

Ocean Initialization for Seasonal Forecasts

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Abstract

The potential for climate predictability at seasonal time scales resides in information provided by the ocean initial conditions, in particular the upper thermal structure. Currently, several operational centres issue routine seasonal forecasts produced with coupled ocean-atmosphere models, requiring real-time knowledge of the state of the global ocean. Seasonal forecasting needs the calibration of the numerical output of the coupled model, which in turn requires an historical ocean reanalysis, as will be discussed in this paper.

Assimilation of observations into an ocean model forced by prescribed atmospheric fluxes is the most common practice for initialization of the ocean component of a coupled model. It is shown that the assimilation of ocean data reduces the uncertainty in the ocean estimation arising from the uncertainty in the forcing fluxes. Although data assimilation also improves the skill of seasonal forecasts in many cases, its impact is often overshadowed by errors in the coupled models. This paper offers a review of the existing ocean analysis efforts aiming at the initialization of seasonal forecasts. The current practice, known as "uncoupled" initialization, has often been criticized as having several shortcomings, the initialization shock being one of them. On the other hand, the uncoupled initialization usually benefits from better knowledge of the atmospheric forcing fluxes, an advantage that should not be overlooked.

In recent years, the idea of obtaining truly "coupled" initialization, where the different components of the coupled system are well balanced, has stimulated several research activities that will be reviewed in light of their application to seasonal forecasts.

Key words: Seasonal forecasts, initialization, ocean reanalysis, data assimilation.

1. Introduction

Seasonal forecasting is now a routine activity in several operational centers around the world. Seasonal forecasting systems are based on coupled ocean-atmosphere general circulation models that predict both the lower boundary conditions (namely sea surface temperatures (SSTs)) and their impact on the atmospheric circulation. This approach is often called a one-tier approach. In a one-tier approach, forecasting the SST using a fully-coupled model is essentially an initial value problem since predictability largely resides in the initial state of the ocean. The probabilistic nature of seasonal forecasting is

addressed by performing an ensemble of integrations with the aim of sampling the probability density function (PDF), primarily for the atmosphere. The uncertainty in the ocean initial conditions should be considered in the ensemble generation (Vialard *et al.* 2003). Because of deficiencies in the component models the coupled model drifts with forecast lead time towards the biased coupled model climate. A common approach is to remove the drift a posteriori: a set of historical hindcasts is performed to provide an estimate of the model climatological PDF, which is then used for a-posteriori calibration of the forecast results. The quality of seasonal forecasts is determined by the various elements of the forecasting system (the ocean initialization, the coupled model, the ensemble generation and the calibration strategy), all of which are closely interrelated. The interdependence of the different elements becomes clear when considering the calibration procedure. The a-posteriori calibration of model output requires an estimate of the model climatology, which is obtained by performing a series of coupled hindcasts during some historical period (typically 15-25 years). A historical record of hindcasts is also needed for skill assessment. Ocean initial conditions spanning the chosen calibration period, equivalent to an ocean “reanalysis” of the historical data stream, are then required. The interannual variability represented by the ocean reanalysis will have an impact on both the calibration and on the assessment of the skill.

The skill of the seasonal forecasts is often used to gauge the goodness of the ocean initial conditions although that may not always be an appropriate measure: the quality of the coupled model will determine the precision of the assessment - if the major source of forecast error comes from the coupled model, changes to the ocean initial conditions would have little impact on the forecast skill. This is something to bear in mind when interpreting results of the impact of the ocean data assimilation on seasonal forecasts.

Although ocean data assimilation is now commonly used to generate ocean initial conditions for seasonal forecasts, the procedure is not without issues. For instance, the assimilation can improve the forecasts by correcting the mean state, but it can also introduce problems such as initialization shock. The non-stationary nature of the ocean observing system can degrade the interannual variability of the ocean initial conditions if not treated carefully (Balmaseda *et al.* 2007). This paper discusses the potential benefits and problems induced by ocean data assimilation, mainly due to the existence of systematic biases in the coupled system. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 offers a brief description of the initialization procedures used in operational seasonal forecasts. The impact of data assimilation in the creation of the initial conditions and in the seasonal forecasts is presented in sections 3 and 4. A brief review of recent initiatives towards a second generation of initialization procedures aiming at a balance initialization is offered in section 5. The paper ends with a summary and main conclusions.

2 Overview of initialization in existing seasonal forecasting systems

Most seasonal forecast systems have a separate initialization of the ocean and atmospheric components of the coupled system, aiming at generating the best analyses of the atmosphere and ocean through comprehensive data assimilation schemes in both media. This is the strategy followed in the operational or quasi-operational seasonal forecasting systems listed in table 1 and described briefly below. It is also the most common strategy followed in most of the coupled integrations in several research projects, such as DEMETER and ENSEMBLES, which will not be described in this paper.

The production of seasonal forecasts is expensive: the need for ensembles and calibration implies the integration of the coupled model for several hundreds of years. This computational burden limits the practical resolution of the ocean model, which is typically of the order of 1 degree with some equatorial refinement in the horizontal, and about 10 meters in the vertical in the upper ocean. The emphasis is on the initialization of the upper ocean thermal structure, particularly the tropics, where the ocean has a strong driving influence on the atmospheric circulation. The atmospheric analysis in turn has very strong impact on the quality of the ocean analysis since it provides the fluxes used to drive the ocean model in the production of the first guess. The atmospheric fluxes are usually provided by an atmospheric reanalysis system (ERA40, JRA-25, NCEP), and as these are usually limited in duration, the fluxes from the operational analysis are then used (ops in table 1). A key parameter in the ocean analysis is SST. It is one of the better-observed variables and the ocean analysis usually does not modify this field greatly.

MRI-JMA http://ds.data.jma.go.jp/tcc/tcc/products/elnino/index.html		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational • MOVE/MRI.COM-G (1x1 +0.3eq) .50 vertical levels • Multi-variate 3DVAR • JRA-25(1979-2003)+JMA ops fluxes • 10 days assimilation cycle+IAU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COBE-SST gridded product • Subsurface T&S (GTS+α) • SLA along track from AVISO • MDT analyzed with historical T, S 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weighted mean of clim. (1%) and model fields is used for FG.. • From 1979 onwards • Both Delayed (34-38 days) and NRT (3-7 days) • Lagged ensemble
ORA-S3 (ECMWF) www.ecmwf.int/products/forecasts/d/charts/ocean ECMWF System 3 http://www.ecmwf.int/products/forecasts/d/charts/seasonal/		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational • HOPE (1x1+0.3 eq). 29 vertical levels • Multivariate OI • ERA40 (1959-2002)+ ECMWFops fluxes • 10 day assim cycle+IAU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HadISST+ Reynolds OI v2 SST • Subsurface T&S (ENACT/ENSEMBLES+GTS) • SLA maps from AVISO • MDT by assimilating T,S 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bias correction (T,S and Pressure) • 10-year relaxation to clim • From 1959 onwards • Both Delayed (12 days) and RT • 5-analyses ensemble
POAMA – PEODAS (CAWCR, Melbourne)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In transition to Operations • ACOM-2 Ocean Model Based on MOM2. • ERA-40 (1980-2001)+NCEP2 (2002 onwards) fluxes • 3 Day assimilation cycle • Multi-variate ensemble OI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENACT observational data set T&S • SST from NCEP re-analysis • Time evolving covariances from ensemble perturbed about main analysis using forcing perturbations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T&S 3D relaxation to Levitus with 2year time scale • Ensemble initial conditions from ensemble of states used for covariance calculation
GODAS (NCEP) http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/GODAS/		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational • MOMv3 (1x1 + 1/3 at eq). 40 vertical levels, 3DVar • NCEP/DOE R2 atmospheric fluxes • 12 hour assimilation cycle+IAU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature from NODC,GTSP and GTS. • Along Track SLA from Jason-1 • SST from Reynolds OIv2. • MDT by assimilation of T,S 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 1979 onwards • Both 14 days and 1 day lags relative to RT • No relaxation to climate
MERCATOR (Meteo France) http://bulletin.mercator-ocean.fr/html/welcome_en.jsp		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational • OPA8.2 ORCA2 (2cosϕ x 2° + 0.5° eq.) reduced order Kalman Filter (SEEK) • ERA-40 (1979-2001) + ops fluxes • 7-day assimilation cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reynolds OI v2 SST • Subsurface T&S (ENSEMBLES+CORIOLIS) • SLA along track from AVISO • Model MDT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-year relaxation to clim • From 1979 onwards • 7 days behind RT
MO (MetOffice) http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/seasonal/		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational • HadOM3/OI (1x1+0.3 eq) • ERA40 (1985-2002)+ ECMWFops fluxes • 7 days assim cycle+IAU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HadISST+ Reynolds OI v2 SST • Subsurface T&S (ENACT/ENSEMBLES+GTS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bias correction (Pressure) • From 1985 onwards • 3 days behind RT • 5-analyses ensemble
GMAO ODAS-1 http://gmao.gsfc.nasa.gov/research/oceanassim/ODA_vis.php GMAO Seasonal Forecasts: http://gmao.gsfc.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/products/climateforecasts/index.cgi		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational • Poseidon/OI and EnKF (5/8 x 1/3) • NCEP R1+ SSMI winds GPCP precip • 5 day assim cycle+IAU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reynolds OI v2 SST • Subsurface T&S (NCEP GTS + TAO + GDAC Argo) • SLA along-track from JPL (EnKF only) • Online bias correction for MDT (EnKF only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bias correction (SLA) • From 1993 onwards • Delayed (about 7 days) • 3-analyses ensemble

Table1: Summary of different ocean assimilation systems used in the initialization of operational and quasi-operational seasonal forecasts.

Most of the initialization systems also use subsurface temperature, most recently also salinity (mainly from Argo), and altimeter derived sea-level anomalies (SLA). The latter usually needs the prescription of

an external Mean Dynamic Topography (MDT). Some of the initialization systems may use an on-line bias correction scheme or relaxation to climatology to control the mean state.

2.1 MRI-JMA

The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) provides operational information of the real time state of the ocean and atmosphere in the tropical Pacific associated with ENSO. JMA has also forecast the anomalies of the monthly mean SST in the NINO3 region (5°S-5°N, 90-150°W) since March, 2008 (<http://ds.data.jma.go.jp/tcc/tcc/products/elnino/index.html>). These products are based on a data assimilation system, MOVE/MRI.COM-G (Usui *et al.* 2006), and a coupled ocean-atmosphere general circulation model, JMA/MRI-CGCM (Yasuda *et al.* 2007). MOVE/MRI.COM-G is the global data assimilation system composed of the ocean model, MRI.COM (Ishikawa *et al.* 2005), and the ocean analysis scheme, MOVE (Fujii and Kamachi 2003; Fujii *et al.* 2005). The model uses a near-global domain (75°S-75°N) and 50 levels in the vertical. The grid spacing is 1°, with meridional equatorial refinement to 0.3° within 5°S-5°N. The layer thicknesses are less than 10m above 200m depth. The analysis scheme, MOVE, adopts a multivariate 3-Dimensional Variational (3DVAR) method with vertical coupled Temperature-Salinity (T-S) Empirical Orthogonal Function (EOF) modes. A nonlinear observation operator for SLA data, a constraint avoiding density inversion, and a variational quality control procedure is adopted. The optimal temperature and salinity fields analyzed in MOVE are inserted into the model using the Incremental Analysis Updates (IAU) technique (Bloom *et al.* 1996), using an assimilation cycle of 10 days.

MOVE/MRI.COM-G assimilates satellite SLA data from AVISO (<http://www.aviso.oceanobs.com>), the gridded COBE-SST (Ishii *et al.* 2005), and in situ temperature and salinity profiles. In reanalyses, temperature and salinity profiles are obtained from the World Ocean Database 2001 (WOD01; Conkright *et al.* 2002), the Global Temperature-Salinity Profile Program (GTSP) database (Hamilton 1994), and the data of the TAO/TRITON array (Hayes *et al.* 1991; McPhaden *et al.* 1998; Kuroda 2002). For the real time analyses, the in-situ data is acquired via the GTS and some domestic sources (α in Table 1)

2.2 ECMWF ORA-S3

The ECMWF Ocean Reanalysis System ORA-S3 (Balmaseda *et al.* 2008a) has been operational since August 2006, providing ocean initial conditions for the ECMWF seasonal and monthly forecasts since March 2007. The ocean data assimilation system for ORA-S3 is based on the HOPE-OI scheme. The ocean model has a horizontal resolution of 1° with equatorial refinement (0.3° meridional resolution within 5° of the equator). The first guess is obtained by forcing the ocean model with daily fluxes of momentum, heat and fresh water from the ERA-40 reanalysis (Uppala *et al.* 2005) for the period January 1959 to June 2002 and NWP operational analyses thereafter. The ORA-S3 system uses a 3D Optimal Interpolation (OI) scheme to assimilate temperature, salinity, altimeter derived sea-level anomalies and global sea level trends. The assimilation of altimeter is described in Vidard *et al.* 2008. Physical constraints relate the temperature and salinity increments (Troccoli *et al.* 2002.), density and velocity increments (Burgers *et al.* 2002) and sea level and vertical profile displacement (Cooper and Haines 1996). The background temperature, salinity and pressure gradient are bias corrected following the algorithm described in Balmaseda *et al.* 2007. A selection of historical and real-time ocean analysis products can be seen at www.ecmwf.int/products/forecasts/d/charts/ocean. The subsurface observations come from the quality-controlled dataset prepared for the ENACT and ENSEMBLES projects until 2004 (Ingleby and Huddleston, 2006), and from the GTS thereafter (ENACT/GTS). The altimeter data used are global gridded weekly maps from 1993 onwards (Le Traon *et al.*, 1998). The model SSTs are strongly relaxed to analyzed daily SST maps from the OIv2 SST product (Reynolds *et al.*, 2002) from 1982 onwards. Prior to that date, the same SST product as in the ERA-40 reanalysis was used.

In ORA-S3, the introduction of a bias correction algorithm with both prescribed and adaptive components has improved the representation of the inter-annual variability of the upper ocean heat content. However, there may still be problems with the representation of the variability in very poorly observed areas such as the Southern Ocean and also in the salinity field. ORA-S3 consists of an ensemble of five simultaneous

reanalyses, aiming at sampling uncertainty in the ocean initial conditions, and thereby contributing to the creation of the ensemble of forecasts for the probabilistic predictions at monthly and seasonal ranges.

2.3 MERCATOR-Meteo France

Mercator-Ocean has provided ocean initial conditions for the Météo-France ocean-atmosphere coupled system since September 2004. These ocean initial conditions are produced with PSY2G2 operational ocean analysis / forecasting system based on the OPA8.2 ocean model (ORCA2 model configuration, Madec *et al.* 1998) and on a reduced order Kalman filter data assimilation scheme. The ocean model has a horizontal resolution of $2.\cos\phi \times 2^\circ$ with an equatorial meridional refinement of $\sim 0.5^\circ$ resolution near the equator. The ocean model is forced with daily fluxes of momentum, heat and fresh water from the ERA-40 reanalysis for the period January 1979 to December 2001 and from the operational analysis thereafter. It assimilates subsurface temperature and salinity, SLA data and SST maps. The subsurface data comes from the ENACT/ENSEMBLES data base until 2001. Afterwards, data are quality controlled and provided by the CORIOLIS data center (<http://www.coriolis.eu.org>) both in delayed mode and real-time. The altimetric data are along-track SLA provided from November 1992 onwards by SSALTO/DUACS. The assimilated SST product is used as boundary conditions in the atmospheric analyses subsequently used to force the ocean model (ERA-40 and ECMWF operational analyses after 2001).

The data assimilation scheme is a reduced order Kalman filter based on the SEEK formulation (Pham *et al.* 1998). The control vector is composed of the temperature and salinity fields and the barotropic height. The forecast error covariance is based on the statistics of a collection of 3D ocean state anomalies (typically a few hundred) and is seasonally variable. In this case, the anomalies are high pass filtered ocean states available over the period 1992-2001 sampled every 3 days. The analysis produces temperature and salinity as well as barotropic velocity increments. Physical balance operators are used to deduce zonal and meridional velocity fields from these increments.

2.4 POAMA – PEOODAS (CAWCR)

The Predictive Ocean Atmosphere Model for Australia (POAMA) is a dynamical seasonal prediction system developed by the Centre for Australia Weather and Climate Research (CAWCR: an adjunct centre of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO). One of the major new developments in POAMA is a new ocean data assimilation system called PEOODAS (POAMA Ensemble Ocean Data Assimilation System). The system is based on multivariate ensemble Optimum Interpolation (Oke *et al.* 2005) where the background error covariance is calculated from an ensemble of ocean states. Unlike Oke *et al.* (2005) which uses a static ensemble, PEOODAS uses a time evolving ensemble to calculate a time dependent multivariate error covariance matrix. An ensemble is run in parallel to the main analyses by perturbing the ocean model forcing about the main analysis run, using a method developed by Alves and Robert (2005).

An ocean re-analysis has been conducted from 1977 to 2007, assimilating temperature and salinity observations from the ENACT/ENSEMBLE project. During the assimilation, temperature and salinity were relaxed to monthly climatology through the water column with an e-folding time scale of 2 years. The model SST was strongly nudged to the SST product from the NCEP re-analysis with a 1-day time scale.

2.5 NCEP

The NOAA/NCEP Global Ocean Data Assimilation System (GODAS) (Behringer, 2007) was developed as a replacement for the earlier Pacific Ocean system and was made operational in 2003. It has provided the oceanic initial conditions for seasonal and interannual forecasting with the NCEP coupled Climate Forecast System (CFS) (Saha *et al.*, 2006) since 2004. The GODAS is based a quasi-global configuration of the GFDL MOMv3. The model domain extends from 75°S to 65°N and has a resolution of 1° by 1° enhanced to $1/3^\circ$ meridionally within 10° of the equator. The model has 40 levels with a 10 meter resolution in the upper 200 meters. The GODAS is forced by momentum, heat and fresh water fluxes

from the NCEP/DOE atmospheric Reanalysis 2 (R2) (Kanamitsu *et al.* 2002) which is maintained operationally at NCEP. In addition to the R2 forcing, the temperature at the top model level is relaxed to a weekly OI analysis of sea surface temperature (Reynolds *et al.*, 2002) and the surface salinity is relaxed to an annual climatology. The assimilation method is a 3DVAR scheme derived from the work of Derber and Rosati (1989). Some of the improvements that have been made include the incorporation of revised background error covariances that allow for spatial and temporal variation of the local error variance (Behringer *et al.* 1998) and the assimilation of satellite altimetry data (Vossepoel and Behringer, 2000; Behringer, 2007). The GODAS assimilates temperature profiles from XBTs, from TAO, TRITON and PIRATA moorings and from Argo profiling floats (The Argo Science Team, 2001). For use in ocean reanalysis, XBT observations made prior to 1990 have been acquired from the NODC World Ocean Database 1998 (Conkright *et al.*, 1999), while XBTs made subsequent to 1990 have been acquired from the Global Temperature-Salinity Profile Project (GTSP) (Hamilton, 1994). For use in operations, temperature profile data are acquired via the GTS. The GODAS also assimilates synthetic salinity profiles which are computed for each temperature profile using a local T-S climatology based on the annual mean fields of temperature and salinity from the NODC World Ocean Database. Finally, the GODAS assimilates along-track Jason-1 altimetry data that NCEP receives through a direct link from the US Naval Oceanographic Office in the form of Interim Geophysical Data Records. Only the variable part of the altimetry is assimilated. The variability of the altimetry is determined relative to the 1993-1999 mean of a consolidated TOPEX/Jason-1 data set. The mean dynamic topography (MDT) of the model is computed for the same time period from a GODAS run that assimilates only temperature and salinity. Products derived from the GODAS can be found at www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/GODAS/.

2.6 Met Office

The Met Office seasonal ocean data assimilation system has been operational since March 2004 to provide ocean initial conditions for the Met Office seasonal forecasting system (GloSea3). The assimilation uses an optimal interpolation scheme based on the ocean component of the GloSea model which has a horizontal resolution of 1° with equatorial refinement (0.3° meridional resolution within 5° of the equator). The first guess is obtained by forcing the ocean model with daily fluxes of momentum, heat and fresh water from the ERA-40 reanalysis for the period January 1985 to June 2002 and ECMWF's NWP operational analysis thereafter. It assimilates subsurface temperature and salinity. The subsurface observations come from the quality-controlled dataset prepared for the ENACT and ENSEMBLES projects until 2004, and from the ENACT/GTS. The model SSTs are strongly relaxed to analyzed daily SST maps from the OIv2 SST product.

2.7 GMAO

The GMAO Ocean Data Assimilation System Version 1 (ODAS-1), using an Ensemble Kalman Filter (EnKF, Keppenne *et al.* 2008) has been operational since 2005, providing ocean initial conditions for the GMAO seasonal forecasts since March 2007. The ODAS-1 system using univariate OI has provided initial conditions for seasonal forecasts since 2000. The ocean model domain is almost global, having a sponge layer boundary at 72°N and at the Strait of Gibraltar. The horizontal resolution is 5/8° zonally and 1/3° meridionally, and there are 27 quasi-isopycnal vertical layers. The first guess is obtained by forcing the ocean model with daily fluxes of heat from the NCEP CDAS1 reanalysis, with momentum from an SSM/I analysis until 2002 and a QuikSCAT analysis after September 2002, and with monthly mean freshwater fluxes using GPCP. The ocean analyses have been generated from January 1993 to the present. The systems assimilate subsurface temperature and salinity, including synthetic salinity derived for temperature using a T-S climatology. The subsurface observations come from GTS data quality-controlled by Dr. David Behringer of NOAA/NCEP, from the TAO data portal, and from the Argo GDAC at FNMOC. The altimeter data from the JPL/PODAAC are assimilated as along-track data from 1993 onwards in the EnKF. The model SSTs are strongly relaxed to analyzed daily SST maps from the OIv2 SST product and the model sea surface salinity is relaxed to the Levitus-Boyer climatology.

The ODAS-1 OI is implemented both with a salinity correction scheme following Troccoli and Haines (1999) and with a univariate assimilation of synthetic and Argo salinity profiles in addition to the

univariate assimilation of temperature profiles (e.g., Sun *et al.*, 2007). The ODAS-1 EnKF system includes an on-line bias correction algorithm for the assimilation of altimeter data (Keppenne *et al.*, 2005). A selection of historical and real-time ocean analysis products can be seen at http://gmao.gsfc.nasa.gov/research/oceanassim/ODA_vis.php.

The GMAO seasonal forecasts using the CGCMv1 are initialized with all three analyses. In addition, perturbed analyses are generated for the analysis with the Troccoli-Haines salinity correction, by merely adding small perturbations according to analyses close to the central time of the forecast initialization. An additional multivariate analysis has also been tested based on coupled bred vectors and shows promise for capturing the state-dependent covariances relevant to the coupled problem and for improving the forecast skill (Yang *et al.*, 2008).

3 Impact of assimilation on the ocean initial conditions

The simplest technique for ocean initialization is to run an ocean model forced with observed wind stress and with a strong relaxation of the model SST to observations. Such stand-alone integrations are referred to as control runs (*CNTL*) in what follows. This technique would be satisfactory if errors in the forcing fields and ocean model were small. However, surface flux products, even wind stress, as well as ocean models are known to have significant errors.

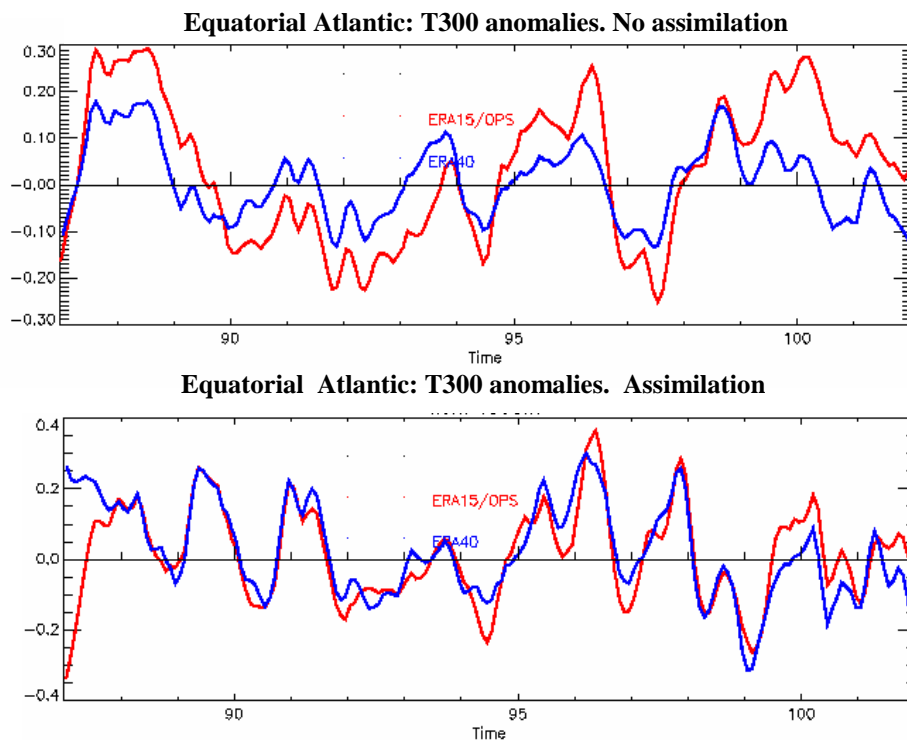


Figure 1: Averaged temperature in the upper 300m in the Equatorial Atlantic region resulting from ocean model integrations forced by fluxes from ERA15/OPS (red) and ERA40 (blue). The upper panel shows the results from the *CNTL* integration, i.e., without data assimilation. The large uncertainty in the ocean state can be reduced by assimilating ocean data (lower panel).

The uncertainty induced in the ocean state can be measured by using a different wind product to force the same ocean model. Figure 1a shows the evolution of the upper heat content anomalies, as measured by the averaged temperature in the upper 300m (T300) in the equatorial Atlantic (5N-5S) from two different *CNTL* integrations using the ECMWF ocean model. The red line shows the results from the run forced by ERA15/OPS winds, while the red line shows results from the run that uses ERA40 winds. The differences in upper ocean heat content are of the same order as the interannual variability. Figure 1b shows the same

diagnostics when data assimilation is included. These results demonstrate that in order to constrain the interannual variability of the ocean it is necessary to use some data assimilation.

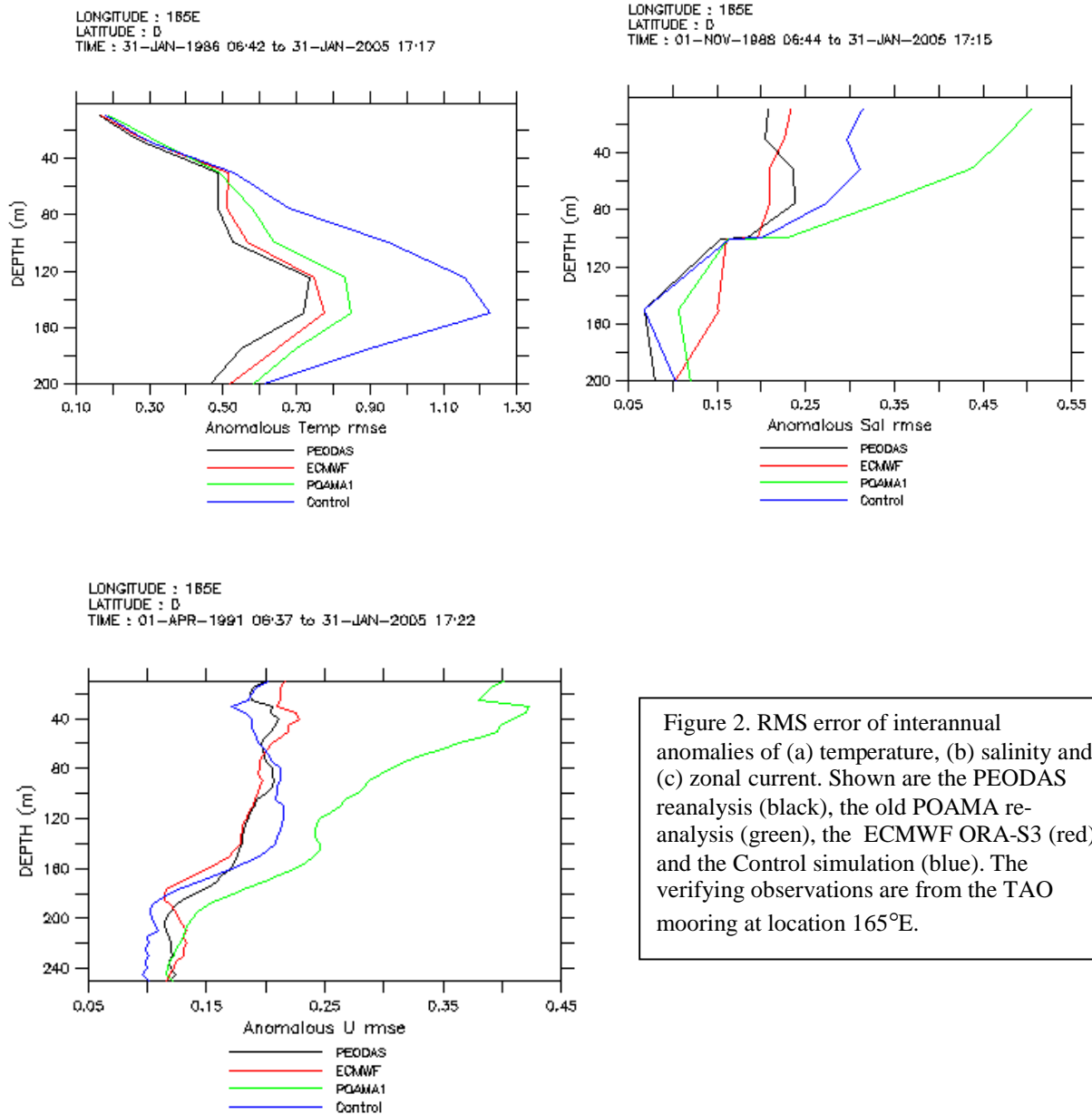


Figure 2. RMS error of interannual anomalies of (a) temperature, (b) salinity and (c) zonal current. Shown are the PEODAS reanalysis (black), the old POAMA reanalysis (green), the ECMWF ORA-S3 (red) and the Control simulation (blue). The verifying observations are from the TAO mooring at location 165°E.

A different question is whether the data assimilation not only constrains the solution, but improves the estimation of the ocean, both mean state and variability. A first test is to verify that the assimilation improves the fit to the observations used. A more stringent test is to verify against independent data, such as velocity, which is usually not assimilated. As an example, figure 2 shows how different ocean analyses fit the TAO temperature, salinity and zonal current, in terms of the root mean square (RMS) error of inter-annual anomalies for the full period that the measurements were available (different for each variable). Shown are the PEODAS analysis (black line), the ECMWF ORA-S3 (red line), and a control integration, a re-analysis using the PEODAS configuration but without assimilating any sub-surface data (blue line). Also shown is the old POAMA ocean analysis, a predecessor of PEODAS. Both temperature and salinity data from TAO moorings were assimilated in PEODAS and ECMWF ORA-S3. No current data was used in any case, so comparison with the TAO mooring measures how well a balanced state is

being produced by the assimilation. The control integration has the same relaxation to sub-surface T and S as PEODAS, which helps to maintain a reasonable mean state (in other studies the integrations used as controls that did not have this relaxation). The old POAMA ocean data assimilation system is a univariate 2-dimensional OI, which assimilate temperature observations only using static Gaussian covariances as in Smith *et al.* (1991). There are other differences between POAMA and PEODAS: the relaxation to subsurface climatology (none in POAMA), the forcing fluxes (NCEP-1 in POAMA and ERA40 in PEODAS), and different physics in the ocean model.

The differences between the PEODAS and POAMA in figure 2 illustrate the advances in data assimilation in recent years. POAMA exhibits the typical behaviour of the first generation of ocean analysis: improved fit to the assimilated observations (temperature in figure 2a) compared to CNTL, but degraded fit to the salinity and velocity data (figures 2b and c). More recent assimilation systems (all those described in section 2, although in the figure 2 only PEODAS and ECMWF are shown) use physical constraints between temperature and salinity, and between density and currents. Most of the current analysis systems also assimilate salinity, which leads to considerable improvements in the salinity field (figure 2b). The importance of the balance relationship between temperature and salinity for the representation of the barrier layer is discussed below. In the new assimilation systems, the equatorial currents are not particularly degraded, being comparable to the CNTL integration. This is probably the result of several contributions: multivariate constraints, improvement in ocean models and in forcing fluxes.

3.1 Impact of assimilation in representation of the barrier layer

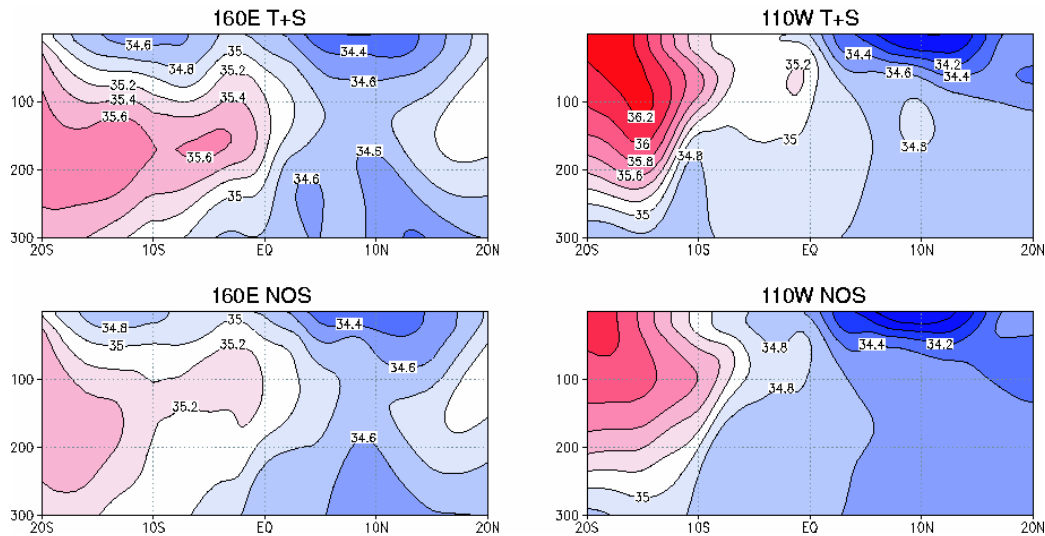


Figure 3: Vertical sections of climatological salinity fields along 160°E (left) and 110°W (right) between 20°S and 20°N in T+S (top) and NOS (bottom). Units are psu.

The impact of the assimilation scheme on the representation of the barrier layer has been discussed by Fujii *et al.* (2008b), using the MOVE assimilation system. MOVE applies vertical coupled T-S EOF modes as the control variables, which allows consistent correction of the model temperature and salinity fields. In particular, the model salinity field is properly modified with the information from the temperature correction through the T-S relation even if few salinity observations are available. In order to examine the effect of the salinity corrections, two types of data assimilation experiments (T+S and NOS) have been performed with MOVE/MRI.COM-G. Temperature and salinity corrections are applied in T+S, while in experiment NOS only the temperature increments are applied.

There is a large difference in the subsurface salinity field in the equatorial Pacific between T+S and NOS (figure 3). High salinity associated with the South Pacific Tropical Water (SPTW) is estimated

inadequately low in NOS. The moderate vertical contrast of the salinity fields in NOS implies that density instability is induced by forced temperature modification without proper salinity adjustment. This is the common feature of the conventional assimilation system where temperature field alone is modified without salinity correction (e.g., Troccoli *et al.* 2002). The salinity field is however properly reproduced in T+S.

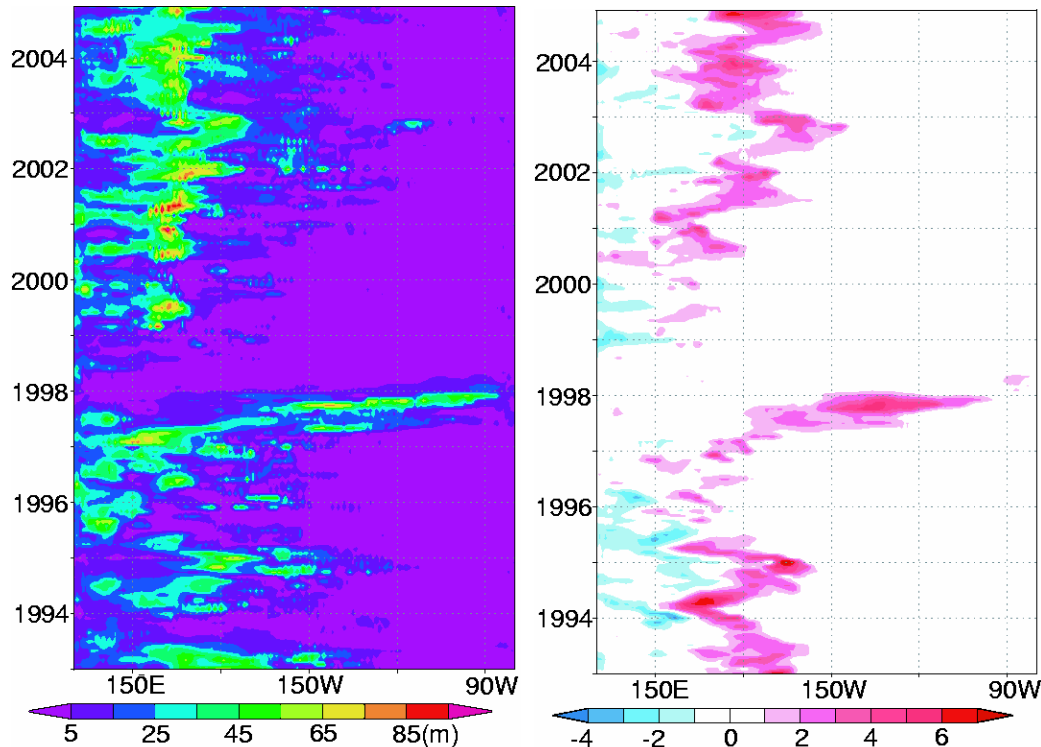


Figure 4: Left: longitude-time section of the barrier layer thickness (m) at the equator in T+S. Right: longitude-time section of the difference of the warm water heat content ($\text{kcal}\cdot\text{cm}^2$) between T+S and NOS (T+S minus NOS) at the equator.

The salinity bias in NOS can degrade the temperature field. Figure 4 shows the variation of the barrier layer thickness and the difference of the warm water heat content between T+S and NOS at the equator. The warm water heat content is defined as the heat content in the water exceeding 28°C . The thick barrier layer is displaced according to the ENSO cycle. It moves to the eastern equatorial Pacific in the large El Niño period (1997) and temporally disappears after that. The position of large positive difference of warm water heat content has a good correspondence with the position of thick barrier layer. The barrier layer tends to increase the heat content in the warm water by avoiding vertical mixing in T+S. The low salinity bias of SPTW, however, weakens the density stratification caused by vertical salinity gradient, and prevents the formation of a substantial barrier layer, which results in the reduction of warm water heat content in NOS. Thus, salinity correction improves the subsurface temperature field by estimating the vertical density stratification properly.

4 Impact of initialization on seasonal forecasts

4.1. Impact of initialization in the ECMWF seasonal forecasting system.

Alves *et al.* (2003) found that data assimilation improved the skill of the seasonal forecasts using one version of the ECMWF coupled model. Since the impact of data assimilation is likely to be model dependent, the same question is revisited in this paper using the results from other seasonal forecasting systems. The impact of initialization on the mean state, variability and skill of coupled forecasts at

seasonal time scale has been revisited by Balmaseda *et al.* (2008b), using the latest ECMWF seasonal forecasting system (S3) (Anderson *et al.* 2007).

There are three experiments where the initial conditions have been produced by (i) the ORA-S3 ocean reanalysis system, (ii) the ocean model forced by the same atmospheric fluxes from reanalysis winds but without data assimilation, and (iii) the ocean model forced by atmospheric fluxes produced by the atmospheric model forced by observed SST, as in Luo *et al.* (2005). In the three cases, SST analyses are used to constrain the ocean initial conditions. In method (i), the coupled system thus starts close to the observed state but it is not obvious that this leads to the most skillful forecasts as the method can have undesirable initialization shocks. Method (iii) can reduce the initialization shock since the atmosphere and ocean models will be in closer balance at the start of the coupled integrations. The three experiments can also be seen as observing system experiments. Differences between (i) and (ii) are indicative of the impact of ocean observations, and comparison of (ii) and (iii) are indicative of the impact of the atmospheric observation that were used to produce the atmospheric reanalysis. In what follows we refer to these methods as ALL, NO-OCOBS and SST-ONLY experiments.

A series of 7-month, 5-member ensemble coupled hindcasts spanning the period 1987-2000, 3 months apart, was performed with initial conditions from each method. Figure 5 shows that both the mean state and the interannual variability are sensitive to the initialization method. In the Eastern Pacific (NINO3, left panel), ALL shows the strongest warm bias, which is symptomatic of the existence of initialization shock: the coupled model is not able to maintain the slope of the thermocline in the initial conditions, and fast dynamic adjustment takes place through a downwelling Kelvin wave. In experiment SST-ONLY the model drifts into a cold state, likely related to a too shallow thermocline in the initial conditions. The bias is close to zero in experiment NO-OCOBS. In the Central and Western Pacific (NINO4, right panel) the smallest bias is obtained with experiment ALL, and the worst with experiment SST-ONLY. The amplitude of the interannual variability seems to be related to the magnitude of the bias. In NINO3, the least activity occurs in the presence of warm bias, suggestive of convective processes setting an upper limit to the amplitude of SST. In NINO4 the experiment cold bias is accompanied by too much variability, consistent with the upwelling being overestimated in this region.

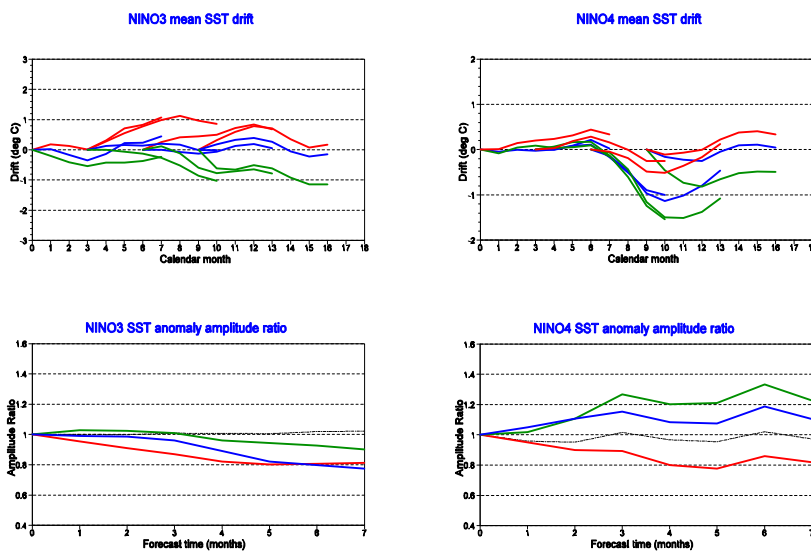


Figure 5. Top: forecast drift as a function of forecast lead time for 4 start months in regions NINO3 (left) and NINO4 (right) for experiments ALL (red), NO-OCOBS (blue) and SST-ONLY (green). Bottom: variance ratio as a function of lead time for the same experiments averaged over all start months.

Figure 6 shows the impact on forecast skill for various regions in table 2. The relative reduction in the monthly mean absolute error (MAE) resulting from adding information from the ocean and/or atmosphere observations for forecast range 1-3 months (left) and 4-7 months (right). The Western Pacific (EQ3) is the region where the observational information has largest impact: the combined

the information of ocean and atmospheric observations can reduce the MAE more than 50% in the first 3 months. With the exception of the Equatorial Atlantic (EQATL), the best scores are achieved by experiment ALL. This means that for the ECMWF system, the benefits of the ocean data assimilation and the use of fluxes from atmospheric (re)analyses more than offset problems arising from initialization shock.

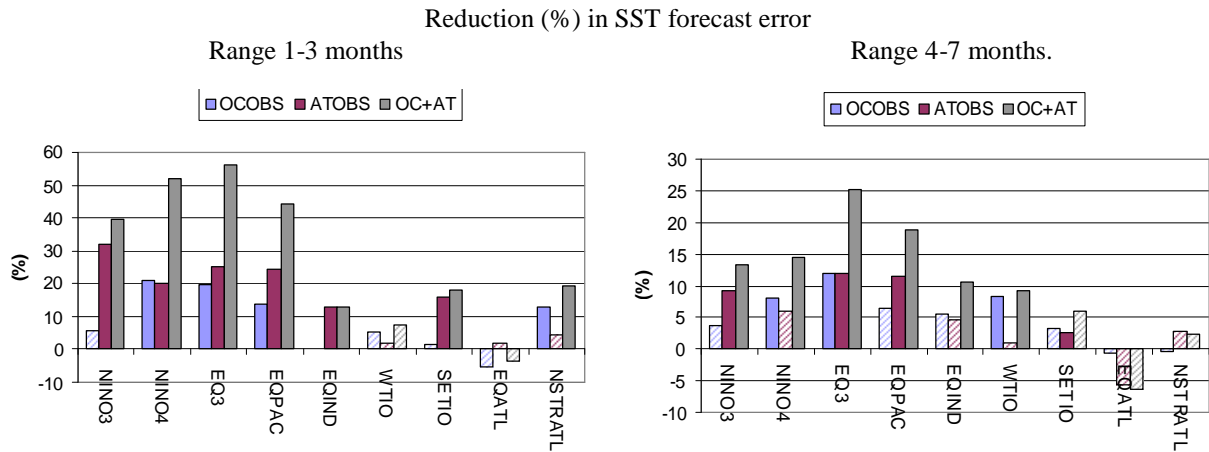


Figure 6: Impact of initialization in forecast skill for different regions, as measured by the reduction in mean absolute error for the forecast range 1-3 months (left) and 4-7 months (right). Solid bars indicate differences are above the 80% significance level. The comparison is done for the period 1987-2000. Blue indicates the differences between strategy i and ii which differ in the use of ocean observations. Red (ATOBS) indicates differences between ii and iii, which differ in the use of atmospheric data, while grey (OC+AT) gives differences between i and iii and represents the combined impact of atmospheric and oceanic data.

Table 2: Definition of area average indices

NINO12: 10°-0°S, 90°-80°W	EQPAC	5°S-5°N, 130°E-80°W
NINO3 5°S-5°N, 90°-150°W	EQIND	5°S-5°N, 40°-120°E
NINO34 5°S-5°N, 170°-120°W	WTIO	10°S-10°N, 50°-70°W
NINO4 5°S-5°N, 160°E-150°W	STIO	10°S-0°N, 90°-110°E
EQ3 5°S-5°N, 150°E-170°W	EQATL	5°S-5°N, 70°W-30°E
NINO-W 0°-15°N, 130°-150°E	NSTRATL	5°N-28°N, 80°W-20°E

4.2. Impact of initialization in the POAMA seasonal forecasting system.

In the previous section it was shown that the PEODAS ocean re-analysis is an improvement with respect to the previous POAMA version and with respect to the Control (no data assimilation). This section shows that these improvements lead to better forecast skill of SST at seasonal time scales. For each re-analysis a set of hindcasts starting each month from 1980 to 2001 were produced, the individual hindcasts consisting of three ensemble members each. For the PEODAS re-analysis a 3-member ensemble was generated using the main PEODAS re-analysis and two other perturbed members. For the Control a 3-member ensemble was also generated, however this time by using the same ocean initial conditions (since perturbed states were not available) and taking atmospheric initial conditions six hours apart. For the old POAMA re-analysis a 3-member ensemble was generated by taking atmospheric initial conditions six hours apart.

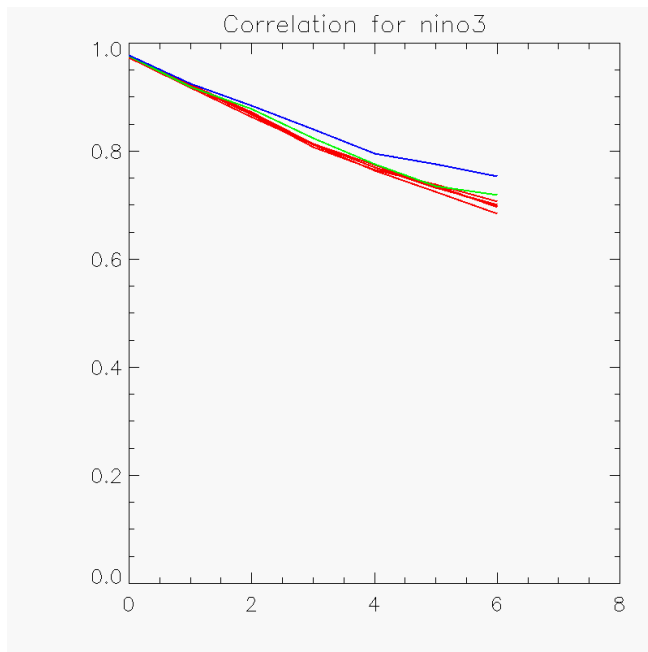


Figure 7: Skill in NINO3 SST forecasts. The red curves are from forecasts initialized by the old POAMA assimilation system (different realizations of 3-member ensembles taken from the full 10 member ensemble), navy blue uses the PEODAS re-analysis, green uses the control re-analysis (with no assimilation of sub-surface data).

Figure 7 shows the NINO3 forecast skill with lead time for forecasts from each set of re-analysis. The skill curves are based on 3-member ensemble means. Forecasts using PEODAS initial conditions show significantly more skill than those using the control or the old POAMA assimilation initial conditions. Forecasts using the control initial conditions show skill at least comparable, if not slightly better, than forecasts using the old POAMA assimilation, which could be related to the results shown in figure 2, comparing the analysis with the TAO observations. While the old re-analysis had a similar fit to observed temperature as the new re-analysis and control, the old re-analysis showed a considerably worse fit for salinity and zonal current. This result can be taken as an indication that, for the assimilation to improve forecast skill, it is important to keep the dynamical and physical balance among variables, and therefore all variables, not just those directly constrained by observations, should show consistent improvement.

4.3 Observing System Evaluation in MRI-JMA

Observing System Evaluation (OSE) is essential to demonstrate the necessity for sustaining the observing system. The effect of assimilating TAO/TRITON array and Argo float data in MOVE/MRI.COM-G and its impact on the JMA seasonal forecasting system has been evaluated by Fujii *et al.* (2008). Three assimilation runs (ALL, NTT, NAF) were performed first. All available observation data is assimilated in ALL. Data from the TAO/TRITON array is excluded in NTT. Data from Argo is excluded in NAF. Sets of 11-member ensemble forecasts were then started from January 31st, April 26th, July 30th, and October 28th in 2004-2006. The ensemble is generated by adding perturbation to the gridded SST data (COBE-SST) in the last 10-day data assimilation cycle. Figure 8 shows Root Mean Square Errors (RMSEs) of the 0-6 month forecasts of monthly SST anomalies averaged in different regions (defined in Table 2). Here, the 0-month forecast refers to the average in the first month of the forecast, and the RMSEs are normalized by the equivalent RMSEs for persistence forecasts. It should be noted that the forecast bias is estimated for each initial month, each lead time, and each experiment, and removed before calculating RMSEs. The differences of RMSEs between ALL and NTT show that TAO/TRITON data has a relatively large impact on the forecast of NINO3 and NINO34 regions. The significance levels for the hypothesis that ALL has smaller RMSEs are about 90% for both regions. Thus, TAO/TRITON data has a potential for improving the forecast of SST in the eastern equatorial Pacific. On the other hand, RMSEs for CTL are smaller than those for NAF in all regions. The significance level is more than 70% in all areas other than WTIO, demonstrating that Argo floats are effective and indispensable observations for the prediction of the SST in the tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans. Similar results have been obtained with the ECMWF seasonal forecasting system (Balmaseda *et al.* 2008).

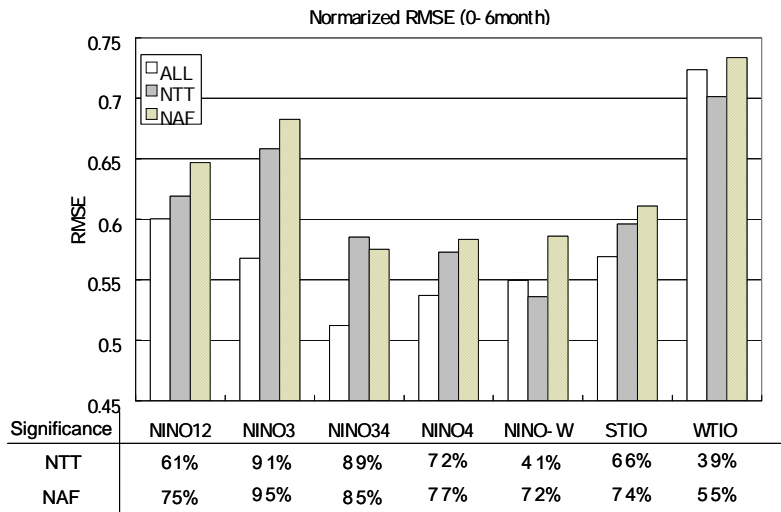


Fig. 8: Impact of withholding TAO/TRITON (NTT) and Argo (NAF) from the initialization of seasonal forecasts in the skill of the JMA El Niño forecasting system. The bars show the RMSEs of the 0-6 month forecasts of monthly SST anomalies averaged in NINO12, NINO3, NINO34, NINO4, NINO-W, STIO and WTIO normalized by the RMSEs of persistence forecasts. The seasonal forecasts are for the period 2004-2006. The forecast bias is estimated for each initial month, each lead time, and each experiment, and removed before calculating RMSEs. From Fujii *et al.* (2008).

4.4 MERCATOR-OCEAN & Météo-France

The improvement in seasonal forecast skill is also exemplified by the experience in Mercator-Ocean. Figure 9 shows the anomaly correlation coefficient of the SST forecasts over different regions for the Mercator-Ocean/Météo-France coupled system version 2 and the more recent version 3. The major improvement between version 2 and 3 is the assimilation of in situ data (temperature and salinity fields). It should also be noted that the model SST is more realistically constrained in system 3 as it is assimilated with a realistic error and not simply strongly nudged towards the observations. Improvements in the atmospheric model can also be responsible for the differences.

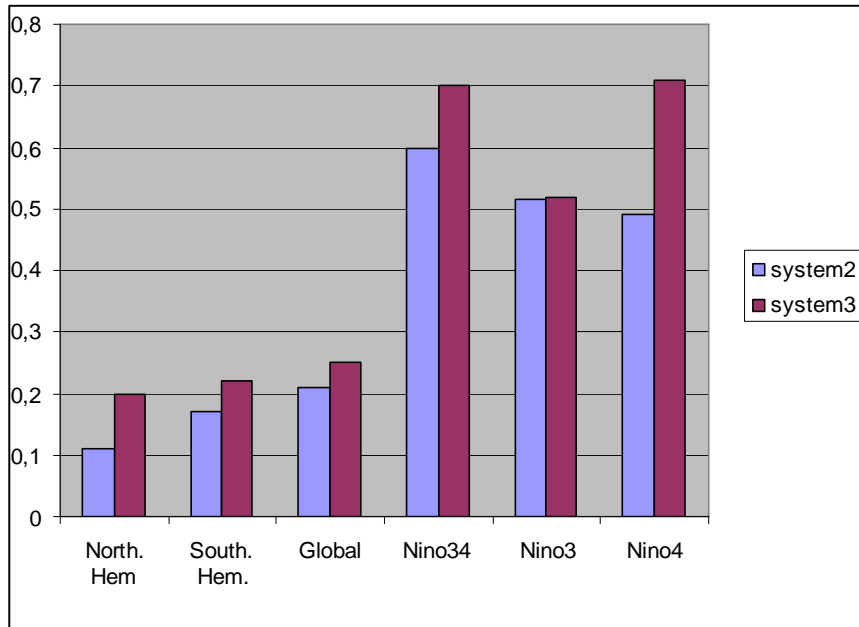


Figure 9: Improvement of Sea Surface Temperature ACC for between Mercator-Ocean/Météo-France system 2 and 3. The ACC is computed for 3 months lead time forecasts in winter (D-J-F) over the 1993-2007 period.

4.5 Impact of ECCO Ocean State Estimation on ENSO Forecast

In an early attempt, Dommenges and Stammer (2004) investigated the impact of ocean state estimates produced by the Consortium for Estimating the Circulation and Climate of the Ocean (ECCO) on seasonal forecast of tropical Pacific SST and subsurface fields. For that purpose the MIT model was used in two distinct settings for ENSO simulation and prediction studies. The first setup served as a control run and was a traditional but simple approach to assimilate SST and wind stress fields into a model, which was used subsequently for seasonal ENSO forecasts (Barnett et al. 1993). Results from this simple control run were compared to similar results that were obtained in a second approach by using a full ocean state estimation procedure. This procedure used the MIT adjoint model (Marotzke et al. 1999) to obtain a solution of the time-varying ocean on a 2x2 degree grid over the period 1992 through 2000 that is consistent with WOCE and remote-sensing datasets. As compared to similar results from a traditional ENSO simulation and forecast procedure, the hindcast of the constrained ocean state is significantly closer to observed surface and subsurface conditions. The skill of the 12-month lead SST forecast in the equatorial Pacific is comparable in both approaches. The optimization appears to have better skill in the SST anomaly correlations, suggesting that the initial ocean conditions and forcing corrections calculated by the ocean-state estimation do have a positive impact on the predictive skill. However, the optimized forecast skill is currently limited by the low quality of the statistical atmosphere. Progress is expected from optimizing a coupled model over a longer time interval with the coupling statistics being part of the control vector.

More recently ECCO-JPL results were used to initialize a fully coupled ocean-atmosphere model. The ECCO-JPL system uses the MIT Ocean General Circulation with a near global domain (75°N-75°S). The resolution is 1° zonally, 0.3° meridionally in the tropics, telescoped to 1° in the extratropics. There are 46 vertical levels with a 10-m thickness in the upper 150 m. The model uses Gent and McWilliams and KPP mixing schemes. A Kalman filter and smoother method is used to assimilate sea level anomaly and in-situ temperature profiles into the model. More details of the model configuration and assimilation method can be found in Lee et al. (2002) and Fukumori (2002). The UCLA atmosphere model has a resolution of 4°x5° with 15 vertical layers. It is coupled to the ECCO-JPL version of the MITGCM using UCLA Earth System Model (ESM) and the Earth System Modeling Framework (ESMF) couplers. No flux correction is involved. Additional description of the coupled model and its behavior can be found in Cazes-Boezio et al. (2008). The ECCO-JPL Kalman-filter based analysis has also been used to initialize SI prediction routinely by the Experimental Climate Prediction Center in Scripps Institution of Oceanography (<http://ecpc.ucsd.edu/>) where the NCEP spectral atmospheric model is coupled to the MIT OGCM (Yulaeva et al. 2008).

The impact of the ocean data assimilation on ENSO forecast is tested using the ECCO-UCLA coupled system (Cazes-Boezio et al. 2008) by initializing ENSO hindcasts with the states obtained from ECCO-JPL ocean model simulation and assimilation, respectively. The hindcasts initialized from the assimilation have better skill than those initialized from the simulation in terms of RMS deviation and correlation from observed SST as well as persistence (example shown in Figure 10).

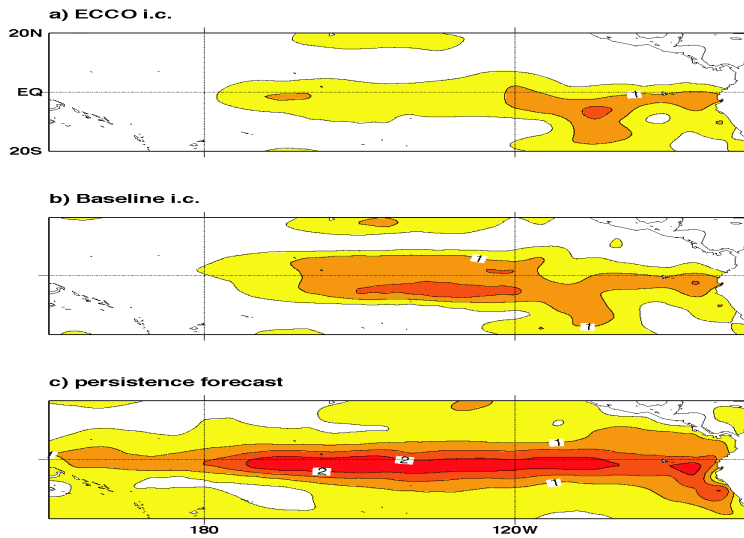


Fig 10 : Improvement of seasonal climate forecast by using ECCO-JPL product as initial state in a coupled model (UCLA atmos. Coupled to MITGCM). Baseline is the forecast initialized from an oceanic initial state derived from the MITGCM forced by NCEP forcing. ECCO is the ECCO JPL Kalman-filter smoother assimilation product based on MITGCM.

From Cazes-Boezio, Menemenlis, and Mechoso, 2008

5 New developments on coupled model initialization

In theory, any initialization strategy for seasonal forecast should provide initial conditions which are a reliable representation of the real world conditions relevant for the seasonal predictions, and which the coupled model is able to evolve to produce as accurate forecasts as possible. In practice, due to model and initialization deficiencies, this is difficult to achieve. For instance, depending of the sort of model errors, it is possible for an improved ocean analysis to adversely impact the forecast skill: this can happen if the so called initialization shock, due to imbalanced initial conditions, plays a role in the skill of the forecast. The a-posteriori drift correction mentioned above will work provided that the initialization shock does not project onto the system's non-linear regime. Alternative initialization strategies aimed at avoiding the initialization shock are currently being explored in different institutions, and a brief discussion of their potential will be offered in this section.

5.1. Coupled 4D-var

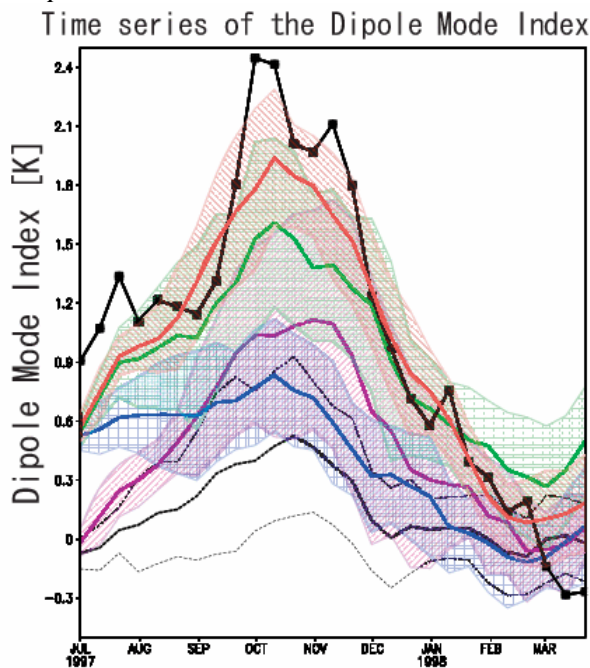


Figure 11. Time series of the Dipole Mode Index of the observation (black solid curve) and the ensemble means of the model runs (black dotted: the first guess field, red: ANL, blue: IC, purple: PRM, green: IC+PRM). Hatched regions indicate ensemble spreads. From Sugiura *et al.* (2008).

Sugiura *et al.* (2008) report results from a coupled four-dimensional variational (4D-VAR) data assimilation system for a global coupled ocean-atmosphere model. Both initial conditions, and parameters controlling the air-sea interaction, can be modified by the analysis system. They demonstrate the feasibility of the 4D-VAR coupled data assimilation (CDA), and its positive impact on the estimation of climate processes during the 1996-1998 period. Several key events in the tropical Pacific and Indian ocean sector (such as the El Nino, the Indian ocean dipole and the Asian summer monsoon) are successfully represented by the CDA. Results suggest that the 4D-VAR CDA approach has the potential to correct the initial location of the model climate attractor based on observational data. Seasonal forecasts for the period 1997-98, using initial conditions produced by the 4D-VAR CDA were successful, suggesting that the system has the potential for initialization of coupled ocean-atmosphere models for seasonal and interannual predictions.

Figure 11 shows the results of 11-member coupled experiments conducted to investigate the relative importance of controlling the initial conditions (IC) versus the bulk formula parameters (PRM) in the representation of the Indian Ocean Dipole Mode Index (DMI) during 1996-1998. In experiment IC+PRM both the oceanic initial condition and climatological monthly mean bulk adjustment factors averaged over the entire 1996-1998 period are optimized. The figure also shows the results from the coupled 4D-Var analysis (ANL) and observations. The IC run (blue curve) reproduces the growth process during positive DMI, while the PRM run (purple curve) captures the development reasonably well. However, the magnitude of the DMI in the PRM run is considerably smaller than that in the observation and in the ANL case. This is likely the result of poor initialization. The best results are from experiment IC+PRM, where most of the features of the DMI time series are within the ensemble members. However, the peak values of the DMI in the IC+PRM run (the green curve) are somewhat smaller than the observed values (the black curve).

5.2 GMAO

The GMAO is pursuing two approaches to improving the initialization of coupled seasonal forecasts. The first uses coupled bred vectors to improve the ensemble suite by generating perturbations that are coupled, rather than using perturbations in the separate uncoupled components. The aim of bred vectors (BVs) is to capture the uncertainties related to the slowly varying coupled instabilities, especially ENSO variability. Yang *et al.* (2008) shows that the BVs improve the ensemble mean SST forecasts (Figure 12) and are generally better than the set of ensembles generated in an uncoupled fashion in the current operational system. The study shows that these BVs also capture information on flow-dependent uncertainty that can be used for background error covariances in the ocean assimilation and improves the water mass distribution in the analyses. One case study shows that the multivariate assimilation using BVs improves the salinity representation in 2006 and has a positive impact of the forecasts initialized in June 2006 when there is a saline intrusion across the equator in the eastern equatorial Pacific (not shown). The primary issue with the current implementation of BVs is that the rescaling norm is focused on the equatorial Pacific structures and this can be detrimental to the forecast SST outside the equatorial Pacific band (see Figure 12). The second thrust is to undertake the ocean assimilation within the GEOS-5 coupled model that will be used for the next seasonal forecast implementation. This assimilation system, ODAS-2, has been tested with MOM4 using pre-computed multivariate background error statistics and a replay of the GMAO atmospheric analysis at 2° resolution. The goal for the next system is to merge these two developments under an EnKF framework with GEOS-5.

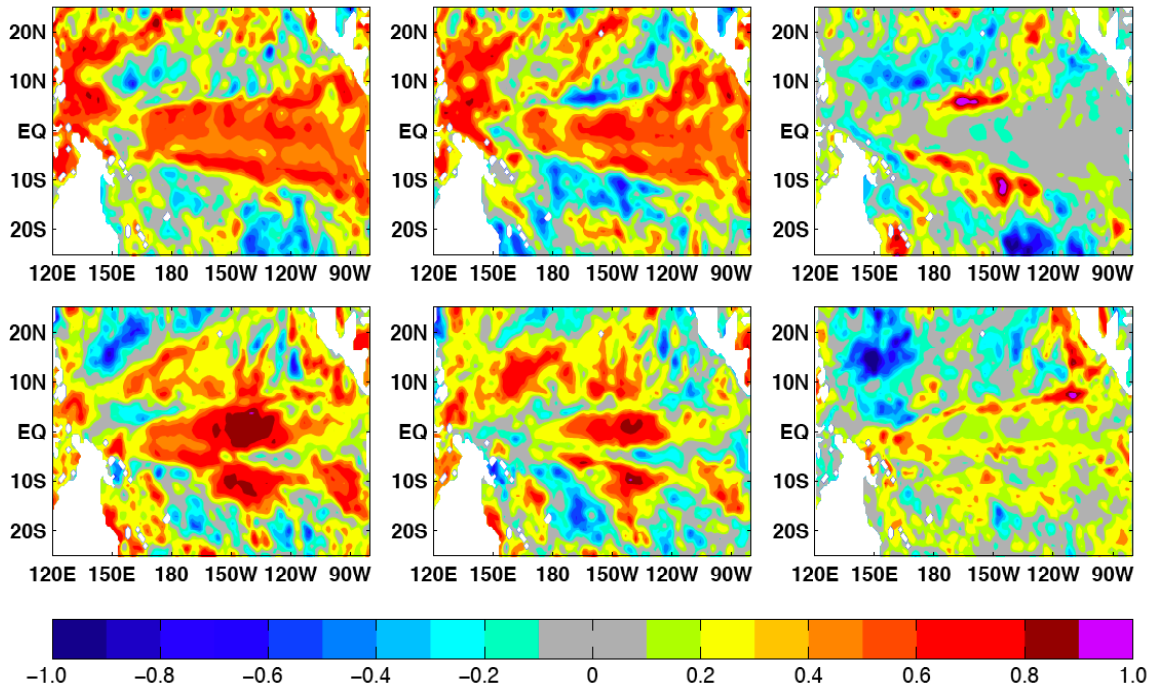


Figure 12: Forecast SST anomaly correlations with observations at the 9th-month lead time for forecasts initialized from May (upper row) and November (lower row). The left-hand column shows the result for a 4-member BV ensemble; the middle column shows the single member control; and the right-hand column shows the difference (BV-control).

5.3. Coupled EKF at GFDL

A fully coupled data assimilation (CDA) system, consisting of an Ensemble Kalman Filter (EKF) applied to the GFDL global coupled climate model (CM2.1), has been developed to facilitate the detection and prediction of seasonal-to-multidecadal climate variability and climate trends (Zhang et al. 2007). The assimilation provides a self-consistent, temporally continuous estimate of the coupled model state and its uncertainty, in the form of discrete ensemble members, which can be used directly to initialize probabilistic climate forecasts. Because all components of the CDA-estimated coupled model state are expected to be in a dynamical balance at any instant in time, the initial shock of coupled model forecasts initialized from CDA products is expected to be minimized. The CDA solves for a temporally varying probability density function (PDF) of climate state variables by combining the PDF of observations and a prior PDF derived from the dynamic coupled model. The resulting temporally varying PDF is a complete solution for the coupled data assimilation problem. Using the covariances evaluated by the ensemble coupled integrations, the system is able to maintain the physical balance between different state variables. The system is currently configured for assimilating both atmospheric and oceanic observations although, other components (e.g., land and sea ice) can be added. The atmosphere model with a finite volume dynamical core has 24 vertical levels and 2° latitude by 2.5° longitude horizontal resolution. The ocean component is MOM4 configured with 50 vertical levels (22 levels of 10m thickness each in the top 220m) and $1^\circ \times 1^\circ$ horizontal B-grid resolution, telescoping to $1/3^\circ$ meridional spacing near the equator. An ocean analysis from 1979 – 2008 using the CDA system has been completed and may be found at <http://data1.gfdl.gov/nomads/forms/assimilation.html>. Since the purpose here is to produce an ocean analysis the atmospheric data that was assimilated was taken from the NCEP reanalysis 2. The ocean assimilates temperature and salinity data from XBT, CTD, MBT, and Argo as well as SST from the Reynolds SST product.

Retrospective one year forecasts initialized from the CDA system have been run starting every month with 10 member ensembles from 1980-2008. A nice feature of the EKF CDA is that the initial conditions

for the coupled model forecasts come naturally from the ensemble members of the CDA. Comparing the seasonal forecast results initialized from the CDA to the forecasts initialized with our 3D-VAR ocean analysis, it was found that there was a significant improvement in our ENSO forecast skill. Experimental seasonal forecasts are run every month and the results are posted on our web site along with the historical and current ocean analysis.

Some new and exciting work has begun on a multi-model ensemble assimilation scheme. Both GFDL CM2.0 and CM2.1 coupled models are used in a unified ensemble system in which the filtering process is based on the error statistics from both models' ensemble integrations. The system construction is complete but the analysis is ongoing. The idea here is that often the ensemble forecasts tend to look more like each other than reality. The goal is that the ensemble spread should span the possible solution space and to include the true solution. Some initial OSSE imperfect twin studies using this system uncovered some inconsistent constraints in the upper and deep ocean due to model biases and the nature of the low frequency of the deep ocean circulation. Although this issue may not be important for seasonal initialization it will most likely be for decadal initialization.

5 Summary and conclusions

The use of data assimilation for the ocean initialization in seasonal forecasts has reached a mature state, with several institutions around the world producing routine ocean (re-)analysis to initialise their operational seasonal forecasts. To this end, not only ocean analyses for the real time seasonal forecasts, but historically consistent ocean re-analyses are also needed for the forecast calibration and skill assessment. These ocean reanalyses are a valuable data resource for climate variability studies and have the advantage of being continuously brought up to real time.

In contrast to atmospheric initialization where data assimilation is needed to constrain the uncertainty due to the chaotic nature of the system, in the ocean initialization data assimilation is needed to reduce the large uncertainty in the forcing fluxes and ocean model formulation. In fact, ocean data assimilation has a strong impact on the representation of the ocean mean state and interannual variability. The first generation of ocean initialization systems were univariate and assimilated only temperature data. These systems were able to reduce the uncertainty in the thermal structure, and sometimes would improve the forecast skill. However the resultant velocity and salinity fields were often degraded. Nowadays most of the ocean initialization systems are second generation: they assimilate temperature, salinity and sea level via multivariate schemes, imposing physical and dynamical constraints among different variables. Results from several of these "second generation initialization systems" show that the assimilation of ocean data in the ocean initialization improves seasonal forecast skill. Ultimately, the impact of initialization in a seasonal forecasting system will depend on the quality of the coupled model. It can be argued that the beneficial impact of ocean initialization on the forecast skill also demonstrates the improved quality of the coupled models, which now are discerning enough to be sensitive to the quality of the initial conditions.

In most of the existing operational systems, the initialization of the ocean is still done in uncoupled mode, and there is no attempt to obtain ocean initial conditions that are balanced within the coupled model. By using forcing fluxes from atmospheric (re-)analysis, the uncoupled initialization has the advantage of incorporating relevant atmospheric variability, such as westerly wind bursts, at intraseasonal time scales, which could be relevant for ENSO initialization. However, the unbalanced initialization can lead to initialization shock, which is likely to be larger in those regions where model and the observed climate are far apart. For instance, experiments carried out with the ECMWF seasonal forecasting system suggest that the initialization shock is damaging the seasonal forecast skill in the Equatorial Atlantic. A third generation of initialization systems is on its way, where the oceanic and atmospheric initial conditions are generated simultaneously using a coupled model and so have the potential of retaining the balances relevant for the coupled system. To cope with the different time scales in the ocean and atmosphere, these coupled data assimilation systems use a previous atmospheric analysis to constrain the atmospheric

component of the coupled model, while assimilating ocean data in assimilation windows appropriate for the ocean time scales. Recent work has demonstrated the feasibility of coupled 4D-var and EnKF systems. Knowledge of the error growth of the coupled model can also be exploited in the initialization and ensemble generation of the coupled forecasts. Experiments with the GMAO system show that the use of coupled breeding vectors to generate initial perturbations for the ensemble results in better seasonal forecast skill.

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