

Sign Language Recognition
Inflated 3D ConvNet

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Master's Thesis



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Student, Nguyen To : Sign Language Recognition
Master's Thesis , 42 p.
Supervisors of the Master's Thesis : Professor Xiao-Zhi Gao
August 2021

Abstract:

Effective communication is considered as the foremost fundamental of human skills. However, more than 5% of the world's population is suffering from disabling hearing loss, as indicated by the World Health Organization (WHO). There is hence a communication gap between the hearing-impaired community, whose primary means of communication is sign language, and others who are not privy with this language. To this end, Sign Language Recognition could be an essential instrument which utilizing vision-based technology and helps the hearing-impaired communicate with the society with ease, thereby diminishing the verbal exchange barrier. The first step in interpreting and analyzing communication via gestures is word-level sign language recognition (WSLR). Recognizing signs from recordings maybe a tough challenge due to the fact that the meaning of a word is determined by a combination of subtle body movements, hand gestures, and other actions. Be that as it may, with the significant advancement of technology, notably Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), in this paper, an Inflated 3D Networks (I3D), a 3D video categorization solution are used to method as an answer of WSLR.

Keywords: Sign Language, Continuous Sign Language, Sign Language Recognition, Classification, Video Classification, Recognition, Convolutional Neural Network, 3D Convolutional Neural Network

CR Categories (ACM Computing Classification System, 1998 version): A.m,
K.3.2

Preface

The basis for the project initially originated from my ardor for developing better methods of sign language recognition. The hearing-impaired community's life has changed considerably over the past half-century as a result of policy adjustments and latest technological tendencies, yet the road to find a viable answer for word-level sign language recognition (WSLR) keeps on being a drawn out circumstance. It is my passion to not solely find out, however to develop tools to bridge the communication gap between the deaf community and the society. This project follows the reference and citation guidelines of the "Quo Valdis, Action Recognition? A New Model and the Kinetics Datasets" by a group of João Carreira and Andrew Zisserman.

In truth, I could not have achieved my current level of success without a strong support group. To begin with, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Professor Xiao-Zhi Gao, for his excellent guidance, valuable input and support throughout the entire period. Furthermore, I would also like to thank Li Dongxu for his enormously valued assistance in collecting data for this study. Especially with respect Cong Phan, a Phd candidate at Griffith University who gave a great help by offering several useful insights and recommendations. And finally, I am grateful to Mai Khanh Nguyen Ngoc. She stood by my side and provided me with the support I needed to complete this thesis.

List of Abbreviations

ACM	Association for Computing Machinery
ISY	Itä-Suomen yliopisto
UEF	University of Eastern Finland
WSLR	Word-level Sign Language Recognition
I3D	Two -Stream Inflated 3D Convolutional Network
CNN	Convolutional Neural Network
LSTM	Long-short Term Memory
TGCN	Temporal Graph Convolutional Network

Contents

1	Introduction	
1.1	Problem	
1.2	Thesis scope and target	
2	Model	
2.1	Methodology of video classification and CNNs	
2.2	Some models to solve video recognition problems	
2.2.1	ConvNet-LSTM	
2.2.2	3D ConvNet	
2.2.3	Two-stream network	
2.3	Model in this study	
3	Convolution Neural Network in image classification	
3.1	Introduction of CNNs	
3.1.1	Convolution layer - the kernel	
3.1.2	Pooling layer	
3.1.3	Fully Connected (FC) Layers - Classification	
3.2	1D, 2D, 3D Convolutions	
4	Techniques for Inflated 3D ConvNet	
4.1	Inflating 2D ConvNets into 3D ConvNets	
4.2	2D filters to 3D filters	
4.3	Space, time and network depth	
5	Optical flow	
5.1	Introduction	
5.2	Algorithm for converting RGB video into Optical Flow video . . .	
5.2.1	Lucas-Kanade: Sparse Optical Flow	
5.2.2	Farneback: Dense Optical Flow	
5.3	Optical Flow in Deep Learning	
6	Experiment	
6.1	Datasets	
6.1.1	Argentina Sign Language Dataset	
6.1.2	Word Level American Sign Language Dataset	

6.2	Setup environment
6.2.1	Python
6.2.2	Goolge Colaboratory
6.2.3	Project structure
6.3	Results

7 Conclusion

List of Tables

1	Sign Language Datasets.
2	Comparision between models on several human activity datasets (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017)
3	HDC vs SDC Scoring function

List of Figures

1	Common occurrence of ambiguity and variation signing
2	An example of video classification
3	CNN-LSTM model
4	An example of 3D ConvNet with RGB video as input
5	Two-stream 3D ConvNet model
6	3D-Fused Two-Stream
7	2-stream 3D ConvNet by Zisserman and Carreira (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017)
8	Example of CNN for classification
9	Kernel movement and Convolution Processing
10	Pooling
11	Fully Connected layer ()
12	Example of an optical flow frame (NVIDIA, n.d.)
13	Harris Corner Dector basic idea
14	Scoring function between HDC and SDC on $\mu_1 - \mu_2$ space
15	Result of HDC and SDC algorithm for corner detection

List of Equations

- 1 Constant intensity assumption
- 2 Taylor Series Approximation of pixel intensity
- 3 Optical flow equation
- 4 Weighted sum multiplied by the intensity difference for all pixels
in a window

1 Introduction

Sign Language, any methods of communicating by bodily motions, particularly with hands and arms, that is utilized when verbal communication is either difficult or undesirable. Sign language can consist of a series of overly-exaggerated facial expressions, shrugs, or hand gestures; or it can be a fine and delicate mix of hand signals that are complemented by facial expressions and words spelt out using a manual alphabet. When a deaf person or someone speaking a different language is communicating with someone who is hearing, using sign language can help connect the parties. (Britannica, 2020, November 12). The public has neither the time nor the patience to learn sign language, which is complicated and time-consuming to learn and practice. Additionally, there are also many language and culture-specific (Holtz, 2014) (e.g Germany, Japanese) constraints which will hinder the widespread adoption of sign language. Significant advances in deep learning (DL) and improvements in device capabilities, such as computation power, memory capacity, power usage, sensor resolution, and optics, have improved the performance and cost-effectiveness of vision-based applications, allowing them to spread more quickly in the market place. For this reason, it is interesting to examine sign language recognition (SLR), which automatically translates sign language and aids deaf-mute individuals in communicating with others in their life

Back to the history of 90s, Yann LeCun et al. published "Gradient-Based Learning Applied to Document Recognition", which is widely considered to be the most popular AI article from the era. This paper was the first modern application of convolutional neural networks to be developed. Since then, more and more sophisticated models trained on ever-larger datasets have been built using the convenient approach of convolutional neural networks. Especially in the field of Computer Vision - Human-based activity recognition, there are many methods can be applied to solve the problem, from traditional convolutional neural networks such as CNN-RNN, CNN-LSTM to RestNetCRNN, Conv3D and state-of-the-art networks e.g Pose-TGCN, I3D. Inheriting the idea of using two-stream I3D network, which is based 2D ConvNet (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017), presented by Carreira and Zisserman, this project is re-implement the model with a slightly modification inside. It might not be better when comparing with other models, however during the project, I have got many experience and broaden my

knowledge on the field of Deep Learning.

1.1 Problem

As same as other human-based activity recognition, SRL also shares some common problems such as background clutter, lightning or lightning changing in a video, motion blur, angle of camera, changing scale. SRL, on the other hand, is a more difficult task than ordinary action recognition. Firstly, sign language relies on a combination of global body movement and subtle hand/arm gesture. Additionally, depending on how many times they are repeated, same gestures might have different meanings. SRL might be more difficult to examine because of different states of motions and signers such as localism, gesture speed, preferred hand or physical form. Finally, it is also expensive to collect additional data from many signers even though it is desirable (Jiang et al., 2021).

As described above, the datasets that uses for training SLR are limited, even the number of samples inside each dataset. The table below describes some datasets that normally use for researching.

Table 1: Sign Language Datasets.

Dataset	Language	Classes	Samples	Data Type	Language Level
CSL Dataset I	Chinese	500	125,000	Video & Depth from Kinect	Isolated
CSL Dataset II	Chinese	100	25,000	Videos & Depth from Kinect	Continuous
RWTH-PHOENIX-Weather 2014	German	1,081	6,841	Videos	Continuous
RWTH-PHOENIX-Weather 2014 T	German	1,066	8,257	Videos	Continuous
ASLLVD	American	3,300	9,800	Videos(multiple angles)	Isolated
ASLLVD-Skeleton	American	3,300	9,800	Skeleton	Isolated
SIGNUM	German	450	33,210	Videos	Continuous
DGS Kinect 40	German	40	3,000	Videos(multiple angles)	Isolated
DEVISIGN-G	Chinese	36	432	Videos	Isolated
DEVISIGN-D	Chinese	500	6,000	Videos	Isolated
DEVISIGN-L	Chinese	2000	24,000	Videos	Isolated
LSA64	Argentinian	64	3,200	Videos	Isolated
GSL isol.	Greek	310	40,785	Videos & Depth from RealSense	Isolated
GSL SD	Greek	310	10,290	Videos & Depth from RealSense	Continuous
GSL SI	Greek	310	10,290	Videos & Depth from RealSense	Continuous
IITB -ROBITA	Indian	23	605	Videos	Isolated
PSL Kinect	Polish	30	300	Videos & Depth from Kinect	Isolated
PSL ToF	Polish	84	1,680	Videos & Depth from ToF camera	Isolated
BUHMAP-DB	Turkish	8	440	Videos	Isolated
LSE-Sign	Spanish	2,400	2,400	Videos	Isolated
Purdue RVL-SLLL	American	39	546	Videos	Isolated
RWTH-BOSTON-50	American	50	483	Videos(multiple angles)	Isolated
RWTH-BOSTON-104	American	104	201	Videos(multiple angles)	Continuous
RWTH-BOSTON-400	American	400	843	Videos	Continuous
WLASL	American	2,000	21,083	Videos	Isolated

Time segmentation is another issue for SLR as it is difficult to distinguish different kinds of sign language while signers make gestures continuously to describe a

phrase or a sentence (Xiao et al., 2020). Word-level sign recognition, an integral part of comprehending sign language phrases and sentences, is also extremely difficult task itself:

- The meaning of signals is primarily determined by the mix of hand actions, body motions and head positions, and small variations in these elements can result in a variety of interpretations.
- With the same gesture, depend on the natural languages and context, they might have different meaning. It is also possible for nouns and verbs from the same lemma to share the same sign. These nuances are not effectively reflected by the small-scale datasets that are currently available (Figure 1) (D. Li et al., 2020).
- The number of signs that are used on daily basis is enormous, it could be thousands. In comparison, tasks such as gesture and action recognition have just had a few hundred categories. The scalability of recognition algorithms is significantly hampered as a result.

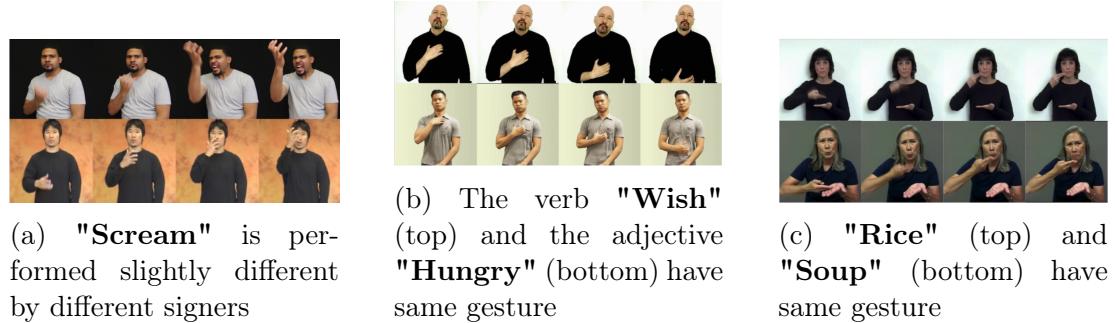


Figure 1: Common occurrence of ambiguity and variation signing

1.2 Thesis scope and target

In fact, the researching of SLR, including isolated (word-level) and continuous (phrase or sentences), has yielded significant results and developed rapidly in recent years (Lim et al., 2019; Y. Li et al., 2018; Mercanoglu Sincan et al., 2021). So this project aims to understand the architecture of I3D model, focuses on the methodology of training, evaluating the network with given dataset. A further objective of the project is getting familiar with libraries and frameworks of Deep

Learning which is built for Python environment, and also other related topics such as image processing, data labelling, development tools e.g Google Colab, Anaconda, Jupyter Notebook. Regarding data and dataset, the project gave a comprehensive overview of organizing data, loading, splitting data for training and testing purpose.

Finally, in terms of the topic's aim, this thesis primarily focuses on enhancing the accuracy of the dataset with the two-stream I3D network. Because of the limitation of facilities, such as hardware, and time-consuming of training process, the project only used the WLASL and ASL dataset. In order to reduce the consumption of training time, as well as to test the effectiveness of I3D network, the dataset is divided into many sub-datasets which have 100 classes, 300 classes, 1000 classes and 2000 classes which is applied for WLASL. Regarding ASL dataset, because the number of class is small (64 words) so this is not splitted.

2 Model

2.1 Methodology of video classification and CNNs

A video is a collection of multi images which are represented by sequential. Therefore, the main idea of clarifying an action or object inside a video is analyzing frame by frame. In details, the general procedure of video recognition (Sivic & Zisserman, 2003; Niebles et al., 2010) contains three key stages. The video is first divided into regions (Liu et al., 2009) based on the places that are easy to characterize in visual terms. This is done by either sampling regions densely (Wang & Schmid, 2013) or, if there are few areas of interest (Laptev, 2005), by using a sparse sampling technique. In the next step, the characteristics are merged into a video level description with defined size. One common method is to train a K-means dictionary and then evaluate all the features. This allows to gather visual words during the duration of the video and then arrange them into histograms of various spatio-temporal positions and extents (Karpathy et al., 2014; Laptev et al., 2008). Finally, a classifier (such as an SVM) is trained to discriminate between the classes of interest with the resulting "bag of words.".

CNN, a single neural network which emulates the process of human brain (LeCun

et al., 1998) offer an approach that combines 3 phases into an end-to-end training from the raw value of pixels to the output classifiers. By using restricted connection across layers (local filters), parameter sharing (convolutions), and specific local invariance-building neurons (max pooling), the spatial structure of pictures is specifically exploited. Recently with the outstanding of GPU, CNNs can now scale the networks with millions variables, resulting in significant developments in object recognition (Girshick et al., 2014), image classification (Krizhevsky et al., 2017), scene annotation. The use of CNNs has piqued the interest of many in the computer vision research community (Zha et al., 2015), and it has been demonstrated that CNN-based methods can reach state-of-the-art performance on various of complex image datasets (Sharif Razavian et al., 2014).

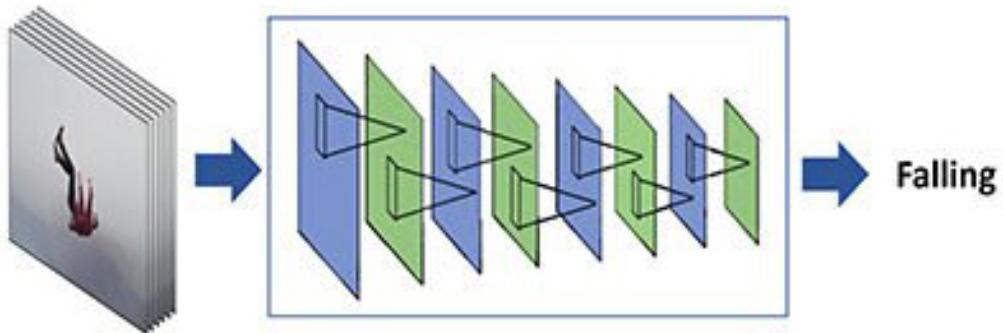


Figure 2: An example of video classification

2.2 Some models to solve video recognition problems

2.2.1 ConvNet-LSTM

LSTM network and CNNs have been researched widely but independently previously. While CNNs are able to give spatially specific information, LSTM networks are good at producing temporally comprehensive results (Mutegeki & Han, 2020). As a result, the use of CNN-LSTM networks is extensively employed for time series data, and is particularly useful for video datasets that have a time dimension.

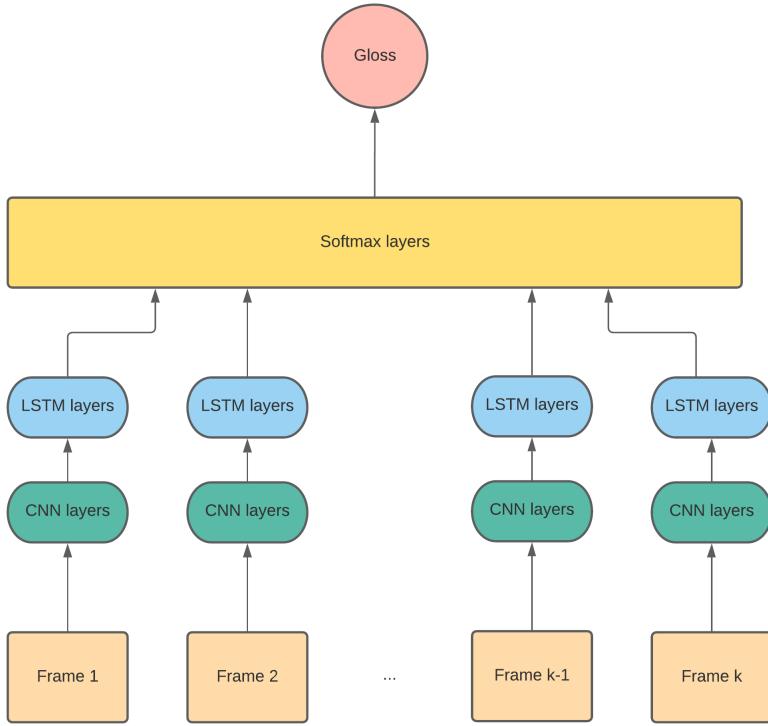


Figure 3: CNN-LSTM model

In the model of ConvNet-LSTM, features are extracted separately from each frame of a video through a CNN network (Karpathy et al., 2014). Then they are feeded into a LSTM layer (Yue-Hei Ng et al., 2015; Donahue et al., 2015), which is capable of providing stage encoding and temporal ordering. Finally, a fully connected layer is put on the top for classifier.

2.2.2 3D ConvNet

Extended from 2D ConvNet, in which convolutions exclusively generate features based on spatial dimensions, 3D ConvNet computes features in the spatial as well as temporal dimensions. Convolution using a 3D kernel is done by convolving a cube of several frames to get a 3D result. This architecture has the additional advantage of making the feature maps in the convolution layer linked to several contiguous frames in the preceding layer, which aids in the capture of motion information (Ji et al., 2013). The use of 3dConvNet have been exploited in many researchs (Tran et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2010).

With $c \times l \times h \times w$ size of a video (c is a number of channel, l is a number of frames, h and w are corresponding to height and width of each frame), kernel size for 3D convolution and pooling are denoted by the notation $d \times k \times k$, where d is the kernel temporal depth and k is kernel spatial size, 3D ConvNet networks are programmed to accept video clips as inputs and predict the class label that correlate to n classes based on datasets (Tran et al., 2015).

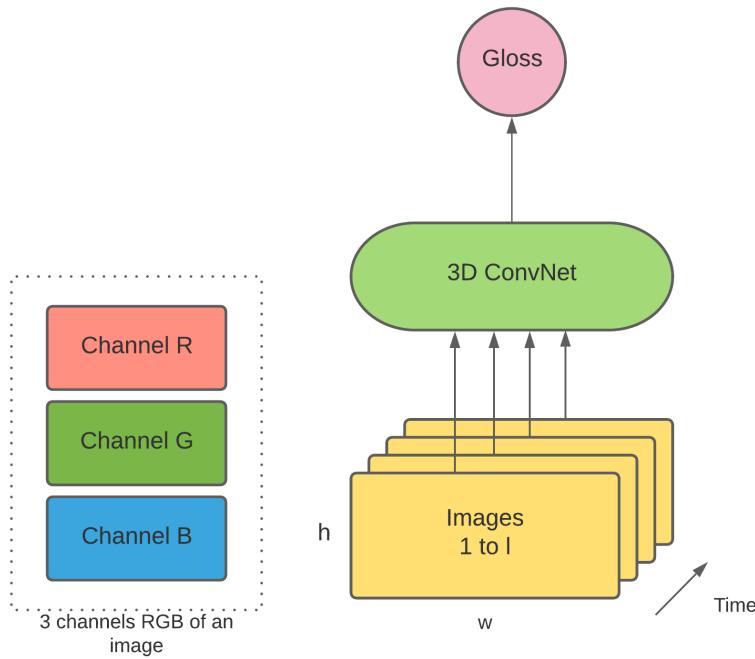


Figure 4: An example of 3D ConvNet with RGB video as input

2.2.3 Two-stream network

Introduced by Simonyan and Zisserman et al, a model which uses an individual RGB frame and an external n-frame optical flow, was shown extremely high performance on benchmarks, while also being efficient to train and test (Simonyan & Zisserman, 2014). In details, a video data is separated into two streams, spatial stream and temporal stream. The spatial stream can spot motion in static frames, whereas the temporal stream is trained to perceive motion in images as optical flows, both of them are developed with ConvNet (Simonyan & Zisserman, 2014).

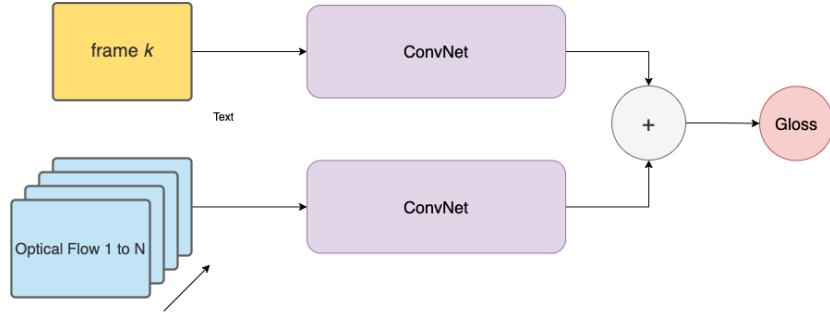


Figure 5: Two-stream 3D ConvNet model

The result shown by Simonyan and Zisserman indicates that using optical flow for training a temporal dimension is outperform than training on static frames (Karpathy et al., 2014).

An extended version of two-stream network, 3D-Fused Two-Stream, is using a 3D ConvNet which can learn patterns related to temporal directly (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017). The model of 3d-Fused Two-Stream is as Figure 6.

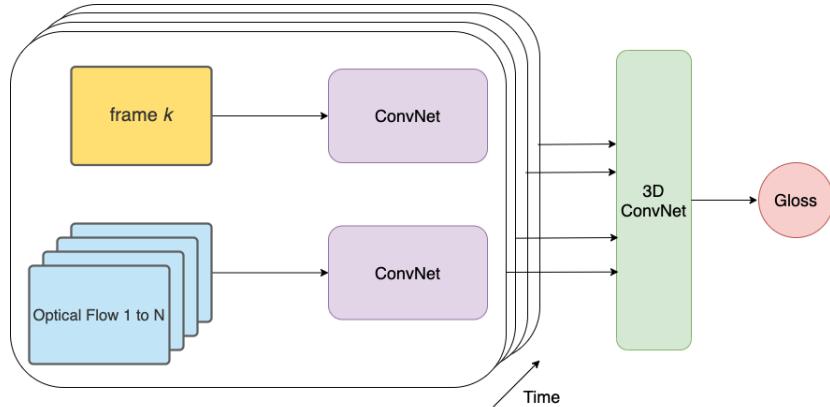


Figure 6: 3D-Fused Two-Stream

2.3 Model in this study

With the extendable 2D ConvNet to 3D ConvNet where time dimensions can be added to perform the result, a coming up model is that use two streams of raw images and also optical flow frames. Thus, the temporal patterns is not only studied during the optical flow but also with RGB inputs. As a result, the performance is improved significantly compared with using only RGB stream (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017).

In the method that Zisserman and Carreira proposed, 2 streams are trained independently. Therefore, with an input video, each stream will provide a prediction according to RGB frames and optical flow frames of it which are fed into two different I3D networks. Then next step is that the predictions of RGB stream and Optical Flow stream are computed averaged to give a final prediction.

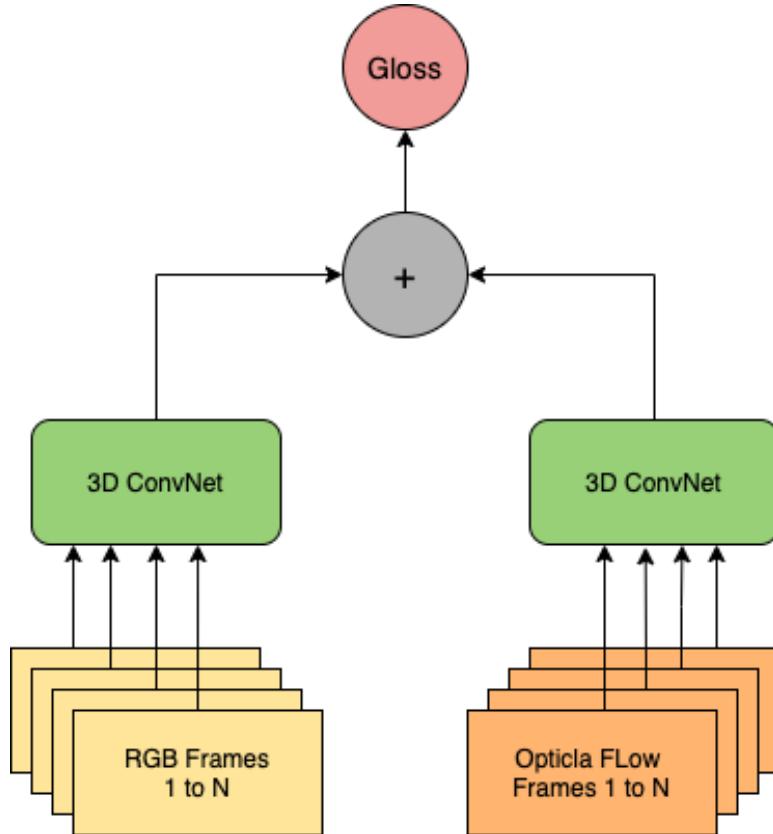


Figure 7: 2-stream 3D ConvNet by Zisserman and Carreira (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017)

The result of combining the predictions from RGB stream and optical flow stream is better than the prediction of each stream separately and also better than the results from other models (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017). In the study, the group of author examined on several datasets for human recognition, such as UCF-101, HMDB-51, Kinitecs, the comparision if shown as the table below.

With an amazing result compared to others, this study use the architecture of 2-stream I3D network to see how good it is when apply to recognize sign languages instead of human activies.

Architecture	UCF-101			HMDB-51			Kinetics		
	RGB	Flow	RGB + Flow	RGB	Flow	RGB + Flow	RGB	Flow	RGB + Flow
LSTM	81.1	-	-	36.0	-	-	63.3	-	-
3D ConvNet	51.6	-	-	24.3	-	-	56.1	-	-
2-Stream	83.6	85.6	91.2	43.2	56.3	58.3	62.2	52.4	65.6
3D-Fused	83.2	85.8	89.3	49.2	55.5	56.8	-	-	67.2
2-Stream I3D	84.5	90.6	93.4	49.8	61.9	66.4	71.1	63.4	74.2

Table 2: Comparision between models on several human activity datasets (Carreira & Zisserman, 2017)

3 Convolution Neural Network in image classification

3.1 Introduction of CNNs

The heart of Deep Learning algorithms rely on Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs) what immitate the behaviors of human brain in which signals are send between neurons (Education, n.d.-b). Various neural network types are employed for certain use cases and data types and CNNs is a specific netwwork which are primarily focus to solve the problem of classification and computer vision tasks. Before the use of CNNs, to identify an object in images, feature extraction approaches were applied, however it were time-consuming and manual methods. With the introduction of convolutional neural networks, a more scalable technique to image classification and object identification has been made available. This methodology, which leverages linear algebra concepts, relies on matrix multiplication to find patterns inside an image. Most of CNNs have expensive computation, therefore to train model effectively, graphical processing units (GPUs) are required.

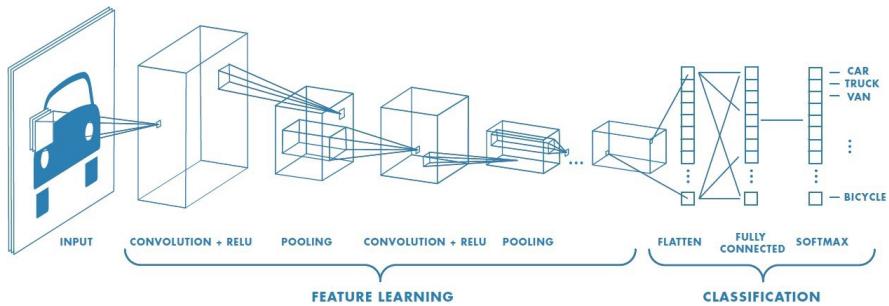


Figure 8: Example of CNN for classification

A key difference between convolutional neural networks and other neural networks

is their strength ability to handle voice, audio or image inputs. In the architecture of CNNs, there are 3 primary types of layers: convolutional layers, pooling layers and fully connected layers (Education, n.d.-a).

3.1.1 Convolution layer - the kernel

The convolutional layer is the fundamental building element of a CNN, where most of computation occurs. The main component of convolution layers are input data, a filter and feature mapping. For instance, an image can be considered as a matrix of $width \times height \times channel$, a video is matrix of $width \times height \times channel \times times$. Then a kernel or filter, named as feature detector, will evaluate for the presence of a specific feature by moving across the fields of images. The final output of this processing is called as an activation map, feature map or convoluted feature (Dumoulin & Visin, 2016).

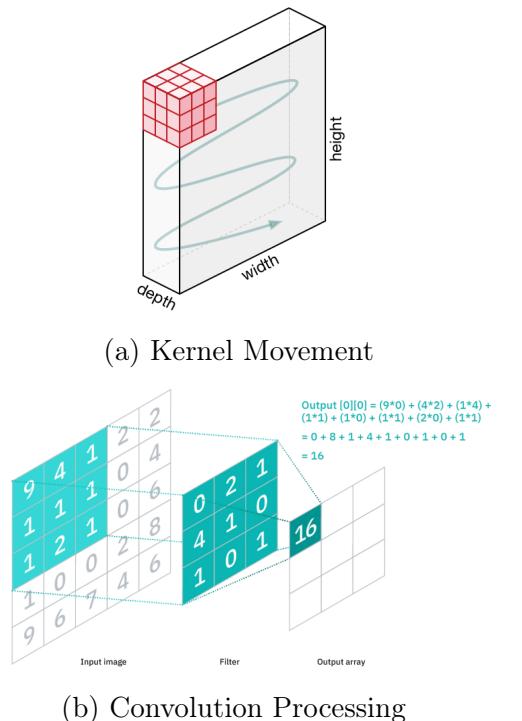


Figure 9: Kernel movement and Convolution Processing

A kernel is a matrix of weights and the dimensions of the kernel is as same as the dimensions of input parameter of a convolutional layer, for example, with 2D convolutions, 2D matrix is used as kernel matrix. On the other hand, the filter

is set of kernels, and each kernel is applied to a specific channel. Therefore, a filter have one more dimension compared to the dimension of kernel. If size of kernel is $h \times w$, and with k channels, filter's dimension is $k \times h \times w$ (Albawi et al., 2017). Through the convolution operation, the high-level feature such as edges are extracted. Convolutional layer is not restricted to only one. Normally, the first layer of convolutional captures low-level features such as color, gradient orientation, edges. Adding more layers allows the architecture to be able to adapt high-level characteristics which gives us a network that fully understanding image in the dataset.

3.1.2 Pooling layer

Besides convolution computations, pooling operations is responsible to build up essential blocks in CNNs by decreasing the spatial size of convolved feature, or reducing the number of parameter input (Dumoulin & Visin, 2016). By this, computational power required also decrease because of dimensionality reduction. Additionally, it is beneficial for extracting dominant features which are positional and rotational invariant, thus allows the model to properly trained. The pooling operation works similarly as the convolutional layer in that it sweeps a filter across the input, except that the filter does not contain any weights (Albawi et al., 2017). There are two types of pooling (Education, n.d.-a):

- Max Pooling: with each pass of the filter over the input, the highest value is selected to the output array. This technique is more commonly implemented compared with average pooling.
- Average Pooling: instead of choosing a max value of input, it computes the average value inside the receptive field, then send to output array.

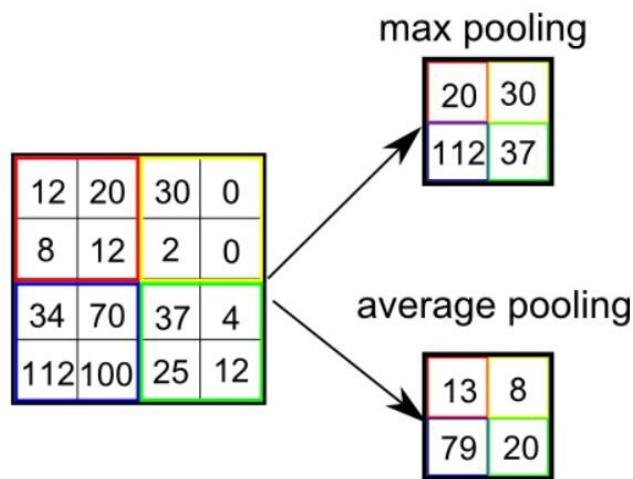


Figure 10: Pooling

3.1.3 Fully Connected (FC) Layers - Classification

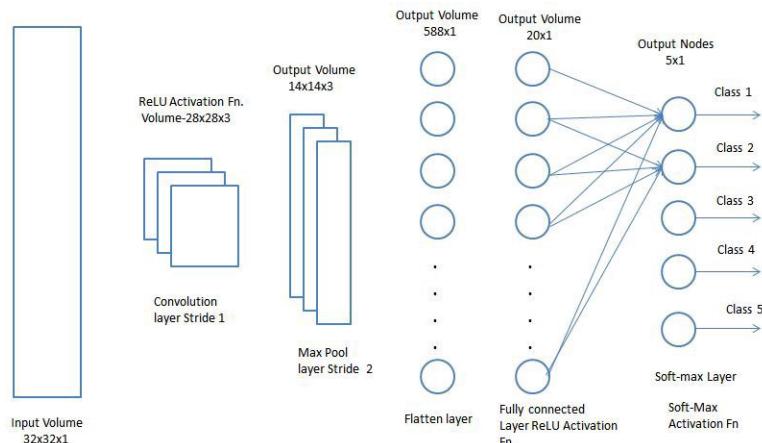


Figure 11: Fully Connected layer ()

3.2 1D, 2D, 3D Convolutions

4 Techniques for Inflated 3D ConvNet

4.1 Inflating 2D ConvNets into 3D ConvNets

4.2 2D filters to 3D filters

4.3 Space, time and network depth

5 Optical flow

5.1 Introduction

Optical flow is a representation of the mobility of a scene environment in relation to an observer's position. In the problem of recognizing human gesture, a static scene in a single frame can lead to an ambiguity in interpreting gesture class. The movement of human bodies must be taken advantage of in order to have a thorough grasp of the gesture class. There are a variety methods for calculating optical flow from frame to frame, including region-based, energy-based, differential-based, phase-based (Marco & Farinella, 2018). The differential technique is the most frequently used method, and it is based on the premise of picture brightness constancy (Horn & Schunck, 1981).



Figure 12: Example of an optical flow frame (NVIDIA, n.d.)

Assume that the constant brightness of a pixel (x, y) in an object does not change;

it is not true in reality, however it is reasonable and natural when the time is small enough. Therefore, the image intensity of two continuous frames can be expressed by the equation below (O'Donovan, 2005).

$$I(x, y, t) = I(x + \delta x, y + \delta y, t + \delta t) \quad (1)$$

Then, using Taylor Series Approximation of the RHS:

$$I(x, y, t) = I(x, y, t) + \frac{\partial I}{\partial x} \delta x + \frac{\partial I}{\partial y} \delta y + \frac{\partial I}{\partial t} \delta t \Rightarrow \frac{\partial I}{\partial y} \delta y + \frac{\partial I}{\partial t} \delta t = 0 \quad (2)$$

Next, δt is divided to derive optical flow equation

$$\frac{\partial I}{\partial x} u + \frac{\partial I}{\partial y} v + \frac{\partial I}{\partial t} = 0 \quad (3)$$

Noted that $u = \frac{dx}{dt}$, $v = \frac{dy}{dt}$ and $\frac{dI}{dx}$, $\frac{dI}{dy}$, $\frac{dI}{dt}$ can be considered as the image gradients along to horizontal, vertical and time dimensions. So far, optical flow problem is that solving $u(\frac{dx}{dt})$ and $v(\frac{dy}{dt})$ (O'Donovan, 2005). However, the issue could not be solved with only one equation with two unknown variables.

There are two types of optical flow: Sparse and Dense optical. In details, Sparse optical flow requires a pre-processing step in which some "*interesting features*" (pixels of object's edges or corners) are detected and then only calculate flow vectors of those pixels (en Lin, n.d.). On the other hand, computation cost for Dense Optical Flow is expensive and slow performance (Wulff et al., 2017) because it provides flow vectors of entire frames, one flow vector per pixel.

5.2 Algorithm for converting RGB video into Optical Flow video

5.2.1 Lucas-Kanade: Sparse Optical Flow

As mentioned above, the initial step of calculating Sparse optical flow is extracting interesting features which are points in images and present rich content information (Harris et al., 1988). They are made up of two main things:

- **Interesting points:** The points which are immune when an image is rotated, translated, scaled or intensified. For instance, pixels which are related to edges, corners or blobs can be considered as interest points inside an image (Derpanis, 2004).
- **Feature Descriptors:** These findings outline the patch of images near the interest points in vectors, from raw pixel to complex Histogram of Gradients (HoG) (Derpanis, 2004).

One of a popular method for corner detection is Harris Corner Detector which was proposed in 1988 by Chris Harris and Mike Stephens in the paper "A combined Corner and Edge Detector". The idea of them is that determine the intensity difference for a movement of (u, v) in all directions. It is expressed in the mathematic form as (Harris et al., 1988):

$$E(u, v) = \sum_{x,y} \underbrace{w(x, y)}_{\text{window function}} \underbrace{[I(x + u, y + v) - I(x, y)]^2}_{\text{shifted intensity}} \quad (4)$$

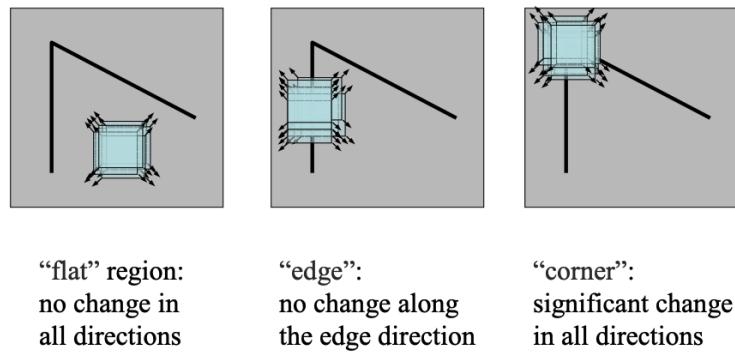


Figure 13: Harris Corner Detector basic idea

The Harris Corner Detector includes three primary steps (Ryu et al., 2011):

- It identifies which windows (small picture patches) generate extremely significant changes in intensity when moved in both the X and Y axes (i.e. gradients).
- Compute a score R for each window found.
- Important corners are selected and marked by applying a threshold to the score.

Another algorithm for corner detected is Shi-Tomasi Corner Detector which was presented by Jianbo Shi and Carlo Tomasi in 1994 (Shi et al., 1994). The algorithm mostly as same as Harris Corner Detector, however the R score is calculated differently which makes the result better. Furthermore, Shi-Tomasi focuses only in the top N corners therefore it might be beneficial in case that each and every corner do not want to be detected.

Deep into the calcultion of R score to identify the diffrence between HDC and SCD.

Table 3: HDC vs SDC Scoring function

Harris Corner Detector	Shi-Tomasi Corner Detector
$R = \det M - k(\text{trace}M)^2$ $\det M = \mu_1 \mu_2$ $\text{trace}M = \mu_1 + \mu_2$	$R = \min(\mu_1, \mu_2)$

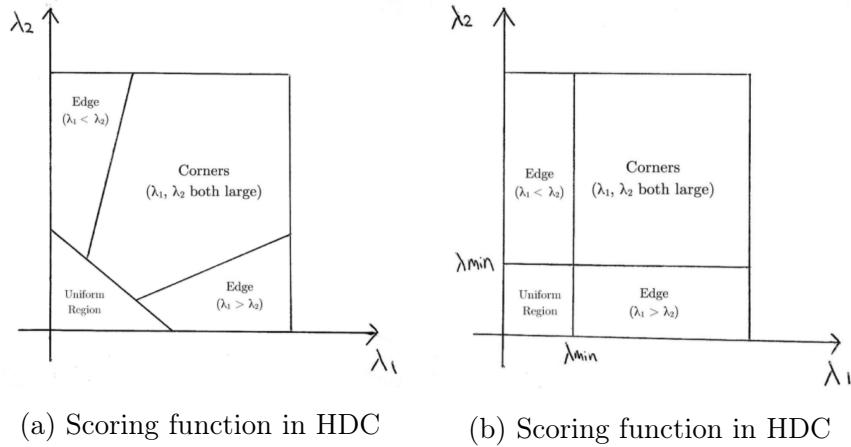


Figure 14: Scoring function between HDC and SDC on $\mu_1 - \mu_2$ space

The pictures below show the result of Harris and Shi-Tomasi Corner Detector.



Figure 15: Result of HDC and SDC algorithm for corner detection

5.2.2 Farneback: Dense Optical Flow

5.3 Optical Flow in Deep Learning

6 Experiment

6.1 Datasets

6.1.1 Argentina Sign Language Dataset

6.1.2 Word Level American Sign Language Dataset

6.2 Setup environment

6.2.1 Python

6.2.2 Goolge Colaboratory

6.2.3 Project structure

6.3 Results

7 Conclusion

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