

# InfLoRA: Interference-Free Low-Rank Adaptation for Continual Learning

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## Abstract

*Continual learning requires the model to learn multiple tasks sequentially. In continual learning, the model should possess the ability to maintain its performance on old tasks (stability) and the ability to adapt to new tasks continuously (plasticity). Recently, parameter-efficient fine-tuning (PEFT), which involves freezing a pre-trained model and injecting a small number of learnable parameters to adapt to downstream tasks, has gained increasing popularity in continual learning. Although existing continual learning methods based on PEFT have demonstrated superior performance compared to those not based on PEFT, most of them do not consider how to eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks, which inhibits the model from making a good trade-off between stability and plasticity. In this work, we propose a new PEFT method, called interference-free low-rank adaptation (InfLoRA), for continual learning. InfLoRA injects a small number of parameters to reparameterize the pre-trained weights and shows that fine-tuning these injected parameters is equivalent to fine-tuning the pre-trained weights within a subspace. Furthermore, InfLoRA designs this subspace to eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks, making a good trade-off between stability and plasticity. Experimental results show that InfLoRA outperforms existing state-of-the-art continual learning methods on multiple datasets. Code is available at <https://github.com/liangyanshuo/InfLoRA>.*

## 1. Introduction

Continual learning requires the model to learn multiple tasks sequentially [33]. To achieve continual learning, the model should possess two essential abilities, including the ability to keep its performance on the old tasks (stability) and the ability to adapt to the new tasks continuously (plasticity) [33]. Furthermore, two different scenar-

ios are often considered in continual learning, including task-incremental scenario [32] and class-incremental scenario [41]. Task-incremental scenario allows the model to get task identities during inference. On the contrary, class-incremental scenario does not allow the model to get task identities during inference, making the model learn to distinguish all the classes across all the tasks.

Recently, parameter-efficient fine-tuning (PEFT) [15, 16, 18], which involves freezing a pre-trained model and injecting a small number of learnable parameters to adapt to downstream tasks, has gained increasing popularity in continual learning [12, 38, 44], especially in the class-incremental scenario. More specifically, existing continual learning methods based on PEFT [21, 43] inject the learnable parameters into a pre-trained model using some popular PEFT methods such as prompt-tuning [25] or low-rank adaptation (LoRA) [16]. Subsequently, these methods freeze the pre-trained weights and sequentially fine-tune the injected parameters on multiple tasks throughout the continual learning process.

Although continual learning methods based on PEFT have demonstrated superior performance compared to those not based on PEFT [44], most of them do not consider how to eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks, which inhibits the model from making a good trade-off between stability and plasticity. Specifically, when learning a new task, existing continual learning methods based on PEFT either reuse the previously learned parameters to adapt to the new task [12, 44] or randomly expand some parameters first and then adapt to the new task [38, 42, 43]. During this process, the interference of the new task on the old tasks exists due to the shared parameters between new and old tasks, which means fine-tuning a pre-trained model on a new task may interfere with the model's performance on the old tasks. As a result, it is hard for the model to make a good trade-off between stability and plasticity.

In this work, we propose a new PEFT method, called interference-free low-rank adaptation (InfLoRA), for continual learning. The contributions of this work are listed as follows:

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- InfLoRA injects a small number of parameters to reparameterize the pre-trained weights and shows that fine-tuning these injected parameters is equivalent to fine-tuning the pre-trained weights within a subspace.
- InfLoRA designs this subspace to eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks, making a good trade-off between stability and plasticity.
- Experimental results show that InfLoRA outperforms existing state-of-the-art continual learning methods on multiple datasets.

## 2. Related Work and Preliminaries

### 2.1. Related Work

**Parameter-Efficient Fine-Tuning** Parameter-efficient fine-tuning (PEFT) methods freeze a pre-trained model and inject a small number of learnable parameters to adapt to downstream tasks. In this way, PEFT methods reduce the inefficiency of full fine-tuning methods which fine-tune all the parameters of a pre-trained model to learn downstream tasks. For example, Adapter [15] adds small modules in different layers of Transformers and only tunes these added modules to adapt to downstream tasks. Prompt-tuning [25] and Prefix-tuning [27] insert a set of learnable tokens into the input of the Transformer layers and only tune these tokens to adapt to downstream tasks. Low-rank adaptation (LoRA) [16] reparameterizes the pre-trained weights with low-rank branches and only tunes these branches to adapt to the downstream tasks. Although these methods tune much fewer learnable parameters than full fine-tuning, they always show comparable or even superior performance compared with full fine-tuning [11, 16, 31, 45]. Early PEFT methods focus on natural language processing (NLP). Recently, PEFT methods have also been proposed for computer vision (CV). For example, visual prompt tuning (VPT) [18] and AdapterFormer [6] apply prompt-tuning and Adapter techniques to CV tasks, respectively. Both of them exhibit comparable performance to full fine-tuning.

**Continual Learning** Early continual learning was usually considered in the context of learning from scratch. Three types of continual learning methods are proposed, including regularization-based methods [1, 20, 23, 46], memory-based methods [2, 3, 7, 28, 39], and expansion-based methods [17, 26, 35]. Regularization-based methods employ a penalty loss (regularization) to prevent important parameters of old tasks from changing too much. Memory-based methods maintain a memory buffer to store information about old tasks. Expansion-based methods dynamically expand the model’s architecture for each new task.

Recently, with the advancements of pre-trained models [9, 10, 13], using pre-trained models for continual learning has gained increasing popularity. Some continual learning methods fully fine-tune the pre-trained models [4, 48],

which has been shown to be inefficient. Other methods explore PEFT methods in continual learning. For instance, some existing continual learning methods [21, 38, 43, 44] introduce prompt-tuning in continual learning, achieving much higher performance than previous methods that learn from scratch, especially in the class-incremental scenario. The method in [12] introduces a framework in continual learning that can be combined with many existing PEFT methods, such as prompt-tuning, LoRA and Adapter. However, all these methods do not consider how to eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks, which inhibits the model from making a good trade-off between stability and plasticity.

### 2.2. Preliminaries

We first introduce low-rank adaptation (LoRA) [16], a popular PEFT method related to our method. Then, we give the problem definition for continual learning.

**Low-Rank Adaptation** LoRA [16] is one of the most popular PEFT methods. It assumes that the changes of parameters lie in a low-rank space when the model is fully fine-tuned on a downstream task. Specifically, for a linear layer with the input dimension  $d_I$  and the output dimension  $d_O$ , we represent its weight with  $\mathbf{W}^{d_O \times d_I}$ . Then, LoRA reparameterizes the pre-trained weight  $\mathbf{W}$  by expanding a branch with two matrices,  $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_O \times r}$  and  $\mathbf{B} \in \mathbb{R}^{r \times d_I}$ . Typically,  $r$  is much smaller than the input dimension  $d_I$  and output dimension  $d_O$ , making  $\mathbf{A}$  a dimensionality increasing matrix and  $\mathbf{B}$  a dimensionality reduction matrix. Finally, LoRA modifies the forward propagation in this linear layer as  $e = \mathbf{W}\mathbf{h} + \mathbf{AB}\mathbf{h}$ . Here,  $\mathbf{h}$  and  $e$  denote the input and output of this layer, respectively. LoRA initializes  $\mathbf{A}$  as  $\mathbf{0}$  and initializes  $\mathbf{B}$  using Gaussian distribution. During the learning of the downstream tasks, LoRA freezes the pre-trained weight  $\mathbf{W}$  and only fine-tunes the parameters  $\mathbf{A}$  and  $\mathbf{B}$ .

**Problem Definition** In continual learning, there is a sequence of tasks with different distributions. We define the task sequence as  $\mathcal{D} = \{\mathcal{D}_1, \dots, \mathcal{D}_T\}$ , where the  $t$ -th task  $\mathcal{D}_t = \{(\mathbf{x}_{i,t}, y_{i,t})\}_{i=1}^{n_t}$ . Here,  $\mathbf{x}_{i,t}$  denotes an input sample and  $y_{i,t}$  denotes its label. The objective of continual learning is to train a model sequentially on these tasks and ensure that the model performs well on all of them.

We follow existing continual learning methods [43, 44] based on PEFT and assume the model is a pre-trained Vision Transformer (ViT) [10]. Specifically, assume the model is  $h_\Phi(f_\Theta(\cdot))$  where  $h_\Phi(\cdot)$  is the classifier with parameters  $\Phi$  and  $f_\Theta(\cdot)$  is the pre-trained ViT backbone with pre-trained parameters  $\Theta$ . Similar to existing work [43], our focus is primarily on the class-incremental scenario, where task identities are unknown during inference. Furthermore, we concentrate on the exemplar-free setting [43, 50], where no historical data can be fetched for rehearsal.

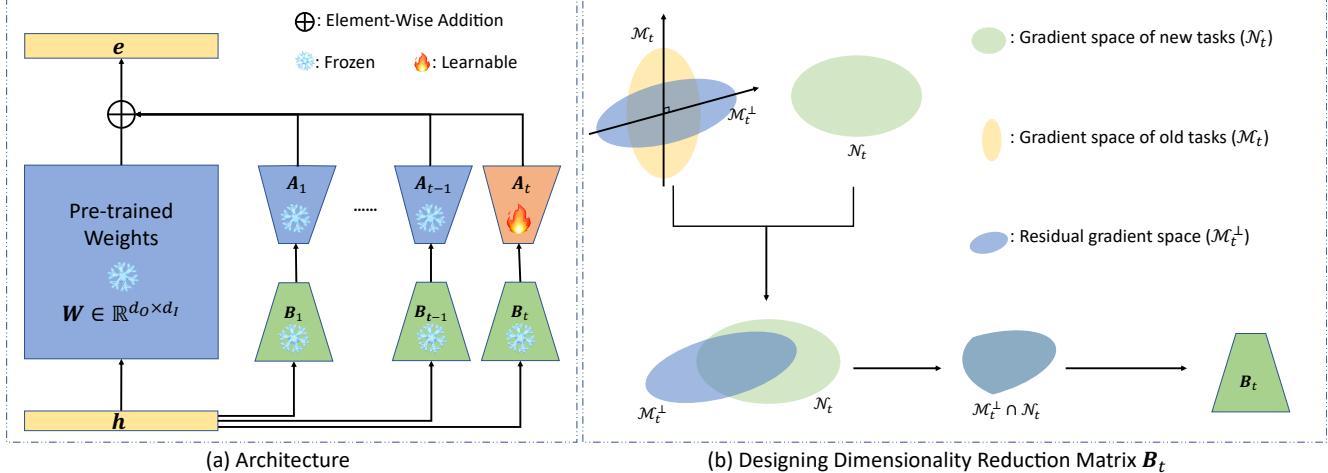


Figure 1. (a) The architecture of our InfLoRA in a certain linear layer of a Transformer. During the learning of the  $t$ -th task, the pre-trained weight and all the old branches are frozen, and only  $\mathbf{A}_t$  is fine-tuned. (b) The pipeline of designing dimensionality reduction matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t$ .

### 3. Methodology

Figure 1 (a) illustrates the architecture of our InfLoRA within a linear layer. Before learning the  $t$ -th new task, our InfLoRA expands a LoRA-like branch, which includes a dimensionality reduction matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t \in \mathbb{R}^{r \times d_I}$  and a dimensionality increasing matrix  $\mathbf{A}_t \in \mathbb{R}^{d_O \times r}$ . Then, the forward propagation of this linear layer is modified as

$$\mathbf{e} = \mathbf{W}\mathbf{h} + \sum_{j=1}^t \mathbf{A}_j \mathbf{B}_j \mathbf{h} = \mathbf{W}_{t-1}\mathbf{h} + \mathbf{A}_t \mathbf{B}_t \mathbf{h} = \mathbf{W}_t \mathbf{h}. \quad (1)$$

Here,  $\mathbf{W}_t = \mathbf{W}_{t-1} + \mathbf{A}_t \mathbf{B}_t = \mathbf{W} + \sum_{i=1}^t \mathbf{A}_i \mathbf{B}_i$ . Similar to LoRA, our InfLoRA also initializes dimensionality increasing matrix  $\mathbf{A}_t$  as  $\mathbf{0}$ . However, different from LoRA, which employs Gaussian distribution to initialize the dimensionality reduction matrix  $\mathbf{B}$ , our InfLoRA designs the dimensionality reduction matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t$  before learning the  $t$ -th task. During the learning of the  $t$ -th task, InfLoRA fine-tunes  $\mathbf{A}_t$  to learn the new task while keeping the pre-trained weight  $\mathbf{W}$ , all the old branches and the matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t$  frozen. After learning the  $t$ -th tasks, for any given test sample belonging to the learned tasks, the model uses  $\mathbf{W}_t$  and (1) to infer its label. This design ensures that our method is compatible with the class-incremental scenario where task identities are unknown during inference.

In the following subsections, we first build the relationship between our InfLoRA and the method that fine-tunes the pre-trained weight. Specifically, we show that fine-tuning parameters  $\mathbf{A}_t$  is equivalent to fine-tuning the pre-trained weights  $\mathbf{W}$  within a subspace spanned by the rows of  $\mathbf{B}_t$ . Note that  $\mathbf{B}_t$  is designed before learning the  $t$ -th task, making this subspace pre-designed. Then, building upon this relationship, we introduce how our InfLoRA designs this subspace to eliminate the interference of the new

task on the old tasks and make a good trade-off between stability and plasticity.

#### 3.1. Relationship between InfLoRA and Fine-Tuning the Pre-Trained Weight

When the  $t$ -th task arrives and our method has expanded a new branch, the forward propagation in this layer can be represented by (1). At this time, we can prove the following proposition:

**Proposition 1.** *When learning the  $t$ -th task with forward propagation represented by (1), fine-tuning  $\mathbf{A}_t$  is equivalent to fine-tuning the pre-trained weight  $\mathbf{W}$  within the subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$ . Here,  $\mathbf{b}_i^t$  ( $1 \leq i \leq r$ ) denotes the  $i$ -th row vector of  $\mathbf{B}_t$ .*

*Proof.* When tuning the pre-trained weight  $\mathbf{W}$  to learn the  $t$ -th task, we can compute the gradient of  $\mathbf{W}$  based on the chain rule:

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{W}} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{e}} \frac{\partial \mathbf{e}}{\partial \mathbf{W}} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{e}} \mathbf{h}^T. \quad (2)$$

Here,  $\mathcal{L}$  denotes the loss function. At this time, the change of  $\mathbf{W}$  can be denoted as  $\Delta \mathbf{W} = -\alpha \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{W}}$ , where  $\alpha$  is the learning rate. Then, we can compute the change of the composed matrix  $\mathbf{W}_t = \mathbf{W} + \sum_{j=1}^t \mathbf{A}_j \mathbf{B}_j$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta_{\mathbf{W}} \mathbf{W}_t &= [\mathbf{W} + \Delta \mathbf{W} + \sum_{j=1}^t \mathbf{A}_j \mathbf{B}_j] - (\mathbf{W} + \sum_{j=1}^t \mathbf{A}_j \mathbf{B}_j) \\ &= \Delta \mathbf{W} = -\alpha \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{W}} = -\alpha \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{e}} \mathbf{h}^T \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

Here, we use  $\Delta_{\mathbf{W}} \mathbf{W}_t$  to denote the change of the composed matrix  $\mathbf{W}_t$  caused by the change of  $\mathbf{W}$ .

Similarly, when tuning the expanded weight  $\mathbf{A}_t$ , we can get the gradient of  $\mathbf{A}_t$  based on the chain rule:

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{A}_t} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial e} \frac{\partial e}{\partial \mathbf{A}_t} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial e} \mathbf{h}^T \mathbf{B}_t^T. \quad (4)$$

At this time, the change of  $\mathbf{A}_t$  can be denoted as  $\Delta \mathbf{A}_t = -\alpha \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{A}_t}$ . Then, we can compute the change of the composed matrix  $\mathbf{W}_t = \mathbf{W}_{t-1} + \mathbf{A}_t \mathbf{B}_t$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta_{\mathbf{A}_t} \mathbf{W}_t &= [\mathbf{W}_{t-1} + (\mathbf{A}_t + \Delta \mathbf{A}_t) \mathbf{B}_t] - (\mathbf{W}_{t-1} + \mathbf{A}_t \mathbf{B}_t) \\ &= \Delta \mathbf{A}_t \mathbf{B}_t = -\alpha \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \mathbf{A}_t} \mathbf{B}_t = -\alpha \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial e} \mathbf{h}^T \mathbf{B}_t^T \mathbf{B}_t \\ &= \Delta_{\mathbf{W}} \mathbf{W}_t \mathbf{B}_t^T \mathbf{B}_t \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

Here, we use  $\Delta_{\mathbf{A}_t} \mathbf{W}_t$  to denote the change of the composed matrix  $\mathbf{W}_t$  causing by the change of  $\mathbf{A}_t$ . The fourth equation in (5) holds because of (4). The fifth equation in (5) holds because of (2). (5) shows that  $\Delta_{\mathbf{A}_t} \mathbf{W}_t$  is equal to  $\Delta_{\mathbf{W}} \mathbf{W}_t$  multiplying a projection matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t^T \mathbf{B}_t$ . Since  $\mathbf{B}_t^T \mathbf{B}_t$  projects each row vector of  $\Delta_{\mathbf{W}} \mathbf{W}_t$  into the subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$ , Proposition 1 holds.  $\square$

Proposition 1 has demonstrated that using our InfLoRA to train the model is equivalent to directly fine-tuning the pre-trained weight  $\mathbf{W}$  within the subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$ . Therefore, before learning the  $t$ -th task, we can design matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t$  such that learning the  $t$ -th task in the subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$  will not interfere with the performance of the model on the old tasks.

### 3.2. Eliminating the Interference of the New Task on the Old Tasks

We first introduce the desired characteristics that InfLoRA aims to let the subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$  have. With these characteristics, InfLoRA can eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks and make a good trade-off between stability and plasticity. Then, we introduce how to design dimensionality reduction matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t$  so that subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$  has these characteristics.

#### 3.2.1 Desired Characteristics

First, InfLoRA aims to make the subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$  orthogonal to the gradients of all the old tasks. In this way, according to Proposition 1, the update of InfLoRA, which can be represented as  $\Delta_{\mathbf{A}_t} \mathbf{W}_t$ , will also be orthogonal to the gradient of the old tasks. Note that the idea of making the update for the new task orthogonal to the gradient of the old tasks to eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks has been proposed in many existing continual learning methods [30, 36]. However, all these existing methods are designed for continual learning from scratch, involving updating all parameters of the model, which is incompatible with the setting in PEFT. On the contrary, our

method is a PEFT method, which only tunes the parameters in  $\mathbf{A}_t$ .

Besides eliminating the interference of new tasks on old tasks, our InfLoRA further makes the subspace  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$  lie in a subspace that the gradient of the new task lies in to make a good trade-off between stability and plasticity. Specifically, existing work [19] has shown that during fine-tuning, the weight increments of pre-trained ViT exhibit redundancy in terms of weight rank. Therefore, the gradients of the new task lie in a low-dimensional subspace. Our method makes  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\}$  not only orthogonal to the gradient of the old tasks but also lie in the subspace in which the gradients of the new task  $t$  lie. By doing so, our method makes the model’s focus on the new task when eliminating the interference of the new task on the old tasks, thereby making a good trade-off between stability and plasticity. Section 4.2 verifies the effectiveness of these two characteristics.

#### 3.2.2 Designing Dimensionality Reduction Matrix

InfLoRA first approximates the gradient space of the new task and old tasks. Here, we use  $\mathcal{N}_t$  to represent the gradient space of the new task approximated by InfLoRA. Similarly, we use  $\mathcal{M}_t$  to represent the gradient space of previous  $t-1$  old tasks approximated by InfLoRA. We also use  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$  to denote the residual gradient space, which is orthogonal to the space  $\mathcal{M}_t$ . Then, in order to meet the characteristics described in Section 3.2.1, InfLoRA ensures that each row of  $\mathbf{B}_t$  lies in  $\mathcal{N}_t \cap \mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ . In other words, InfLoRA makes  $\text{span}\{\mathbf{b}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{b}_r^t\} \subseteq \mathcal{N}_t \cap \mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ .

Existing works [29, 36] have shown that the gradient update of the linear layer lies in the span of the inputs. Please refer to supplementary material for a detailed explanation of this proposition. Therefore, InfLoRA uses the input matrix of the new task  $t$  to approximate the gradient space of the new task. Specifically, InfLoRA computes the input matrix  $\mathbf{H}_t = [\mathbf{h}_1^t, \dots, \mathbf{h}_n^t]$ , with each column of  $\mathbf{H}_t$  representing an input vector of the  $t$ -th task. Then, InfLoRA considers  $\mathcal{N}_t$  as the subspace spanned by the columns of matrix  $\mathbf{H}_t$ .

However, InfLoRA cannot use the input matrix of the old tasks to approximate the gradient space of the old tasks since the data from the old tasks is not available when the model learns the new tasks. Instead, existing methods such as gradient projection memory (GPM) [36] and dual gradient projection memory (DualGPM) [29] can learn a matrix to preserve information about the gradients of the old tasks. InfLoRA incorporates DualGPM to preserve gradient information. With the assistance of DualGPM, the model can learn either a matrix  $\mathbf{M}_t \in \mathbb{R}^{d_t \times k_t}$  or a matrix  $\mathbf{M}_t^\perp \in \mathbb{R}^{d_t \times (d_t - k_t)}$ . Here, the columns of  $\mathbf{M}_t$  contribute to the orthonormal bases of  $\mathcal{M}_t$  and the columns of  $\mathbf{M}_t^\perp$  contribute to the orthonormal bases of  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ .  $k_t$  denotes the

dimension of  $\mathcal{M}_t$ . For detailed information of how DualGPM maintains orthonormal bases  $\mathbf{M}_t$  or  $\mathbf{M}_t^\perp$ , please refer to supplementary material or the original paper [29].

After approximating the gradient space of the new task and old tasks, InfLoRA gets the component of  $\mathcal{N}_t$  which lies in  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ . Specifically, when the model maintains  $\mathcal{M}_t$ , InfLoRA performs the operation

$$\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t = \mathbf{H}_t - \mathbf{M}_t \mathbf{M}_t^T \mathbf{H}_t. \quad (6)$$

Similarly, when the model maintains  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ , InfLoRA performs the operation

$$\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t = \mathbf{M}_t^\perp (\mathbf{M}_t^\perp)^T \mathbf{H}_t. \quad (7)$$

Note that when  $t = 1$ ,  $\mathcal{M}_t$  is a null space and  $\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t = \mathbf{H}_t$ . Obviously, each column of  $\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t$  lies in  $\mathcal{N}_t \cap \mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ . However, since  $(\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t)^T \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d_I}$  and  $\mathbf{B}_t \in \mathbb{R}^{r \times d_I}$  have different shapes, InfLoRA can not directly define  $\mathbf{B}_t$  as  $(\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t)^T$ . Note that  $n \gg r$ , InfLoRA uses the principal components of  $(\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t)^T$  to set  $\mathbf{B}_t$ . Specifically, singular value decomposition (SVD) is performed on  $(\hat{\mathbf{H}}_t)^T = \mathbf{V}_t \Sigma_t \mathbf{U}_t$ . Then, InfLoRA designs  $\mathbf{B}_t$  by

$$\mathbf{B}_t = (\mathbf{U}_t)_r. \quad (8)$$

Here,  $(\mathbf{U}_t)_r$  denotes the rows of  $\mathbf{U}_t$  corresponding to the top- $r$  singular values. Figure 1 (b) illustrates the pipeline of designing matrix  $\mathbf{B}_t$ .

Note that DualGPM expands subspace  $\mathcal{M}_t$  and reduces subspace  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$  when the number of tasks increases. Since InfLoRA constrains the update of the model within the subspace  $\mathcal{N}_t \cap \mathcal{M}_t^\perp \subseteq \mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ , the space for learning the new task reduces when the number of tasks increases. However, by adjusting the approximation error of the gradient for the old tasks, DualGPM can expand  $\mathcal{M}_t$  slowly and reduce  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$  slowly. Therefore, the constraints imposed by InfLoRA do not excessively affect the model’s learning of new tasks. Please refer to supplementary material for a detailed explanation.

### 3.3. Whole Process of InfLoRA

Algorithm 1 outlines the whole process of InfLoRA in continual learning. When the  $t$ -th new task arrives, InfLoRA first designs  $\mathbf{B}_t$  through (8) and expands a new branch. Then, InfLoRA learns the  $t$ -th task by fine-tuning the newly expanded branch. Please note that, based on empirical findings from existing methods [12, 38], we employ the local cross-entropy (CE) loss as the learning objective, as it usually performs better than the global CE loss in continual learning methods based on PEFT. The local CE is the CE loss constrained to the classes of the current new task, which can be denoted as

$$\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{D}_t) = \frac{1}{|\mathcal{D}_t|} \sum_{(\mathbf{x}, y) \in \mathcal{D}_t} \mathcal{L}_{ce}(\text{mask}(h_\Phi(f_\Theta(\mathbf{x}))), y). \quad (9)$$

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### Algorithm 1 InfLoRA for Continual Learning

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1: Input: The data of different tasks  $\{\mathcal{D}_t\}_{t=1}^T$ , a pre-trained ViT
   model  $f_\Theta(\cdot)$ .
2: Output: Network  $f_\Theta(\cdot)$  with learned parameters  $\mathbf{W}_t$ .
3: for  $t$  in  $1 : T$  do
4:   Design  $\mathbf{B}_t$  through (8);
5:   Expand a new branch for the  $t$ -th task;
6:   for  $\mathcal{B}_t$  sampled from  $\mathcal{D}_t$  do
7:     Compute the loss  $\mathcal{L}(f_\Theta(\mathcal{B}_t))$  through (9) and update the
       parameters;
8:   end for
9:   Preserve the information about the gradient of the  $t$ -th task
      through DualGPM;
10:  end for

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Here,  $\text{mask}(\cdot)$  is a function that filters out the logits of the old classes and  $\mathcal{L}_{ce}$  denotes the standard CE loss. After learning the  $t$ -th new task, InfLoRA follows the DualGPM to preserve the information about the gradient of the  $t$ -th task.

Note that the branch corresponding to the  $t$ -th task will be frozen once the model has learned the  $t$ -th task. Since the expanded branches are linear transformations, we can integrate the old branches into the pre-trained weight to reduce the expanded parameters. Specifically, after learning the first task, InfLoRA integrates the first branch into the pre-trained weight and obtains the weight  $\mathbf{W}_1 = \mathbf{W} + \mathbf{A}_1 \mathbf{B}_1$ . Before learning the  $t$ -th new task ( $t > 1$ ), InfLoRA maintains the weight  $\mathbf{W}_{t-1}$ . After learning the  $t$ -th task, InfLoRA integrates the  $t$ -th branch into  $\mathbf{W}_{t-1}$  and obtains  $\mathbf{W}_t = \mathbf{W}_{t-1} + \mathbf{A}_t \mathbf{B}_t$ . In this way, the parameters in  $\mathbf{A}_t$  and  $\mathbf{B}_t$  do not need to be maintained in the learning of subsequent tasks. Therefore, during the whole learning process, the number of parameters expanded by InfLoRA equals the number of parameters in a single branch. Since a single branch contains  $(d_I + d_O)r$  parameters, the number of parameters expanded by InfLoRA is  $(d_I + d_O)r$  all the time.

## 4. Experiments

### 4.1. Experimental Settings

**Datasets and Evaluation Metric** Similar to existing continual learning methods [12, 44] based on PEFT, we use ImageNet-R [14], CIFAR100 [24], and DomainNet [34] to train and evaluate the models. Imagenet-R is generated through artistic processing of 200 classes from ImageNet [8]. This dataset is introduced to continual learning by existing work [43] and has become a standard benchmark for continual learning methods based on PEFT. CIFAR100 is a dataset commonly used in existing continual learning works. DomainNet contains 345 classes and is introduced by some existing works [38, 42] for continual learning. Following existing continual learning work [38],

Table 1. Results (%) on ImageNet-R. Results are included for 5 tasks, 10 tasks, and 20 tasks. We report results averaged over 5 trials.

Tasks	5		10		20	
Method	$ACC_5 (\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_5 (\uparrow)$	$ACC_{10} (\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_{10} (\uparrow)$	$ACC_{20} (\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_{20} (\uparrow)$
<i>joint</i>	$81.14 \pm 0.34$	-	$81.14 \pm 0.34$	-	$81.14 \pm 0.34$	-
<i>sequential</i>	$58.74 \pm 1.28$	$72.91 \pm 0.28$	$46.07 \pm 1.15$	$62.91 \pm 0.68$	$34.62 \pm 0.85$	$51.15 \pm 1.50$
L2P [44]	$64.13 \pm 0.78$	$68.66 \pm 0.41$	$62.54 \pm 0.24$	$67.98 \pm 0.27$	$57.92 \pm 0.28$	$64.57 \pm 0.29$
DualPrompt [43]	$67.88 \pm 0.17$	$71.16 \pm 0.31$	$65.41 \pm 0.52$	$69.39 \pm 0.43$	$61.00 \pm 0.72$	$65.80 \pm 0.67$
CODA-P [38]	$73.09 \pm 0.21$	$76.91 \pm 0.21$	$71.47 \pm 0.35$	$75.82 \pm 0.29$	$67.28 \pm 0.30$	$72.34 \pm 0.17$
C-LoRA [37]	$75.85 \pm 0.31$	$78.85 \pm 0.34$	$71.89 \pm 0.45$	$75.33 \pm 0.28$	$65.71 \pm 0.60$	$70.63 \pm 0.85$
LAE [12]	$73.84 \pm 0.14$	$77.29 \pm 0.45$	$71.70 \pm 0.39$	$76.71 \pm 0.10$	$66.98 \pm 0.35$	$73.72 \pm 0.05$
InfLoRA-b5	$75.28 \pm 0.01$	$78.95 \pm 0.08$	$74.13 \pm 0.18$	$78.54 \pm 0.14$	$68.41 \pm 0.29$	$74.00 \pm 0.50$
InfLoRA	<b><math>77.52 \pm 0.37</math></b>	<b><math>82.01 \pm 0.12</math></b>	<b><math>75.65 \pm 0.14</math></b>	<b><math>80.82 \pm 0.24</math></b>	<b><math>71.01 \pm 0.45</math></b>	<b><math>77.28 \pm 0.45</math></b>

we split ImageNet-R into 5, 10, and 20 tasks, with each task containing 40, 20, and 10 classes. We split CIFAR100 into 10 tasks, and each task constrains 10 classes. We split DomainNet into 5 tasks, and each task contains 69 classes.

Following existing continual learning methods [12, 44], we evaluate the performance of the model through two popular metrics, including the final accuracy  $ACC_T$  and the averaged accuracy  $\overline{ACC}_T = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{i=1}^T ACC_i$ , where  $T$  denotes the total number of tasks and  $ACC_i$  is defined as

$$ACC_i = \frac{1}{i} \sum_{j=1}^i a_{i,j}. \quad (10)$$

Here,  $a_{i,j}$  denotes the accuracy of the  $j$ -th task once the model has learned the  $i$ -th task.

**Baselines** We compare our InfLoRA with state-of-the-art continual learning methods based on PEFT, including learn to prompt (L2P) [44], DualPrompt [43], continual decomposed attention-based prompt (CODA-P) [38], learning accumulation ensemble (LAE) [12], continual low-rank adaptation (C-LoRA) [37]. For LAE, we implement it with LoRA [16]. Following existing works [12, 38], we also include two methods without continual learning, *joint* and *sequential*, in the comparison. Here, *joint* denotes the method that learns all the tasks jointly, while *sequential* denotes the method that learns all the tasks sequentially without any operation to overcome the forgetting of the model. The accuracy of *joint* can be treated as the accuracy upper-bound and the accuracy of *sequential* can be treated as the accuracy lower-bound.

**Architecture and Training Details** We follow existing works [12, 43] to perform experiments. Specifically, we use the ViT-B/16 backbone [10] supervised pre-trained on ImageNet 21K as the pre-trained model.

For all the methods, we follow existing works [12, 38, 44] and use the Adam [22] optimizer with running averages of gradient and its square ( $\beta_1 = 0.9$ ,  $\beta_2 = 0.999$ ). Each task is trained for 50 epochs on ImageNet-R, 20 epochs on CIFAR100 and 5 epochs on DomainNet. The batch size

is set to 128 for all the experiments. Since our InfLoRA shares a similar architecture to LoRA, we follow existing work [12] and insert the architecture of our InfLoRA in the key and value of the attention module. Furthermore, existing method DualPrompt [43] treats the inserted blocks as hyperparameters and searches for the best positions for their prompts. On the contrary, we insert the architecture of InfLoRA for all the Transformer blocks to avoid searching. We also implement a variant of our method, which inserts the bottom 5 Transformer blocks like existing methods DualPrompt and CODA-P. We call this variant InfLoRA-b5. As for the hyperparameter  $r$ , we determine its value through a grid search on a validation dataset.

## 4.2. Experimental Results

**Accuracy** Table 1 shows the results of different methods on ImageNet-R with a different number of tasks. Table 2 shows the results of different methods on CIFAR100 and DomainNet. We can find that our methods InfLoRA and InfLoRA-b5 outperform existing continual learning methods.

Figure 2 shows the variation of the accuracy of different continual learning methods on ImageNet-R and CIFAR100. We can find that our method outperforms existing methods not only at the end of the learning but also throughout the whole learning process. This indicates that our InfLoRA eliminates the interference of the new task on the old tasks and thus the accuracy of our method decreases slower compared to other methods.

**Analysis of Expanded Parameters** Figure 3 shows the number of expanded parameters and the accuracy of different methods on ImageNet-R and CIFAR100. For L2P, DualPrompt and CODA-P, their expanded parameters are included in the added prompts and corresponding key. For LAE, its expanded parameters are the inserted LoRA modules and an additional copy. For C-LoRA, its expanded parameters are inserted LoRA modules. For our method, the expanded parameters are  $B_t$  and  $A_t$ . The details of computing the number of expanded parameters for different meth-

Table 2. Results (%) on CIFAR100 and DomainNet. We report results over 5 trials.

Tasks	CIFAR100		DomainNet	
Method	$ACC_{10} (\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_{10} (\uparrow)$	$ACC_5 (\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_5 (\uparrow)$
<i>joint</i>	$91.92 \pm 0.05$	-	$77.72 \pm 0.04$	-
<i>sequential</i>	$62.18 \pm 3.59$	$80.42 \pm 0.23$	$53.44 \pm 1.21$	$69.09 \pm 0.33$
L2P [44]	$82.48 \pm 0.20$	$87.64 \pm 0.25$	$70.16 \pm 0.05$	$75.60 \pm 0.03$
DualPrompt [43]	$84.42 \pm 0.30$	$90.06 \pm 0.07$	$72.14 \pm 0.05$	$77.71 \pm 0.06$
CODA-P [38]	$86.62 \pm 0.11$	$91.08 \pm 0.28$	$73.23 \pm 0.13$	$78.72 \pm 0.07$
C-LoRA [37]	$82.97 \pm 0.47$	$88.81 \pm 0.34$	$69.34 \pm 0.13$	$75.25 \pm 0.11$
LAE [12]	$84.15 \pm 0.10$	$89.84 \pm 0.03$	$66.85 \pm 0.40$	$75.01 \pm 0.17$
InfLoRA-b5	<b><math>87.06 \pm 0.25</math></b>	$91.59 \pm 0.13$	$73.26 \pm 0.50$	$78.82 \pm 0.34$
InfLoRA	$86.51 \pm 0.73$	<b><math>91.70 \pm 0.32</math></b>	<b><math>74.53 \pm 0.23</math></b>	<b><math>79.57 \pm 0.57</math></b>

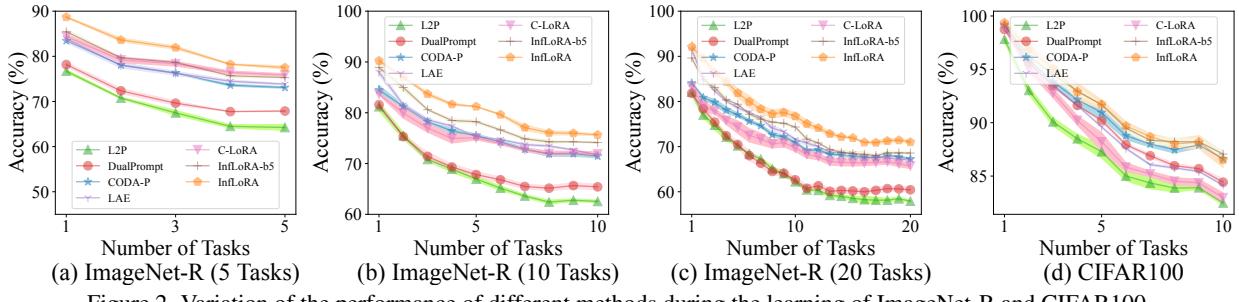


Figure 2. Variation of the performance of different methods during the learning of ImageNet-R and CIFAR100.

ods are given in supplementary material. We can find that CODA-P and C-LoRA expand much more parameters than other methods. Furthermore, our methods InfLoRA and InfLoRA-b5 expand comparable parameters to L2P, DualPrompt and LAE but perform better than these methods.

**Ablation Study** We perform experiment to verify the effectiveness of designing dimensionality reduction matrix  $B_t$  by (8). Specifically, we explore three different variants for designing  $B_t$ . The first variant designs  $B_t$  randomly using Gaussian distribution. We call this variant ‘Random  $\rightarrow B_t$ ’. The second variant discards the operation in (6) or (7) and directly sets  $\hat{H}_t = H_t$ . Through this way, this variant ensures that each row of  $B_t$  lies in  $\mathcal{N}_t$  while ignoring  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$ . We call this variant ‘ $\mathcal{N}_t \rightarrow B_t$ ’. The third variant does not compute the input matrix but initializes  $H_t$  using a Gaussian distribution before applying the operation in (6) or (7). In this way, this variant ensures that each row of  $B_t$  lies in  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$  while ignoring  $\mathcal{N}_t$ . We call this variant ‘ $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$ ’. Since our method focuses both  $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp$  and  $\mathcal{N}_t$ , we use  $\mathcal{N}_t \cap \mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$  to represent our method.

Table 3 shows the results of our method and its variants. We can find that all these variants fail to perform as well as our method. To further demonstrate the performance of different variants, we show the relative accuracy of different tasks after the model learns them all in Figure 4. Here, relative accuracy is the accuracy of different variants minus the accuracy of our InfLoRA. Note that the last task is the new task, and the other tasks are old tasks in Figure 4. As we can see, ‘Random  $\rightarrow B_t$ ’ and ‘ $\mathcal{N}_t \rightarrow B_t$ ’ outper-

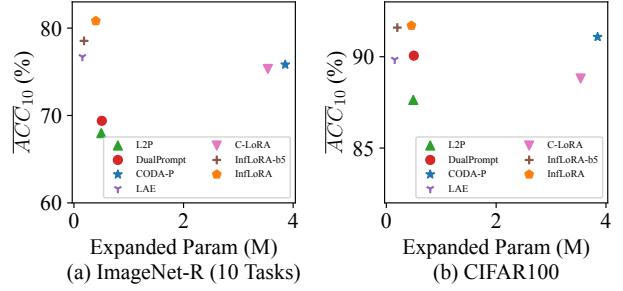


Figure 3. Variation of the performance of different methods during the learning of ImageNet-R and CIFAR100.

form ‘ $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$ ’ on the new task but shows much lower accuracy than ‘ $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$ ’ and our InfLoRA on the old tasks. This means these two variants fail to eliminate the inference of the new task on the old tasks, making the model suffer from low stability. On the contrary, ‘ $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$ ’ shows the lowest performance on the new task. This means ‘ $\mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$ ’ ignores the plasticity of the model. Our method outperforms all the variants on most of the tasks. This shows that our method can eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks and make a better trade-off between stability and plasticity than these variants.

**Varying the Pre-Trained Model** We also follow the existing method [40] and perform experiments using a ViT-B/16 pre-trained with two different self-supervised methods, including DINO [5] and iBOT [49]. All experimental settings, except for the choice of the pre-trained model, are kept consistent with the details outlined in Section 4.1.

Table 3. Results of different variants on ImageNet-R with a different number of tasks.

Tasks	5		10		20	
	$ACC_5(\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_5(\uparrow)$	$ACC_{10}(\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_{10}(\uparrow)$	$ACC_{20}(\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_{20}(\uparrow)$
$Random \rightarrow B_t$	$72.49 \pm 0.38$	$79.40 \pm 0.29$	$67.38 \pm 0.41$	$76.62 \pm 0.06$	$56.17 \pm 0.29$	$69.24 \pm 0.35$
$\mathcal{N}_t \rightarrow B_t$	$67.01 \pm 0.11$	$76.09 \pm 0.04$	$57.91 \pm 0.30$	$70.23 \pm 0.59$	$40.73 \pm 0.29$	$59.68 \pm 0.52$
$\mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$	$75.94 \pm 0.53$	$80.69 \pm 0.27$	$74.61 \pm 0.62$	$79.67 \pm 0.27$	$68.79 \pm 0.42$	$75.74 \pm 0.26$
$\mathcal{N}_t \cap \mathcal{M}_t^\perp \rightarrow B_t$ (InfLoRA)	<b><math>77.52 \pm 0.37</math></b>	<b><math>82.01 \pm 0.12</math></b>	<b><math>75.65 \pm 0.14</math></b>	<b><math>80.82 \pm 0.24</math></b>	<b><math>71.01 \pm 0.45</math></b>	<b><math>77.28 \pm 0.45</math></b>

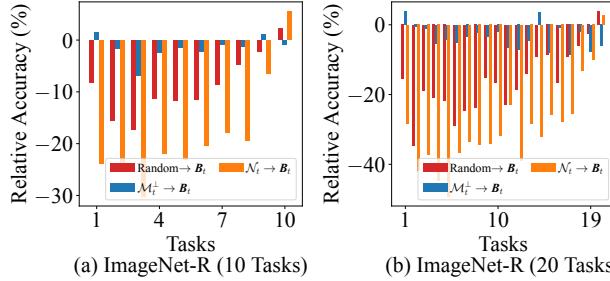


Figure 4. Relative accuracy of different tasks. Relative accuracy is the accuracy of different variants minus the accuracy of InfLoRA.

Table 4. Results (%) of different methods on ImageNet-R (10 tasks) using various self-supervised pre-trained models. Here, DINO-1k and iBOT-1k indicate that the ViT is pre-trained on ImageNet-1k using these respective methods.

	Method	$ACC_{10}(\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_{10}(\uparrow)$
DINO-1k	L2P [44]	$56.71 \pm 0.12$	$63.59 \pm 0.21$
	DualPrompt [43]	$60.23 \pm 0.42$	$66.57 \pm 0.25$
	CODA-P [38]	$64.02 \pm 0.68$	$71.50 \pm 0.42$
	C-LoRA [37]	$63.07 \pm 0.36$	$68.09 \pm 0.41$
	LAE [12]	$61.03 \pm 0.27$	$69.89 \pm 0.15$
	InfLoRA-b5	$66.16 \pm 0.14$	$73.01 \pm 0.17$
iBOT-1k	InfLoRA	<b><math>68.31 \pm 0.28</math></b>	<b><math>76.15 \pm 0.05</math></b>
	L2P [44]	$60.80 \pm 0.35$	$66.58 \pm 0.28$
	DualPrompt [43]	$63.78 \pm 0.38$	$68.88 \pm 0.16$
	CODA-P [38]	$68.02 \pm 0.48$	$74.28 \pm 0.47$
	C-LoRA [37]	$68.60 \pm 0.07$	$73.47 \pm 0.28$
	LAE [12]	$64.14 \pm 0.29$	$72.59 \pm 0.22$
	InfLoRA-b5	$69.72 \pm 0.44$	$76.11 \pm 0.13$
	InfLoRA	<b><math>71.84 \pm 0.09</math></b>	<b><math>78.29 \pm 0.09</math></b>

Table 4 shows the results of different methods on ImageNet-R when using various pre-trained models. Comparing these results to those in Table 1, we can find that the performance of all methods utilizing self-supervised pre-trained models is lower than the performance of the corresponding methods using supervised pre-trained models. However, our methods still outperform all other methods.

**Combining with Classifier Alignment** Slow learner with classifier alignment (SLCA) [47] utilizes feature statistics to align classifiers, demonstrating superior performance compared to methods without aligned classifiers. Our InfLoRA can be combined with classifier alignment (CA) to get better performance. Specifically, after learning the  $t$ -th task

Table 5. Results (%) of different methods on ImageNet-R (10 tasks) and CIFAR100 using classifier alignment (CA) technique.

	Method	$ACC_{10}(\uparrow)$	$\overline{ACC}_{10}(\uparrow)$
CIFAR100	SLCA [47]	$91.06 \pm 0.24$	$93.65 \pm 0.19$
	InfLoRA+CA	<b><math>91.59 \pm 0.08</math></b>	<b><math>94.39 \pm 0.05</math></b>
ImageNet-R	SLCA [47]	$77.34 \pm 0.25$	$81.35 \pm 0.16$
	InfLoRA+CA	<b><math>79.78 \pm 0.25</math></b>	<b><math>83.38 \pm 0.19</math></b>

with parameters  $A_t$  and  $B_t$  and loss (9), we collect features  $F_t = \{r_{i,t}\}_{i=1}^{n_t}$  of the  $t$ -th task. Here,  $r_{i,t} = f(x_{i,t})$  denotes the features extracted by backbone  $f_\Theta(\cdot)$ . Then, mean and covariance of features for each class are computed and saved. After that, for each class  $c$  the model has seen during continual learning,  $S$  samples are sampled from Gaussian distribution  $\mathcal{N}(\mu_c, \Sigma_c)$ . Here,  $\mu_c$  and covariance  $\Sigma_c$  denote the mean and covariance of the class  $c$ . Finally, we align the classifier using standard cross-entropy and these samples. The details of this experiment are given in supplementary material.

Table 5 shows that our method InfLoRA+CA outperforms SLCA. Note that SLCA tunes all the parameters of the model while our method InfLoRA only tunes the parameters in  $A_t$ . Therefore, our InfLoRA+CA is much more efficient than SLCA.

## 5. Conclusion

In this work, we propose a new method, called interference-free low-rank adaptation (InfLoRA), for continual learning. InfLoRA injects a small number of parameters to reparameterize the pre-trained weights and shows that fine-tuning these injected parameters is equivalent to fine-tuning the pre-trained weights within a subspace. Furthermore, InfLoRA designs this subspace to eliminate the interference of the new task on the old tasks, making a good trade-off between stability and plasticity. Experimental results show that InfLoRA outperforms existing state-of-the-art continual learning methods on multiple datasets.

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