

# Lightweight Deep Convolutional Network for Tiny Object Recognition

Thanh-Dat Truong<sup>1</sup>, Vinh-Tiep Nguyen<sup>2</sup> and Minh-Triet Tran<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Science, Vietnam National University, HCMC, Vietnam

<sup>2</sup>University of Information Technology, Vietnam National University, HCMC, Vietnam

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**Abstract:** Object recognition is an important problem in Computer Vision with many applications such as image search, autonomous car, image understanding, etc. In recent years, Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) based models have achieved great success on object recognition, especially VGG, ResNet, Wide ResNet, etc. However, these models involve a large number of parameters that should be trained with large-scale datasets on powerful computing systems. Thus, it is not appropriate to train a heavy CNN with small-scale datasets with only thousands of samples as it is easy to be over-fitted. Furthermore, it is not efficient to use an existing heavy CNN method to recognize small images, such as in CIFAR-10 or CIFAR-100. In this paper, we propose a Lightweight Deep Convolutional Neural Network architecture for tiny images codenamed “DCTI” to reduce significantly a number of parameters for such datasets. Additionally, we use batch-normalization to deal with the change in distribution each layer. To demonstrate the efficiency of the proposed method, we conduct experiments on two popular datasets: CIFAR-10 and CIFAR-100. The results show that the proposed network not only significantly reduces the number of parameters but also improves the performance. The number of parameters in our method is only 21.33% the number of parameters of Wide ResNet but our method achieves up to 94.34% accuracy on CIFAR-10, comparing to 96.11% of Wide ResNet. Besides, our method also achieves the accuracy of 73.65% on CIFAR-100.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Object recognition is one of the important tasks in computer vision whose objective is to automatically classify images into many classes. The result of image classification is an essential precondition of many tasks such as understanding images, image search engine. Current approaches for image classification are based on machine learning.

Yann LeCun et. al. proposed Convolutional Neural Network (LeCun et al., 1989) in the early 1990's which demonstrates excellent performance at recognition tasks. Several papers have shown that they can also deliver outstanding performance on more challenging visual recognition tasks: Ciresan et. al. (Ciresan et al., 2012) demonstrate state-of-the-art performance on CIFAR-10 dataset. CNN has recently enjoyed great success in large-scale image recognition, e.g CNN architecture is proposed by Krizhevsky et. al. (Krizhevsky et al., 2017a). In 2015, Karen Simonyan and Andrew Zisserman propose an architecture (Simonyan and Zisserman, 2014) which improves the performance of the original architecture of Krizhevsky.

In reality, objects taken from cameras are often small or even tiny. Object detection is a method to determine the object location in an image. Object detection pipeline involves the object recognition module. For each object proposal region, we need to recognize the object in this region. And some regions are quite small or tiny. In the autonomous car, detecting and recognizing from far away is really challenging because objects are taken quite small.

In the recent years, lifelogging rapidly becoming a mainstream research topic. With the rich data captured over a long period of time, it will require both advanced methods that can provide an insight of the activities of an individual and systems capable of managing this huge amount of data. In the lifelog scenario there will be present several objects of small sizes, but the object detection part is equally important in this scenario.

The recent common methods deal with tiny object recognition is to resize a small image into larger ones and use common networks having the best performance such as VGG (Simonyan and Zisserman, 2014), Inception (Szegedy et al., 2015), ResNet (He et al., 2016a), etc. to recognize. But the computa-

tional cost of their method is really large and cannot be employed in real time. Although GPU with high performance can deal with this problem, the price of GPU is really expensive and not suitable for small devices. Furthermore, resizing a tiny image into a large image really does not get more information of an image. Additionally, training a large network takes a lot of time and requires the hardware to be really powerful enough.

A good solution for this problem is to keep the size of the image and to build a network with fewer parameters but it still has the ability to recognize with high accuracy. On this basis, we propose a new method to employ very deep CNN called Lightweight Deep Convolutional Network for Tiny Object Recognition (DCTI). Our proposed network has not only fewer parameters but also high performance on the tiny image. It has both good accuracy and minimal computational cost. Through experiments, we achieved some good results which are quite effective for multi-purposes. This is the motivations for us to continue to develop our method and build many systems which make use of object recognition such as understanding image systems, image search engine systems.

**Contributions.** In our work, we consider in tiny images with size  $32 \times 32$ . We focus on exploiting local features with small convolutional filters size. Therefore, we use convolutional filters size  $3 \times 3$ . It fits with tiny images and helps to extract local features. Besides that, it helps reducing parameters and to push network going deeper.

In traditional approaches, the last layers use fully connected layers to feed feature maps to feature vectors. However, it increases more parameters and leads to over-fitting. Our network proposes using global average pooling (Lin et al., 2013) instead of fully connected layers. The purpose of this work is to help the network directly project significant feature maps into the feature vectors. Additionally, global average pooling layers do not employ parameters. So it has fewer parameters and over-fitting is avoided.

In deep networks, small changes can amplify layer by layer. It leads to change distribution each layer. This problem is called Internal Covariate Shift. To tackle this problem, we use Batch-Normalization proposed by Ioffe et al. (Ioffe and Szegedy, 2015). Once again, through experiments, we prove batch-normalization is potential and efficient. It also helps faster learning.

Additionally, to prevent over-fitting, we use dropout. In common, dropout is put after fully connected layers. But in our network, we put it after convolutional layers. Through experiment, this work helps improving accuracy and to avoid over-fitting.

We also use data augmentation and whitening data to improve accuracy. Our method only uses 21.33% number of parameters than the state-of-the-art method (Zagoruyko and Komodakis, 2016). However, we achieve the accuracy up to 94.34% and 73.65% on CIFAR-10 and CIFAR-100. With our result we achieved, it proves that our method not only gets high accuracy but also reduce parameters significantly.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents related works. The proposed architecture of our network is presented in Section 3. Section 4 presents our experimental configuration on CIFAR-10 and CIFAR-100. We compare our results to other methods in section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper.

## 2 RELATED WORKS

The earlier method for object recognition named Convolutional Neural Networks is proposed by Yann LeCun et al. (LeCun et al., 1989). It demonstrates high performance on MNIST Dataset. Many current architectures used for object recognition are based on Convolutional Neural Networks (Graham, 2014), (Krizhevsky et al., 2017a), (Zeiler and Fergus, 2013).

**Very Deep Convolutional Neural Networks:** a method proposed by Andrew Zisserman et al. (Simonyan and Zisserman, 2014). It has good performance on ImageNet Dataset. Very deep convolutional neural networks have two main architectures are VGG-16 and VGG-19. VGG-16 and VGG-19 mean that there are 16 layers and 19 layers having parameters. The main contribution of its paper is a thorough evaluation of networks of increasing depth using an architecture with very small ( $3 \times 3$ ) convolution filters, which shows that a significant improvement on the prior-art configurations can be achieved by pushing the depth to 16-19 weight layer.

**Network In Network:** notice the limitations of using the fully connected layer, a novel network structure called Network In Network (NIN) to enhance the model discriminability for local receptive fields (Lin et al., 2013). Global average pooling is used in this network instead of fully connected layer. The purpose of this work is to reduce parameters and enforcing correspondences between feature maps and categories. It continues improving by Batch-normalized Maxout and has good performance on CIFAR-10 dataset (Chang and Chen, 2015). In our work, we also use global average pooling approach.

**Deep Residual Learning for Image Recognition:** one of the limitations when the network has

more layers is the gradient is vanished in back-propagation process. To avoid this problem, a method proposed by Kaiming He (He et al., 2016a). It presents a residual learning framework to easy the training of networks that are substantially deeper than those used previously. Deep Residual gets high performance on ImageNet dataset, CIFAR dataset.

**Going Deeper with Convolutions:** one of the important works when designing a network is that selects kernels for each layer. Should we use a size of the kernel of convolutional layers is  $1 \times 1$ ,  $3 \times 3$  or  $5 \times 5$ ? To solve this problem, the group of Google’s authors proposed a method codenamed Inception that achieves the new state-of-the-art for classification and detection in the ImageNet Large-Scale Visual Recognition Challenge 2014 (Szegedy et al., 2015). The idea of the method is to use all three size kernels each convolutional layer. By a carefully crafted design, they increase the depth and width of the network while keeping the computational budget constant.

**Deep Networks with Internal Selective Attention through Feedback Connections:** traditional CNN are stationary and feed-forward. They neither change their parameters during evaluation nor use feedback from higher to lower layers. Real brains, however, do. So does the Deep Attention Selective Network (DasNet) architecture. DasNet’s feedback structure can dynamically alter its convolutional filter sensitivities during classification. It harnesses the power of sequential processing to improve classification performance, by allowing the network to iteratively focus its internal attention on some of its convolutional filters (Stollenga et al., 2014).

**Recurrent Convolutional Neural Network for Object Recognition:** a prominent difference is that CNN is typically a feed-forward architecture while in the visual system recurrent connections are abundant. Inspired by this fact, its paper proposes a recurrent CNN (RCNN) for object recognition by incorporating recurrent connections into each convolutional layer (Liang and Hu, 2015).

### 3 PROPOSED ARCHITECTURE

#### 3.1 Overall Architecture

DCTI has 5 phases of convolutional layers (see Figure 1). We use all filters with receptive field  $3 \times 3$  for all convolutional layers. All hidden layers are equipped with the rectification (ReLU (Krizhevsky et al., 2017b)) non-linearity. We use dropout and batch-normalization after each convolutional layer.

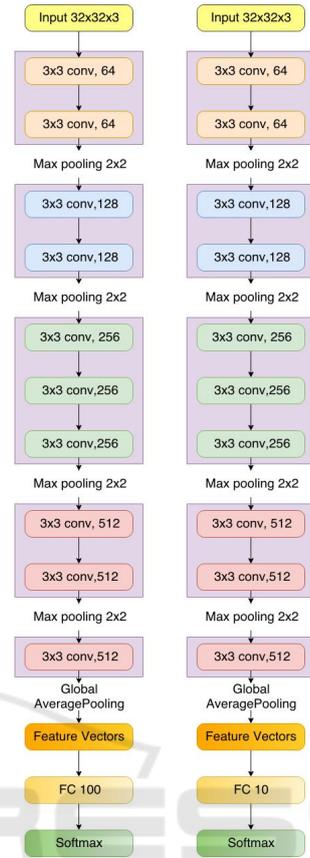


Figure 1: Overall architecture of Lightweight Deep Convolutional Network for Tiny Object Recognition (top for CIFAR-10, bottom for CIFAR-100).

From the original image size  $32 \times 32$  and 3 color channels, we process multiple phases, after each phase, we use max pooling with the pool size  $2 \times 2$  to reduce the size of feature maps down to two times. The purposes of this work are to reduce variance, reduce computation complexity (as  $2 \times 2$  max pooling reduces 75% data) and extract low level features from a neighborhood. Through four max pooling layers, we receive feature maps with the size  $2 \times 2$ .

In the first phase, the current input size is  $32 \times 32$ . Therefore, we use convolutional filters size  $5 \times 5$  to deal with detail local features. Instead of using one convolutional layer with the kernel size  $5 \times 5$ , we use two convolutional layers with kernel size  $3 \times 3$ . Using two convolutional filters size  $3 \times 3$  is equivalent to one convolutional filter size  $5 \times 5$ . By this way, we reduce parameters and push network going deeper.

In the second phase, the current input size is  $16 \times 16$ . We continue processing local feature with convolutional filter size  $5 \times 5$  on all feature maps. We implement this by 2 convolutional layers with kernel size  $3 \times 3$ . The similarity with the first phase, using 2 convolutional filters help reducing parameters and

increase more layers.

In the third phase, the current input size is  $8 \times 8$ . We want to hold on global feature maps, so we use convolutional filters  $7 \times 7$ . We implement by three convolutional layers with the kernel size  $3 \times 3$ , it is equivalent to one layer  $7 \times 7$ . We incorporate three non-linear rectification layers instead of a single one, which makes the decision function more discriminative. Second, we decrease the number of parameters than use one convolutional layers with kernel size  $7 \times 7$ . This can be seen as imposing a regularization on the  $7 \times 7$  convolutional filters, forcing them to have a decomposition through the  $3 \times 3$  filters (with non-linearity injected in between).

In the fourth and fifth phases, the input sizes are just  $4 \times 4$  and  $2 \times 2$ . We continue dealing with global features. We use convolutional filters size  $5 \times 5$  for the fourth phase and convolutional filters size  $3 \times 3$  for the fifth size. It guarantees that convolutional filters still fit with feature maps. We use two convolutional filters size  $3 \times 3$  instead of using one convolutional filter size  $5 \times 5$ . Finally, we receive feature maps with size  $2 \times 2$ , it uses to directly feed to feature vectors.

In final, we use global average pooling layer to feed directly feature maps into feature vectors. From feature vectors, we apply fully connected and softmax to calculate probability each class.

### 3.2 Data Normalization

Since the range of values of raw data varies widely, in some machine learning algorithms, objective functions will not work properly without normalization. Another reason why data normalization is applied is that gradient descent converges much faster with data normalization than without it.

Data normalization makes the values of each feature in the data have zero-mean (when subtracting the mean in the numerator) and unit-variance. This method is widely used for normalization in many machine learning algorithms (e.g., support vector machines, logistic regression, and neural networks) (Grus and Joel, 2015). This is typically done by calculating standard scores. (Mohamad et al., 2013) The general method of calculation is to determine the distribution mean and standard deviation for each feature. Next, we subtract the mean from each feature. Then we divide the values (mean is already subtracted) of each feature by its standard deviation.

### 3.3 Whitening Transformation

A whitening transformation or sphering transformation is a linear transformation that transforms a vector

of random variables with a known covariance matrix into a set of new variables whose covariance is the identity matrix meaning that they are uncorrelated and all have variance (Kessy et al., 2015).

We use ZCA whitening transformation (Krizhevsky, ) to transform our data. We store  $d \times n$  - dimensional data points in the columns of a  $d \times n$  matrix  $X$ . Assuming the data points have zero mean.

First, we need to compute  $\Sigma = \frac{1}{n}XX^T$ . Next, we compute the eigenvectors  $\Sigma$ . Suppose matrix  $U$  contains the eigenvectors of  $\Sigma$  (one eigenvector per column, sorted in order from top to bottom eigenvector), and the diagonal entries of the matrix  $S$  will contain the corresponding eigenvalues (also sorted in decreasing order).

$$X_{ZCAwhite} = U \cdot \text{diag}(S)^{-\frac{1}{2}} \cdot U^T \cdot X$$

where:  $\text{diag}(S)$  means diagonal of matrix  $S$ . Exponent  $-\frac{1}{2}$  means each element of matrix has exponent  $-\frac{1}{2}$ .

### 3.4 Rectifier

The most important feature of AlexNet is ReLUs (Krizhevsky et al., 2017b) nonlinearity, which shows the importance of nonlinearity. Two additional major benefits of ReLUs are sparsity and a reduced likelihood of vanishing gradient. But first recall the definition of a ReLUs is  $h = \max(0, a)$ .

One major benefit is the reduced likelihood of the gradient to vanish. This arises when  $a > 0$ . In this regime, the gradient has a constant value. In contrast, the gradient of sigmoids becomes increasingly small as the absolute value of  $x$  increases. The constant gradient of ReLUs results in faster learning.

The other benefit of ReLUs is sparsity. Sparsity arises when  $a \leq 0$ . The more such units that exist in a layer the more sparse the resulting representation. Sigmoids, on the other hand, are always likely to generate some non-zero value resulting in dense representations. Sparse representations seem to be more beneficial than dense representations.

### 3.5 Batch Normalization

Batch normalization potentially helps in two ways: faster learning and higher overall accuracy. The improved method also allows you to use a higher learning rate, potentially providing another boost in speed.

For very deep networks, small changes in the previous layers will amplify layer by layer and finally cause some problem. The change in the distribution of layer inputs causes problems since the parameter should adapt to new distribution with iterations, which is called Internal Covariate Shift (Ioffe

and Szegedy, 2015). To solve this problem, Google’s researcher Ioffe proposed Batch Normalization (Ioffe and Szegedy, 2015), which normalizes every layer’s inputs, thus it makes the network converge much faster, converge at lower error rate and reduce over-fitting to some degree.

$$Y = \gamma \frac{X - \mu}{\sigma} + \beta$$

Where:  $\mu = \bar{X}$ ,  $\sigma^2 = \overline{(X - \mu)^2}$ ,  $\gamma, \beta$  are learnable parameters. In our experiment, we set  $\gamma = 1$  and  $\beta = 0$ .

### 3.6 Global Average Pooling

This method is proposed by Min Lin et. al. (Lin et al., 2013). They propose another strategy called global average pooling to replace the traditional fully connected layers in CNN. The idea is to generate one feature map for each corresponding category of the classification task in the last block of the convolutional layer. Instead of adding fully connected layers on top of the feature maps, they take the average of each feature maps, and the resulting vector is fed directly into the softmax layer. One advantage of global average pooling over the fully connected layers is that it is more native to the convolution structure by enforcing correspondences between feature maps and categories. Thus the feature maps can be easily interpreted as categories confidence maps. Another advantage is that there is no parameter to optimize in the global average pooling thus over-fitting is avoided at this layer.

In our architecture, instead of being fed directly into the softmax layer, we use global average pooling to extract feature vectors 512-dimension. Global average pooling sums out the spatial information, thus it is more robust to spatial translations of the input.

### 3.7 Dropout

When we use a very deep CNN for small datasets, it easily tends to over-fitting. The most common methods reducing over-fitting is dropout (Srivastava et al., 2014). The standard way of using dropout is to set dropout at the fully connected layers where most parameters are. However, the model is very deep and the dataset is relatively small, we use a different way of dropout setting. We set dropout for convolution layers, too. Specifically, we set dropout rate as 0.3 for the first and second group of convolution layers, 0.4 for the third and fourth group. The dropout rate for the feature vectors 512D layer was set to be 0.5.

## 4 EXPERIMENTS

We experiment our method on CIFAR-10 dataset. Each image we have a vector result with 10-dimension, each element represents for the probability of corresponding class. To rate our architecture, we use *Cross-Entropy Cost Function* as objective function.

$$L = -\frac{1}{N} \sum_{j=1}^N \sum_{i=1}^{10} t_i^j \ln(y_i^j) + (1 - t_i^j) \ln(1 - y_i^j) + \frac{\lambda}{2} \sum ||W||^2$$

Where  $t^j$  is the target of input  $j^{th}$ ,  $x^j$  is the output  $j^{th}$ ,  $W$  is the parameters,  $\lambda$  is a regularization parameter.

We use *Stochastic gradient descent (sgd)* to optimize parameters. To reduce time training, we train on GPU instead of CPU. We implement by MatConvNet of MatConvNet Team. CIFAR-10 dataset has 60000 images with 6000 images each class. We divide the dataset into 2 sets are training set and test set. Training set has 50000 images, test set has 10000 images. Configurations of computer use for this training are CPU Core i3 4150, RAM 8GB, GPU GTX 1060 6GB. The training process takes about 10 hours to train.

We conduct the training model for 500 epochs. Use mini-batch sgd to solve the net, with batch-size of 64. The momentum, base learning rate and base weight decay rate are set to 0.9, 0.1, 0.0005, respectively. Lower down the learning rate every an epoch by a factor of 0.9817.

To accelerate training process and prevent over-fitting, we use data augmentation while training. We flip image left to right with probability is 0.5 and random crop with padding is 4 (pads array with mirror reflections of itself). We also experiment on CIFAR-100 dataset. We use same experimental configurations with the experiment on CIFAR-10.

In figure 2, the red line represents for training and the green line represents for testing. In 250 first epochs, the objective and accuracy converge quickly to stabilized result. After the result does not change too much and the result is stabilized. Through that, our method can quickly converge to stabilized result quickly with regular configurations of computer and takes less time to training (500 epochs take 10 hours to train). It is equivalent when we train our method on CIFAR-100 (Figure 3).

## 5 RESULT

The accuracy we achieve on CIFAR-10 test set is 94.34%. See some true predictions in Figure 4. The input images are tiny, but our method can classify correctly. In some case, some classes are similarity such as dog and cat, automobile and truck, etc. It lead to

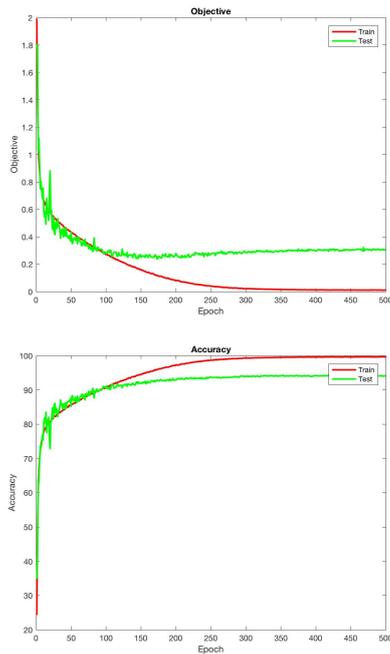


Figure 2: Objective (top) and Accuracy (bottom) training plot (CIFAR-10).

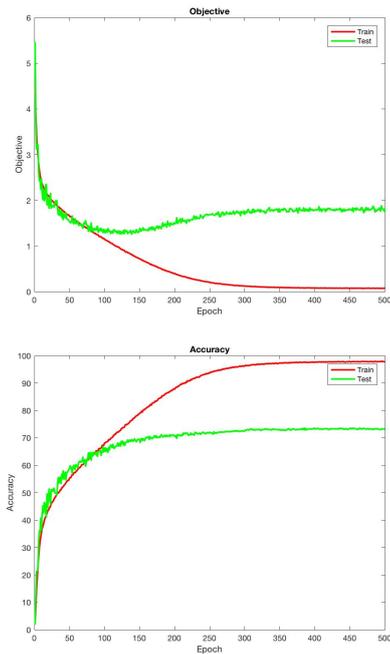


Figure 3: Objective (top) and Accuracy (bottom) training plot (CIFAR-100).

our method can wrongly classify (see some wrongly predicted images in Figure 5). Considering in confusion matrix (Table 1), dogs are easily wrongly predicted as cats, trucks are also easy wrongly predicted as automobiles or deers are also wrongly predicted as cats. Because of an abstracted level features, there is not much difference between these classes.

We compare our architecture to the VGG architecture. We use fewer parameters than VGG architecture. The number of parameters of our architecture is about 7.6 million. In while, VGG-16 and VGG-19 have more than 100 million parameters. Our result is event better than modified VGG-16 applied to CIFAR-10 dataset (Liu and Deng, 2015).

We also compare the accuracy of our method with other methods on CIFAR-10. See the result in Table 2. Our result uses only 21.33% number of parameters of the state-of-the-art method but we achieve accuracy up to 94.34%. Comparing with the other methods such as VGG, NiN, Dasnet, our method outperform than their methods. Using only about 7.6M parameters, we reducing parameters significantly and achieve convincing results.

We also compare our method with the other methods on CIFAR-100. See the result in Table 3. Our method performs better than DasNet and NiN method. Our results are nearly as close to ResNet 1001 method but we use fewer parameters than its

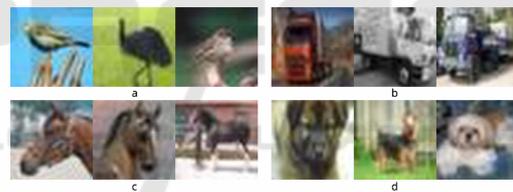


Figure 4: a) Correctly predicted examples (a) bird (b) truck (c) horse d) dog.

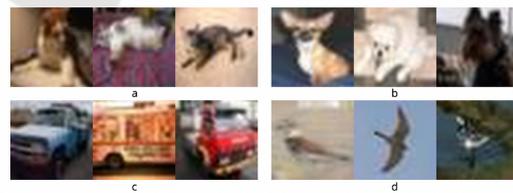


Figure 5: Same examples of wrongly predicted images (a) Cats are wrongly predicted as dogs, (b) dogs are wrongly predicted as cats; (c) trucks are wrongly predicted as automobiles; (d) birds are wrongly predicted as airplanes.

method. Although our result does not reach the state-of-the-art, by our method we reduce parameters significantly. Specifically, our method has fewer parameters than the state-of-the-art method 4.5 times. Additionally, we also reach good accuracy and low computational cost.

To achieve this result, we use very small convolu-

Table 1: Confusion matrix (CIFAR-10).

		Predicted									
		Airplane	Automobile	Bird	Cat	Deer	Dog	Frog	Horse	Ship	Truck
Actually	Airplane	954	3	6	5	1	0	2	0	27	2
	Automobile	2	979	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	14
	Bird	14	0	940	14	12	6	8	4	2	0
	Cat	7	1	20	867	12	64	13	7	5	4
	Deer	2	1	5	16	953	6	4	11	2	0
	Dog	4	0	12	57	10	905	4	8	0	0
	Frog	2	1	17	15	6	2	956	0	1	0
	Horse	4	0	7	5	11	11	0	960	2	0
	Ship	17	3	2	2	1	0	1	0	965	9
	Truck	3	29	0	2	0	0	0	0	11	955

Table 2: Some results of the comparative experiments (CIFAR-10).

Method	Accuracy	Params
Wide Residual Networks (Zagoruyko and Komodakis, 2016)	96.11%	36.5M
<b>DCTI</b>	<b>94.34%</b>	<b>7.63M</b>
CIFAR-VGG-BN-DROPOUT (Liu and Deng, 2015)	91.55%	14.7M
NiN (Lin et al., 2013)	91.20%	1.00M
DasNet (Stollenga et al., 2014)	90.78%	1.00M

Table 3: Some results of the comparative experiments (CIFAR-100).

Method	Accuracy	Params
Wide Residual Network (Zagoruyko and Komodakis, 2016)	81.15%	36.5M
ResNet 1001 (He et al., 2016b)	77.29%	10.2M
<b>DCTI</b>	<b>73.65%</b>	<b>7.68M</b>
DasNet (Stollenga et al., 2014)	66.22%	1.00M
NiN (Lin et al., 2013)	64.32%	1.00M

tional filters size to deal with local features and push network can go deeper. And the network can learn high level features. Furthermore, we use global average pooling helps reducing parameters significantly and is more native to the convolution structure by enforcing correspondences between feature maps and feature vectors. The new way of putting dropout after convolutional layers help improving accuracy. It was proved through our result we achieved.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In our research, we proposed a new method for object recognition with tiny images. By using very small convolutional filters, we pushed our network going deeper and dealt with local features. It also helped our network learn high level features. And by using global average pooling instead of fully connected layers, we reduced parameters significantly. Moreover, it helped the network directly project significant feature maps into the feature vectors. Beside that, using batch-normalization and dropout helped to accelerate the learning process and preventing over-fitting. Furthermore, it also improved performance and re-

duced computational cost. Although we cannot reach the state-of-the-art, the results we achieved proved that our method is promising. It was also demonstrated that the representation depth is beneficial for the recognition. Additionally, we proved very deep models were used to fit small datasets as long as the input image is big enough so that it does not vanish as the model going deeper. Our results yet again confirmed the performance of very deep CNN for the pattern recognition task. In the future, we continue improving our method to get higher performance and reduce parameters.

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