 2|\tilde{a}|^2 - 2|b|^2 - 2|\hat{b}|^2) t + 2 \Re[M e^{i(\delta_\beta - \delta_\alpha)}] \sqrt{(1 - t)} + \Re[(M t + \hat{b}^* \tilde{a}|\tilde{A}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}|) e^{i(\delta_\beta - \delta_\alpha)}] \times (1 - 2t) \sqrt{t(1 - t)} + (|b|^2 + |\hat{b}|^2 - 2|\tilde{a}|^2) = 0 ,
\]

where \(t\) denotes \(|\alpha|^2\) and \(M = a^* b\langle A|B\rangle - \hat{b}^* \tilde{a}|\tilde{A}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}|\). Since (7) holds for any \(t \in (0, 1)\) and \(\delta_\alpha, \delta_\beta \in [0, 2\pi]\), we get

\[
2|\alpha|^2 + 2|\tilde{a}|^2 - 2|b|^2 - 2|\hat{b}|^2 = 0 , \quad \hat{b}^* \tilde{a}|\tilde{A}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}| = 0 , \quad |b|^2 + |\hat{b}|^2 - 2|\tilde{a}|^2 = 0 .
\]

Notice that none of \(a, \tilde{a}, b, \tilde{b}\) is equal to 0, otherwise if \(a = 0\) or \(\tilde{a} = 0\) then the four are all equal to 0 and if \(b = 0\) or \(\tilde{b} = 0\) then a contradiction arises. Solving these functions, we can get the final relations which the coefficients and apparatus states must satisfy as

\[
|\alpha| = |\tilde{a}| = |b| = |\hat{b}| = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} .
\]

\(\langle A|B\rangle = (|\tilde{A}\rangle |\tilde{B}\rangle = 0)\),

\(a^* \tilde{b}|A\rangle |\tilde{A}\rangle + b^* \tilde{a}|\tilde{B}\rangle\langle \tilde{A}| = 1 .\)

Now, taking the constraints in (9) back into (4), we find that the density operator of the additional copy becomes \(\rho_{\psi,2}^{(\text{out})} = \frac{1}{2} (|0\rangle\langle 0| + |1\rangle\langle 1|) = 1/2\), which contains no information of the original copy \(|\psi\rangle\). This tells us that copying an arbitrary pure state without changing it is forbidden.

In summary, we have showed that the attempt to \(1 \rightarrow 2\) universally copy an arbitrary unknown quantum state keeping the original copy unchanged is forbidden by proving that this kind of copying transformations can copy no information of the input states indeed. The result also holds for \(1 \rightarrow n\) case. An interest direction for further studying is to get rid of the universality condition and consider the state-dependent copying.

**Acknowledgements**

This work is supported by the National Foundation for Distinguished Young Scholars (Grant No. 69725004), the National Key Project for Basic Research (Grant No. 1998030509) and the National Foundation of Natural Sciences (Grant No. 69823001).

**References**
