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# CLASSIFICATION OF SMALL DATA SETS OF IMAGES WITH TRANSFER LEARNING IN CONVOLUTIONAL NEURAL NETWORKS

Biserka Petrovska<sup>1</sup>, Igor Stojanovic<sup>2</sup>, Tatjana Atanasova Pachemska<sup>3</sup>

Military Academy “General Mihailo Apostolski”, University “Goce Delcev”, Stip, Macedonia  
biserka.petrovska@morm.gov.mk<sup>1</sup>

Faculty of Computer Science, University “Goce Delcev”, Stip, Macedonia  
igor.stojanovic@ugd.edu.mk<sup>2</sup>

Faculty of Computer Science, University “Goce Delcev”, Stip, Macedonia  
tatjana.pacemska@ugd.edu.mk<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** Nowadays the rise of the artificial intelligence is with high speed. Neural networks are in a big expansion in a new millennium. Their application is wide: they are used in processing images, video, speech, audio, and text. Convolutional neural networks have been widely applied to a variety of pattern recognition problems, such as computer vision. Pre-trained convolutional neural networks developed by researches or big corporations were trained on millions of images. Sometimes we have a small set of images to be classified and in those situations, there is no success to train the network from a scratch. This article exploits the technique of transfer learning for classifying the images of small datasets. It transfers the knowledge of the pre-trained convolutional neural network and uses it for the classification of those data sets. Fine-tuning of the network is done through optimization of hyper parameters, in order to maximize the classification accuracy. In the end, the directions have been proposed for the selection of the hyper parameters and of the pre-existing network which can be suitable for transfer learning.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, deep learning, AlexNet, hyper parameters, optimization, accuracy

## 1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a cutting edge discipline, which unites machine learning-based techniques and neural networks (NN). Even we are far away from the moment when machines are going to make decisions instead of human beings, the development in the field of neural networks is remarkable. Deep learning (DL) is based on a specialized architecture of neural networks. The concepts of AI are extremely technical, complex, and based on numerous fields of science, such as mathematics, statistics, probability theory, signal processing, machine learning, linguistics, and neuroscience. At the moment, there are a lot of problems which are incredibly complicated, not well understood and very difficult to solve it manually. The primary motivation for the further study of AI, and for profound developing of these techniques, is to find solutions of the kind of problems mentioned above. Increasingly, we rely on AI techniques to solve these problems for us, without requiring explicit programming instructions.

There have been remarkable gains in the application of AI techniques and associated algorithms of AI. Popular examples of an AI solution includes IBM's Watson, Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa. Watson was made famous by beating the two greatest Jeopardy champions in history. It is now being used as a question answering computing system for commercial applications [15]. So far AI has been used for speech recognition and natural language applications (processing, generation, and understanding). It is also used for other recognition tasks (pattern, text, image, video, audio, facial ...), autonomous vehicles, medical diagnoses, gaming, search engines, robotics, spam filtering, crime fighting, marketing, remote sensing, transportation, classification, etc.

At the time of this writing, there are a lot of pre-trained convolutional neural networks, developed by scientists or big corporations. One of the main purposes of these networks is to solve image classification problems. Pre-existing convolutional neural networks were trained on huge datasets and they have shown astonishing accuracies. Even that the above mentioned CNN were trained on certain image sets, they can be used for image classifications on other sets of images. This is achieved with transfer learning technique. We



transfer the weights and biases of the pre-trained CNN and then fine-tune the network in order to classify the small datasets on which it was not trained before. Fine-tuning the neural network actually consists selection of hyper parameters.

In this article, we research one particular part of the area of AI, deep neural networks. They are neural networks with many computational stages. This article exploits convolution neural networks and their use for transfer learning. Transfer learning is a technique of optimization of pre-trained CNN in order to classify a set of images on which it was not trained before.

## 2. Related work

Lately, large public image data sets, such as ImageNet [3], and high-performance computing systems, such as GPUs or large-scale distributed clusters [20] have become available. This is the reason why convolutional networks have come out on top in large-scale image and video recognition [1], [17], [18], [19]. Convolutional neural networks have been a point of interest of researches in the last decade. The ImageNet Large-Scale Visual Recognition Challenge (ILSVRC) [21] is a competition with the most remarkable role in the advance of deep visual recognition architectures. From high-dimensional shallow feature encodings [22] to deep CNN [1], all these generations of image classification systems of enormous scale were tested in ImageNet Large-Scale Visual Recognition Challenge (ILSVRC). It is difficult to outperform the accuracies that have been achieved.

Transfer learning technique as a method for computer vision is related to the pre-trained network from which we transfer the knowledge, in our case convolutional neural network AlexNet [1], especially with its hyper parameters.

### 2.1 Transfer learning

The purpose of transfer learning is to transfer knowledge between the source and target domains. For image classification, transfer learning is a good choice when the number of training samples is small. It is done by adapting classifiers trained for other categories. Transfer learning has been successfully applied except to image classification [5], [6], also to text sentiment classification [4], human activity classification [7], software defect classification [8], and multi-language text classification [9]. Since Pan [10] in 2010 published a research paper for transfer learning, there have been over 700 papers written about it.

Existing networks, pre-trained on ImageNet [3], demonstrate a good ability to classify images outside this dataset via transfer learning. Figure 1 shows directions how to proceed with using the pre-trained neural network in a specific case [14].

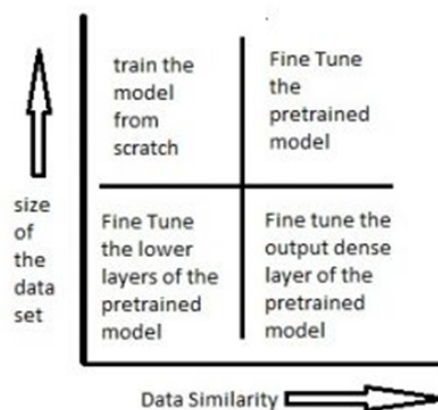


Figure 1. Transfer learning according to the characteristics of dataset [14]

**Case 1 – Size of the data set is small and the data similarity is very high** – Here there is no need to retrain the network; the pre-existing model is used as a mechanism for feature extraction. But certainly, the convolutional

neural network needs some changes. The output layers should be modified and adjusted according to the classification assignment.

**Case 2 – Size of the data is small and data similarity is very low** – In this scenario, size of a data set is not sufficient for training the network from a scratch. So, k lower layers are frozen and the remaining (n-k) higher layers of the pre-existing network model are trained again. A certain number of layers has to be retrained, because of the fact that new data set has low similarity compared to the data set the network was originally trained on.

**Case 3 – Size of the data set is large and the data similarity is very low** – Compared to case 3, here the condition for the effectiveness of a neural network training is fulfilled, the size of the data set is large enough. The similarity between two data sets is small, so using the pre-trained CNN will result in low classification accuracy. The best solution is to train the neural network from a scratch.

**Case 4 – Size of the data is large and there is high data similarity** – When the data set is large, there are enough images to retrain the whole network. We are not doing it from a scratch, but the architecture of the model and its initial weights are kept.

## 2.2 AlexNet

Krizhevsky, Sutskever, and Hinton (KSH) trained and tested a deep convolutional neural network [1]. In their work, they used a subset of the ImageNet data repository [3]. The images were categorized into 1,000 categories. The validation set contained 50,000 images and test set contained 150,000 images. The developed deep convolutional network was later named AlexNet. AlexNet took part on ILSVRC 2012 and knocked off its competitors. AlexNet achieved an accuracy of 84.7 percent, according to the top-5 criterion. It was better than the second-rang CNN, which classification accuracy was 73.8 percent. When it comes strictly to the restrictive metric of accuracy, AlexNet achieved an accuracy of 63.3 percent.

The KSH network consists of input layer, 7 layers of hidden neurons and output 1000-unit softmax layer. 5 of the hidden layers are convolutional layers, and 2 layers are fully-connected layers. Model architecture is shown in Figure 2 [1]. The network was trained on 2 parallel GPUs. Half of the kernels of the KSH network were put on the first GPU and the other half on the second GPU. The GPUs communicate in the third convolutional layer and in fully connected layers. Response-normalization layers follow the first and second convolutional layers. First, second and fifth convolutional layer are followed by a max-pooling layer with  $3 \times 3$  regions. The pooling regions of the max-pooling layer have a stride length of 2 pixels. In order to speed up training, the ReLU (Rectified Linear Unit) non-linearity with activation function  $f(z) \equiv \max(0, z)$  [2], is applied to the output of every convolutional and fully-connected layer.

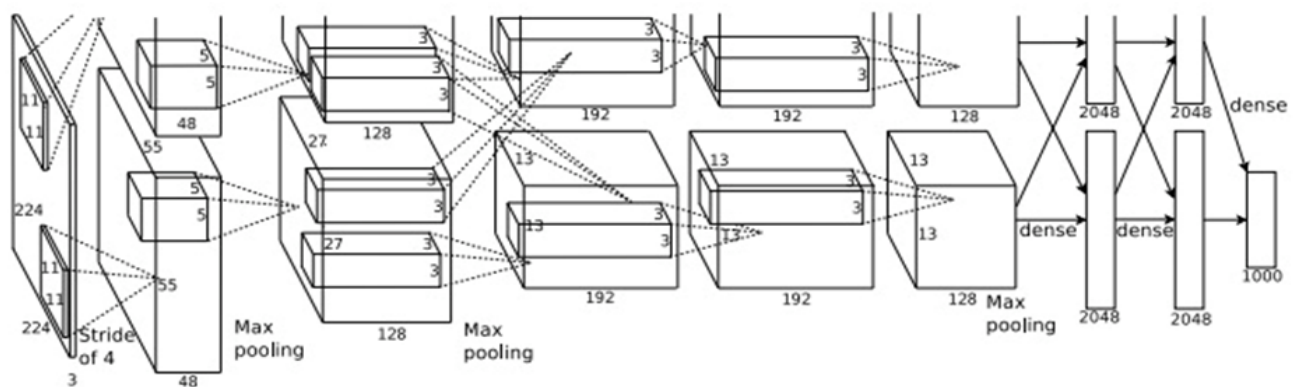


Figure 2: Architecture of AlexNet [1]

KSH network had about 60 million learned parameters. In order to combat overfitting in such a large-scale network, Krizhevsky, Sutskever, and Hinton employed numerous techniques: the training set was expanded by using random cropping, a variant of L2 regularization and dropout were used. Alexnet was trained with a BP (Back Propagation) algorithm - momentum-based, mini-batch stochastic gradient descent.

## 2.2 Hyper parameters

Different network training algorithms involve different sets of hyper-parameters [16]. Here we are discussing the hyper parameters which are optimized in our simulation scenario.

**The initial learning rate** ( $\eta_0$ ) - the most important thing in neural network training is to tune the learning rate. Typically, its value is between the borders  $10^{-6}$  - 1, for standardized neural network inputs (in the range (0, 1)). There are two possibilities for tuning the learning rate. The first one is to keep the learning rate values constant over whole network training, which is satisfying in most cases. The second possibility is to adapt the learning rate according to a given schedule, as presented in equation (1). It gives an  $O(1/t)$  learning rate schedule [11]. In equation (1)  $\tau$  is time constant: when  $\tau \rightarrow \infty$  then the learning rate is constant over whole network training.

$$\eta_t = \frac{\eta_0 \tau}{\max(t, \tau)} \quad (1)$$

Here learning rate is kept constant for the first  $\tau$  steps and then decreases it in  $O(1/t)$ .

**The mini-batch size B** – usually, B moves between values of 1 and few hundreds. Selection of the mini-batch size has strictly computational meaning. When the training set is larger, there is a possibility to choose a bigger mini batch size B. In those scenarios, network training takes advantage of matrix-matrix products.

**Number of training iterations T** - this hyper-parameter optimization concerns best classification accuracy. Termination of network training is determined by the technique of early stopping. Every N updates of a mini-batch, we mark down the accuracy estimated on a validation set. We stop the neural network training if it doesn't improve for quite some time (number of training iterations).

**Layer-specific optimization hyper parameters** – this scenario mostly concerns the learning rate; it can be different on different layers of a deep neural network. Another possibility is to have different learning rates for the different types of parameters in the neural network, like biases and weights. Apart biases and weights, usage of different learning rate for separate parameters has significance when parameters such as precision or variance are included in the training process [12].

**Weight decay regularization coefficient  $\lambda$**  – adding a regularization term to the cost function is a way to reduce overfitting. There are two types of regularization L2 and L1. L2 adds a term  $\lambda \sum_i \theta_i^2$  to the cost function. It

decreases large weights more than small weights. The second type of regularization L1 adds a term  $\lambda \sum_i |\theta_i|$ . It

forces the network weights to go to zero, except in a small number of high-important connections [16]. Despite the fact that weights  $w$  and biases  $b$  are associated with the hidden neurons' activation, some researches during neural network training regularize only the first ones.

The above mentioned hyper parameters are basic choices. There are also a number of other hyper parameters which can be optimized with different neural network models and training algorithms: momentum  $\beta$ , a number of hidden neurons (layers), neuron non-linearity, the sparsity of activation, weights initialization scaling coefficient, random seeds, preprocessing etc.

## 3. Materials and methods

The aim of our research is to use the technique of transfer learning for classification of small datasets. What was done is transfer the part of the architecture, weights, and biases from the pre-trained convolutional neural network and then fine-tune it. In our simulations, we were optimizing the hyper parameters of the convolutional neural network in order to maximize the classification accuracy on the small dataset. Here AlexNet [1] is used as pre-trained model architecture. AlexNet was trained on a restricted subset of the ImageNet data [3] by its creators. The goal is to classify a set of images on which the neural network was not trained before. Used images are a subset of CIFAR-10 dataset [13]. The subset consists of images which belong to 5 categories. The size of the test dataset was 20% the size of the training dataset. Except in the first studied situation where the size of the training data set varied from 500 to 4000 images and respectively the size of the test data set varied from 100 to 800 images, in the rest studied situations the size of the training data set was 3000 images and the size of a test data set was 600 images.

In heading **2.2 Transfer learning**, four possible scenarios that can take place are explained. Choice of the scenario depends on the size of the dataset and the similarity between the dataset on which the convolutional neural network was trained at first and the dataset which should be classified. The CIFAR-10 dataset consists of 60000 32x32 colour images in 10 classes (airplane, automobile, cat, bird, deer, dog, frog, horse, ship, truck) with 6000 images per class. We will use only part of CIFAR-10 dataset, so the data set size is small. The similarity between the ImageNet data and CIFAR-10 dataset is big. This situation can be resolved by scenario 1 – we fine tune the output layers of the pre-trained neural network. The images were pre-processed in an appropriate way at the input of AlexNet.

The pre-existing network model AlexNet is used as a feature extractor. The last three layers form the original AlexNet architecture: a fully connected layer with 1000 neurons, a softmax layer, and the classification output layer are removed. They are replaced with new layers relevant to our assignment: a fully connected layer with 5 hidden units, softmax layer and classification layer of 5 categories. We choose the weights of the last layers we introduced in the network to learn faster than the others. That's why weight learn rate factor and bias learn factor are from order  $10^1$ .

The simulations were performed in MATLAB with GeForce GTX 960 GPU (Graphic Processor Unit), Intel Core2Duo 3.0 GHz CPU (Central Processor Unit) and 4GB RAM (Random Access Memory). Despite the computation of classification accuracy, we were plotting the training accuracy in order to visualize the process and to realize when the network starts severely to overfit.

In the next heading, we will present and discuss the success of transfer learning as a function of the size of a training set, learning rate, regularization parameter  $\lambda$ , weight and bias learn rate factor, size of a mini batch, number of training epochs (iterations).

#### 4. Results and discussion

The scale of the data set is a couple thousands of images, for which the pre-trained convolutional network gives acceptable accuracy, nearly 85%. Figure 3 shows the overall accuracy which is accomplished by CNN with transfer learning from AlexNet, as a function of the number of training images.

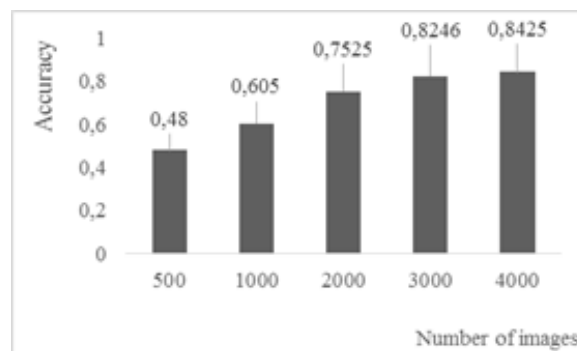


Figure 3. Accuracy of pre-trained CNN as a function of dataset size

Next parameter we optimized is learning rate. For bigger learning rates 0.1 and 0.01 our classification accuracies are no better than chance (0,2). The highest accuracies are achieved for learning rates 0.001 and 0.0001. Learning rate 0.00001 is too small and it slows down stochastic gradient descent. Figure 4 shows the process of training CNN with transfer learning from AlexNet with different learning rates. The neural network has a lot of parameters, so it tends to overfit during training with a small dataset. It can be seen that with  $\eta=0.001$  the network suffers from severe overfitting, so  $\eta=0.0001$  is the best option and this value for the learning rate is used in further simulations.

Pre-trained CNN AlexNet was originally trained with L2 regularization parameter  $\lambda=0.0005$ . We tried to optimize the value of  $\lambda$  in the surrounding of that value. For  $\lambda=0.0001$  we got a little bit better accuracy, Figure 5, and with further decrease of  $\lambda$  improvement was negligible.

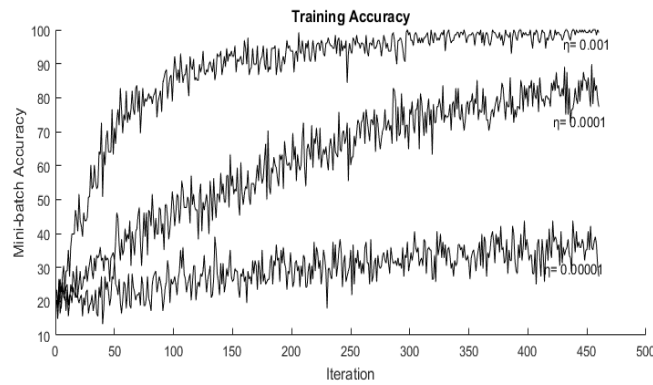


Figure 4. Process of training with different learning rates

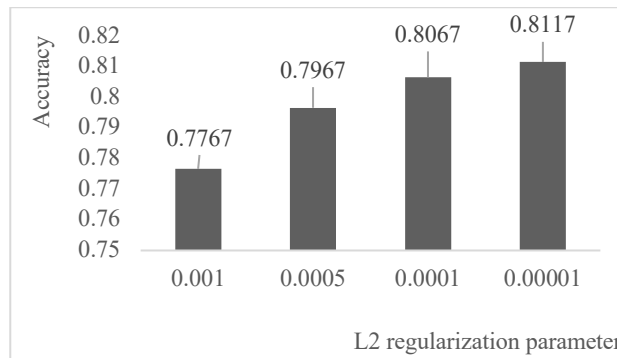


Figure 5. Accuracy of pre-trained CNN as a function of L2 regularization parameter

Choosing a size of a mini batch is closely related to the number of epochs (iterations) the network was trained. We trained the neural network for 20 epochs. The size of a mini batch varied from 8, 16, 32, 64 to 128 images. For fixed size of training epochs, the number of iterations was biggest for MBS (mini batch size) 8 –more than 4000, and it was smallest for MBS 128 – below 500. With smaller mini batch the training images are visited many times, so CNN experienced enormous overfitting. From the same reason, overfitting is less for larger mini batches. During training of the network, we introduced an accuracy threshold of 99.5, in order to stop the training process because of the overfitting. The training was stopped in cases when the size of a mini batch was 8 and 16, Figure 6.

The classification accuracy which was achieved with MBS of 128 images and 20 training epochs was 81%. It can reach over 83% when the neural network is trained with MBS of 128 images and 30 training epochs.

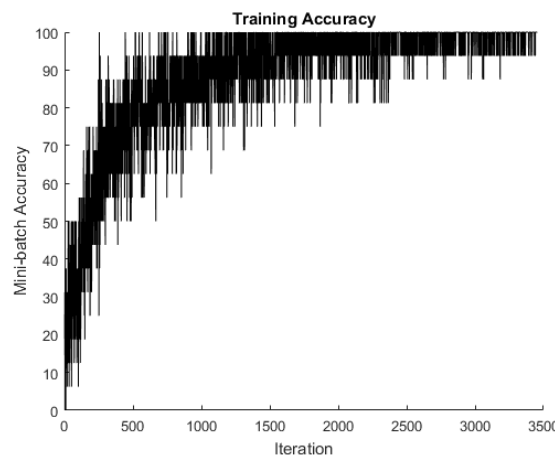


Figure 6. Training accuracy with mini batch size of 16 images

We simulated transfer learning from pre-trained CNN with layer-specific optimization parameter: the learning rate for weights and biases of the neurons of the last fully connected layer. Because ImageNet data and CIFAR-10 are similar data sets, it is reasonable to keep the weights and biases of the layers which we took from AlexNet in a great measure and to make the new fully connected layer to learn more. Fig.7 presents the increasing of the classification accuracy with the growth of the weight and bias learn rate factor.

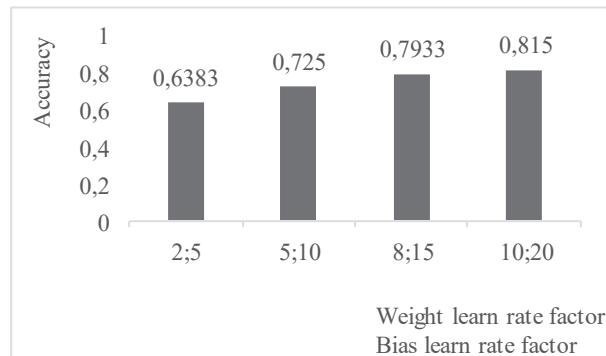


Figure 7. Accuracy of pre-trained CNN as a function of weight and bias learn factor

## 5. Concluding remarks

In our research assignment, we tried to solve the problem of classification of a small dataset of images with the technique known as transfer learning. We transferred knowledge from AlexNet and at the same time, we were optimizing the hyper parameters of our network with the purpose to maximize the accuracy on the test data. We got an accuracy of over 85% in specific cases of a simulation scenario.

Neural network training was short in time and the training dataset consisted a couple thousands of images. We didn't modify the weights too soon and too much. Taking in to consideration the similarity of ImageNet data set and CIFAR-10 dataset, we imported the architecture of AlexNet in a great measure, as far as the weights of all layers (except the last three one) of the pre-trained network.

There are situations when the training and testing set of images are small, and yet we need to classify it with acceptable accuracy. Then comes to a situation when one should think of transfer learning from a pre-trained neural network as an option. In order to get as high as possible classification accuracy, the pre-trained model selected for transfer learning has to be trained on a similar data set as the data set we wish to use it on. If the image set we have to classify differs a lot from the one on which the pre-existing neural network was trained, then the classification would be very inaccurate. There are various architectures people have tried on different types of data sets.

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