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Using 3D Convolutional Neural Networks for Tactile Object Recognition with Robotic Palpation

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Abstract: In this paper, a novel method of active tactile perception based on 3D neural networks and a high-resolution tactile sensor installed on a robot gripper is presented. A haptic exploratory procedure based on robotic palpation is performed to get pressure images at different grasping forces that provide information not only about the external shape of the object but also about its internal features. The gripper consists of two underactuated fingers with a tactile sensor array in the thumb. A new representation of tactile information as 3D tactile tensors is described. During a squeeze-and-release process, the pressure images read from the tactile sensor are concatenated forming a tensor that contains information about the variation of pressure matrices along with the grasping forces. These tensors are used to feed a 3D Convolutional Neural Network (3D CNN) called 3D TactNet, which is able to classify the grasped object through active interaction. Results show that 3D CNN performs better, and provide better recognition rates with a lower number of training data.

Keywords: Tactile perception; Robotic palpation; Underactuated grippers; Deep learning

1. Introduction

Recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have brought the possibility of improving robotic perception capabilities. Although most of them are focused on visual perception [1], existing solutions can also be applied to tactile data [2–4]. Tactile sensors measure contact pressure from other physical magnitudes, depending on the nature of the transducer. Different types of tactile sensors [5–9] have been used in robotic manipulation [10,11] for multiple applications such as slippage detection [12,13], tactile object recognition [14,15] or surface classification [16,17] among others.

Robotic tactile perception consists in the integration of mechanisms that allow a robot to sense tactile properties from physical contact with the environment along with intelligent capacities to extract high-level information from the contact. The sense of touch is essential for robots the same way as for human beings to performing both simple and complex tasks such as object recognition or dexterous manipulation [18–20]. Recent studies focused on the development of robotic systems that behaves similar to humans, including the implementation of tactile perception capabilities [21,22]. However, tactile perception is still a fundamental problem in robotics that has not been solved so far [23]. Also, there are multiple applications, not limited to classic robotic manipulation problems, that can benefit from tactile perception such as medicine [24], food industry [3], or search-and-rescue [4] among others.

Many works related to tactile perception use pressure images after the interaction [25], which means that the interaction is considered static or passive. However, tactile perception in the real world is intrinsically active [26]. A natural or bio-inspired haptic Exploratory Procedure (EP) for perceiving pressure or stiffness of an object must consider dynamic information [27]. According to [28], the haptic attributes that can be perceived depends on the EP.

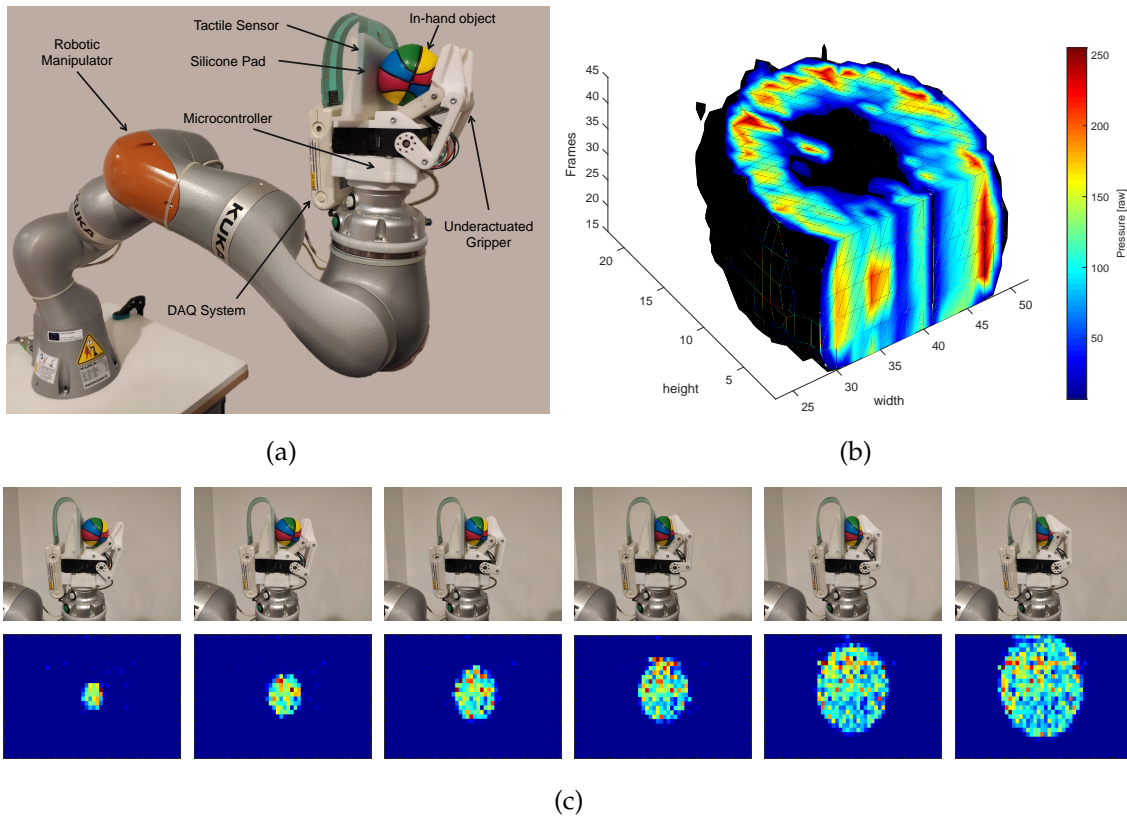


Figure 1. The full experimental system formed by a robotic manipulator, an underactuated gripper with a tactile sensor, and the control electronics (a), a 3D tensor representation of active tactile information when the gripper is grasping a squeezable ball (b), and a subset of pictures and their respective tactile images of a grasping sequence of another squeezable ball (c). In (b), the tensor is sectioned to show the intrinsic attributes and pressure variations of the grasped object.

34 survey on the concept of active tactile perception considering biological and psychological terms
 35 is presented in [29]. In this chapter, and according to [30], two approaches for tactile perception in
 36 robots are possible: perception for action, which means that the perceived information is used to guide
 37 the robot (i.e., dexterous manipulation and grasp control), and action for perception, which means
 38 that the robot explores the environment to collect data (i.e., active perception and haptic exploration).
 39 Hence, an active tactile perception approach can be defined as one in which the data are collected
 40 during an active EP using an active sensing approach (e.g., tactile sensing). This means that action
 41 and perception are not separated, and the robot collects dynamic data depending on the action, while
 42 this action is occurring. Therefore, although both static and dynamic tactile data are useful for many
 43 robotic applications, it can be considered that active perception is more faithful to the real sense of
 44 touch, and the information acquired using active tactile sensing reflects better the attributes of the
 45 grasped objects. Static pressure images only contain information about stiffness and shape of the
 46 object when a certain force is applied [14], while the changes of the pressure distribution over force,
 47 contain information about the variation of shape and stiffness during the whole EP [31]. This dynamic
 48 information allows us to distinguish both rigid and deformable objects [32].

49 This paper addresses the shortcomings mentioned above and is focused on the active tactile
 50 perception problem in robotics. A robotic palpation process with active tactile sensing, based on a
 51 squeeze-and-release motion for distinguishing grasped objects, both rigid and deformable, is presented
 52 (See Fig. 1). The robotic EP conceives a novel representation of dynamic tactile information based on
 53 sequences of pressure images and an AI method based on 3D Convolutional Neural Networks (3D
 54 CNNs) for active tactile perception. A tactile sensor array is integrated into the thumb of a gripper

55 with two underactuated fingers to get sequences of tactile images. These sequences are represented as
56 3D tensors similar to Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). However, in this case, 3D tactile tensors
57 represent the variation of pressure distribution over applied force, whereas MRI contains information
58 about cross-sectional images of internal structures and organs over distance. Although the type of
59 information contained in MRIs and 3D tactile tensors is different, methods such as 3D CNNs used to
60 process MRI information [33,34], might be used for tactile data with good results in this application
61 as we explored in our previous work [35]. In this work, our preliminary study is expanded: A
62 high-resolution tactile sensor has been integrated into a new gripper where the palpation process (e.g.,
63 the EP) is fully autonomous, so the robot controls the grasping force. As a result, not only objects with
64 different elasticity are compared and classified, but also objects that contain internal inclusions and
65 bags of objects which provide different pressure images each time, have been tested. In particular,
66 24 objects have been used: rigid, deformable, and in-bag; and the results are compared against 2D
67 CNN-based methods. Altogether, the main contribution of this paper relates to the entire process of
68 active tactile perception, considering the use of an underactuated, sensorized gripper to carry out the
69 EP, and a 3D CNN for tactile perception.

70 The relevance of this contribution relies on different factors. First, the presented method achieves
71 better performance in the discrimination problem for all kinds of objects, and in case that the number
72 of classes increases, a lower number of training data is needed to obtain higher accuracy rates than
73 classic 2D networks. Second, it is also shown that in case of misclassification, the resulting object class
74 has almost indistinguishable physical features (e.g., soda cans of different capacities), where 2D CNNs,
75 in the event of failure, give disparate output classes unrelated to the class of the grasped object.

76 This paper is structured as follows: In section 2, the current state-of-the-art related to this topic is
77 introduced. In section 3, the underactuated gripper and the 3D CNN-based method used for tactile
78 perception are described. The experimental protocol and results are explained in section 4, and a
79 thorough and detailed discussion of our results in comparison with related works is presented in
80 section 5. Finally, the conclusion and future research lines are exposed in section 6.

81 2. Related Work

82 Related works within the scope of tactile perception in robotics focus on tactile object-recognition
83 from pressure-images, deep-learning methods based on CNNs, and active tactile perception.

84 2.1. Tactile object recognition

85 Two main approaches for tactile object recognition may be considered depending on the nature of
86 the EP: On one hand, perceiving attributes from the material composition, which are typically related
87 to superficial properties like roughness, texture, or thermal conductivity [36–38]. On the other hand,
88 other properties related to stiffness and shape may also be considered for object discrimination [39–41].
89 Most of these works are based on the use of novel machine learning-based techniques. That way,
90 different approaches can be followed, such as Gaussian Processes [42], k-Nearest Neighbour (kNN) [25],
91 Bayesian approaches [43], k-mean and Support Vector Machines (SVM) [44] or Convolutional Neural
92 Networks (CNNs) [45] among others. Multi-modal techniques have also been considered in [46],
93 where they demonstrated that considering both haptic and visual information generally gives better
94 results.

95 2.2. Tactile perception based on pressure images

96 Concerning the latter approach, most of the existing solutions in literature acquire data from
97 tactile sensors, in the form of matrices of pressure values, analog to common video images [47]. In
98 this respect, multiple strategies and methodologies can be followed. In [25] a method, based on *Scale*
99 *Invariant Feature Transform* (SIFT) descriptors, is used as a feature extractor, and the kNN algorithm
100 is used to classify objects by their shape. In [15], Luo et al. proposed a novel multi-modal algorithm

101 that mixes kinesthetic and tactile data to classify objects from a 4D point cloud where each point is
102 represented by the 3D position of the point and the pressure acquired by a tactile sensor.

103 2.3. CNNs-based tactile perception

104 One recent approach for tactile object discrimination consists of the incorporation of modern deep
105 learning-based techniques [48,49]. In this respect, the advantages of Convolutional Neural Networks
106 (CNNs) such as translational and rotational invariant property, enable the recognition in any pose [50].
107 A CNN-based method to recognize human hands in contact with an artificial skin has been presented
108 in [51]. The proposed method benefits from the CNNs translation-invariant properties and is able to
109 identify whether the contact is made with the right or the left hand. Apart from that, the integration of
110 the dropout technique in deep learning-based tactile perception has been considered in [49], where the
111 benefits of fusing kinesthetic and tactile information for object classification are also described, as well
112 as the differences of using planar and curved tactile sensors.

113 2.4. Active tactile perception

114 In spite of the good results obtained by existing solutions in tactile object recognition, one of the
115 main weaknesses is that most of these solutions only consider static or passive tactile data [25]. As
116 explained, static tactile perception is not a natural EP to perceive attributes like pressure or stiffness [27].
117 Pressure images only have information about the shape and pressure distribution when a certain force
118 is applied [14]. On the other hand, sequences of tactile images also contain information about the
119 variation of shape (in the case of deformable objects [32]), stiffness and pressure distribution over
120 time [31].

121 Time-series or sequential data are important to identify some properties. This approach has been
122 followed in some works for material discrimination [52,53]. In [54], an EP is carried out by a robotic
123 manipulator to get dynamic data using a 2D force sensor. The control strategy of the actuator is critical
124 to apply a constant pressure level and perceive trustworthy data. For this purpose, a multi-channel
125 neural network was used achieving high accuracy levels.

126 Pressure images obtained from tactile sensors have also been used to form sequences of images.
127 In [3], a flexible sensor was used to classify food textures. A CNN was trained with sequences of tactile
128 images obtained during a food-biting experiment in which a sensorized press is used to crush food,
129 simulating the behavior of a mouth biting. The authors found that the results when using the whole
130 biting sequence or only the first and last tactile images, were very similar because the food was crushed
131 when a certain level of pressure was applied. Therefore the images before and after the break point
132 were significantly different. For other applications, as it was demonstrated in [55], Three-Dimensional
133 Convolutional Neural Networks (3D CNNs) present better performance when dealing with sequences
134 of images than common 2D CNNs.

135 3. Materials and Methods

136 The experimental setup is composed by a gripper with a tactile sensor. The gripper, the
137 representation of 3D tactile information, and the 3D CNN are described next.

138 3.1. Underactuated gripper

139 The active perception method has been implemented using a gripper with two parallel
140 underactuated fingers and a fixed tactile-sensing surface (See Fig. 2). The reason for using an
141 underactuated gripper is that this kind of gripper allows us to apply even spread pressure to the
142 grasped objects, and the fingers could adapt to their shape, which is especially useful when grasping
143 deformable or in-bag objects. In our gripper, each underactuated finger has two phalanxes with two
144 DOF's θ_1 and θ_2 , and a single actuator θ_a capable of providing different torque values τ_a . The values of
145 the parameters of the kinematics are included in Table 1. A spring provides stiffness to the finger to
146 recover the initial position when no contact is detected.

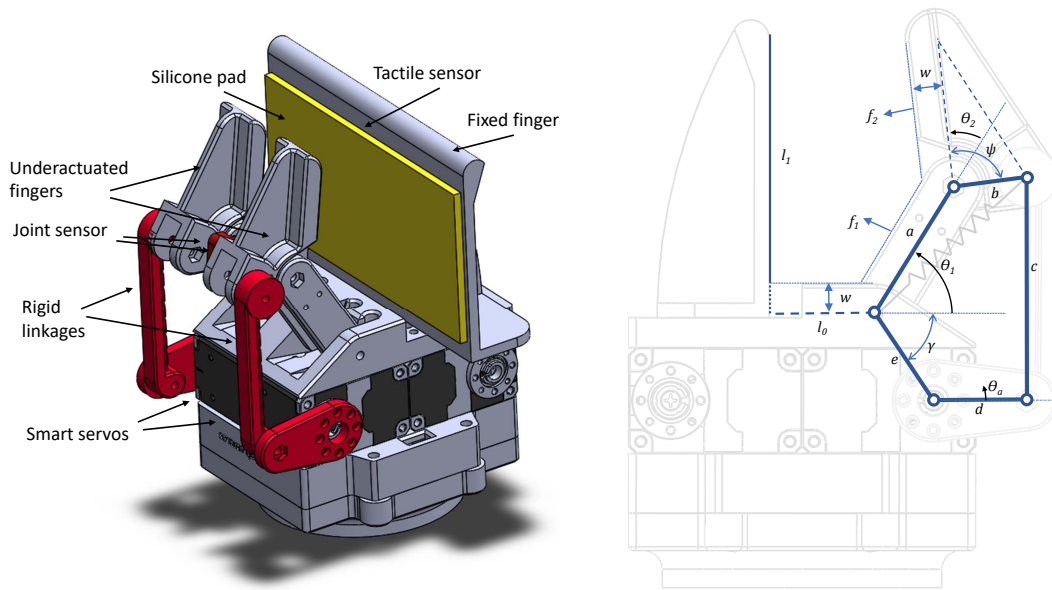


Figure 2. Gripper design (left) with two independent underactuated fingers and one fixed thumb with a tactile sensor covered with a silicone pad. The kinematic structure of the underactuated fingers (right) shows the five-bar structure with associated parameters and DOF's.

147 Two smart servos (Dynamixel XM-430 from ROBOTIS) have been used to provide different
 148 torques through rigid-links, using a five-bar mechanical structure to place the servos away from the first
 149 joint. Thus, the relationship between τ_a and the joint torques (τ_1, τ_2) can be expressed as a transfer
 150 matrix \mathbf{T} , and the computation of the Cartesian grasping forces (f_1, f_2) from the joint torques is defined
 151 by the Jacobian matrix $\mathbf{F} = \mathbf{J}(\theta)\boldsymbol{\tau}$.

152 The computation of those matrices requires knowledge of the actual values of the underactuated
 153 joints. For this reason, a joint sensor has been added to the second joint of each finger. The remaining
 154 joint can be computed as the actual value of the servo joint, which is obtained from the smart servos.
 155 Two miniature potentiometers (*muRata* SV01) have been used to create a special gripper with both
 156 passive adaptation and proprioceptive feedback.

157 The dynamic effects can be neglected when considering slow motions and lightweight fingers.
 158 This way, a kinetostatic model of the forces can be derived(1) as described in [56].

$$\mathbf{F} = \mathbf{J}(\theta)^{-T} \mathbf{T}(\theta)^{-T} \boldsymbol{\tau} \quad (1)$$

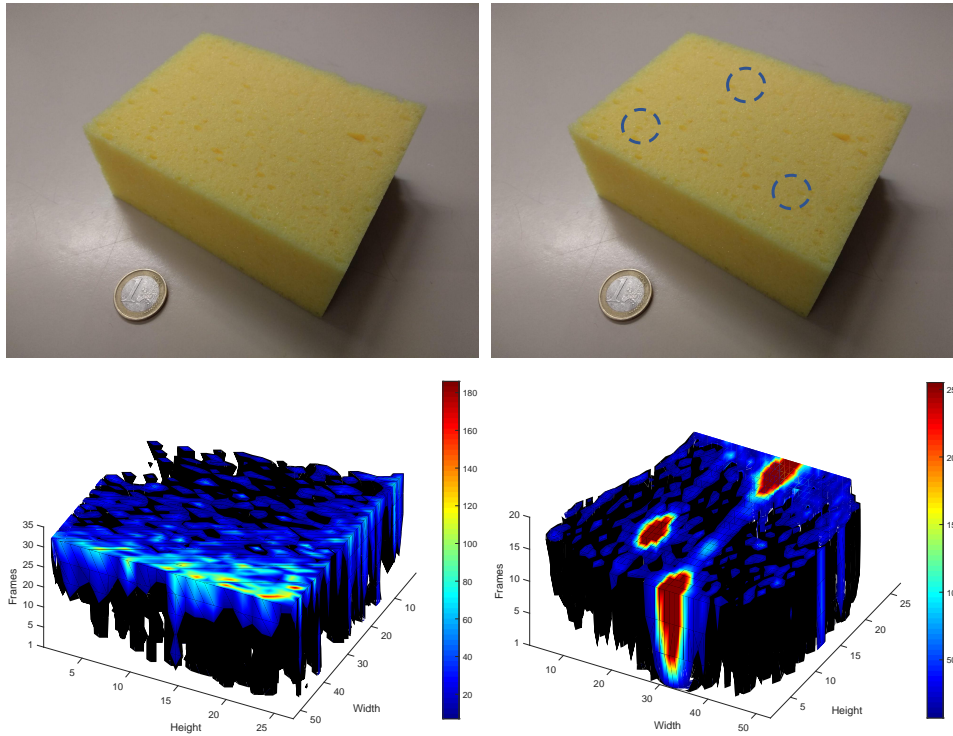
159 Although the actual Cartesian forces could be computed, each object with a different shape should
 160 require feedback control to apply the desired grasping forces. In order to simplify the experimental
 161 setup, an open-loop force control has been used for the grasping operations, where the actuation
 162 (PWM) of the DC motors of the smart servos follows a slow triangular trajectory from a minimum
 163 value (5%) to a maximum (90%) of the maximum torque of 1.4 N.m of each actuator. The resulting
 164 position of each finger depends on the actual PWM and the shape and impedance of each contact area.

Table 1. Parameter values for the kinematic model of the gripper with underactuated fingers.

Parameter	Value	Parameter	Value
a	40 mm	e	27.8 mm
b	20 mm	ψ	90°
c	60 mm	γ	56°
d	25 mm	w	10 mm
l_0	25 - 45 mm	l_1	70 mm

Table 2. Main features of the *Tekscan 6077* tactile sensor.

Parameter	Value
Max. pressure	34 KPa
Number of tactels	1700
Tactels density	27.6 tactels/cm ²
Temperature range	−40 °C to +60 °C
Matrix height	53.3 mm
Matrix width	95.3 mm
Thickness	0.102 mm

**Figure 3.** 3D tactile tensors (bottom) of the same sponge with and without hard inclusions (top). The inclusions become visible as grasping force increases, but cannot be seen in the picture of the sponge.

165 Finally, a microcontroller (Arduino Mega2560) has been used to acquire angles from the analog
 166 potentiometers and communicating with the smart servos in real-time, with a 50 ms period.

167 3.2. Tactile Sensor

168 A Tekscan (South Boston, MA, USA) sensor model 6077 has been used. This high-resolution
 169 tactile-array has 1400 tactels (also called taxels or sensels), with 1.3×1.3 mm size each. The sensor
 170 presents a density of 27.6 tactels/cm² distributed in a 28×50 matrix. The main features of the sensor
 171 are presented in Table 2. The setup includes the data acquisition system (DAQ) (see Fig. 1(a)), and the
 172 Tekscan real-time SDK.

173 A silicone pad of 3 mm has been added to the tactile sensor to enhance the grip and the image
 174 quality, especially when grabbing rigid objects. In particular, the EcoflexTM00 – 30 rubber silicone has
 175 been chosen due to its mechanical properties.

176 3.3. Representation of active tactile information

177 As introduced in section 1, a natural palpation EP to get information about the stiffness of an
 178 in-hand object is dynamic. In this respect, it seems evident that a robotic EP should also be dynamic so

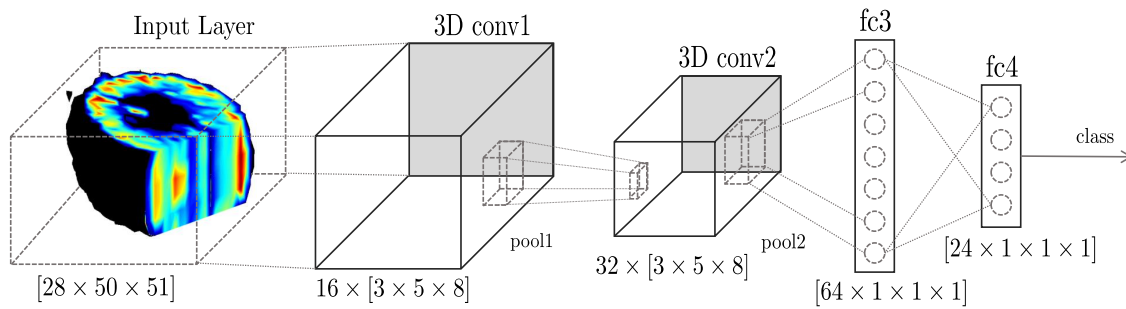


Figure 4. Architecture of TactNet3D, which is formed by 4 layers, the first two are 3D convolutional layers with kernel sizes $16 \times [5 \times 3 \times 8]$ and $32 \times [5 \times 3 \times 8]$ respectively, and two fully connected layers with 64 and 24 neurons respectively.

179 that the information acquired during the whole squeeze-and-release process describes the external
 180 and internal tactile attributes of an object.

181 The pressure information can be represented in multiple ways, commonly as sequences of tactile
 182 images. However, in this case, a more appropriate structure is in the form of 3D tactile tensors. An
 183 example of this type of representation is presented in 1(b), which is similar to MRI, except that in
 184 this case the cross-sectional images contain information about the pressure distribution at the contact
 185 surface, for different grasping forces.

186 To show the advantages of 3D tactile tensors, sectioned tensors of the same sponge, with and
 187 without hard inclusions, are shown in Fig. 3. The inclusions become perfectly visible as the grasping
 188 force increases.

189 3.4. 3D TactNet

190 When using 3D tactile information, it is necessary to control the applied forces to obtain a
 191 representative pressure-images from a certain object. For 3D CNNs, each tensor has information about
 192 the whole palpation process. On the other hand, when dealing with soft or shape-changing objects,
 193 this operation is more challenging using 2D CNNs, as it would be necessary a high amount of training
 194 data, or selected data captured at optimal pressure levels, which also depends on the stiffness of each
 195 object.

196 In previous works, we trained and validated multiple 3D CNNs with different structures and
 197 hyperparameters to discriminate deformable objects in a fully-supervised collection and classification
 198 process [35]. Here, although the classification is still supervised, the grasping and data collection
 199 processes have been carried out autonomously by the robotic manipulator. According to the results of
 200 our previous work, the 3D CNN with highest recognition rate, and compatible with the size of the
 201 3D tensors read from our tactile sensor, was a neural network with four layers, where the first two
 202 were 3D convolutional, and the last two were fully connected layers. The network's parameters have
 203 been slightly modified to fit a higher number of classes and to adjust the new 3D tensor, which has a
 204 dimension of $[28 \times 50 \times 51]$.

205 The architecture of this network, called TactNet3D, is presented in Fig. 4. This network has two 3D
 206 convolutional layers ($\mathcal{C} = [3D\ conv_1, 3D\ conv_2]$) with kernels $16 \times [3 \times 5 \times 8]$ and $32 \times [3 \times 5 \times 8]$
 207 respectively, and two fully connected layers ($\mathcal{F} = [fc_3, fc_4]$) with 64 and 24 neurons respectively. Each
 208 convolutional layer also includes Rectified Linear Unit (ReLU), batch normalization with $\epsilon = 10^{-5}$,
 209 and max-pooling with filters and stride equal to 1. Besides, fc_3 incorporated a dropout factor of 0.7
 210 to prevent overfitting. Finally, a softmax layer is used to extract the probability distribution of belonging
 211 to each class. The implementation, training and testing of this network has been done using the Deep
 212 Learning Toolbox in Matlab.

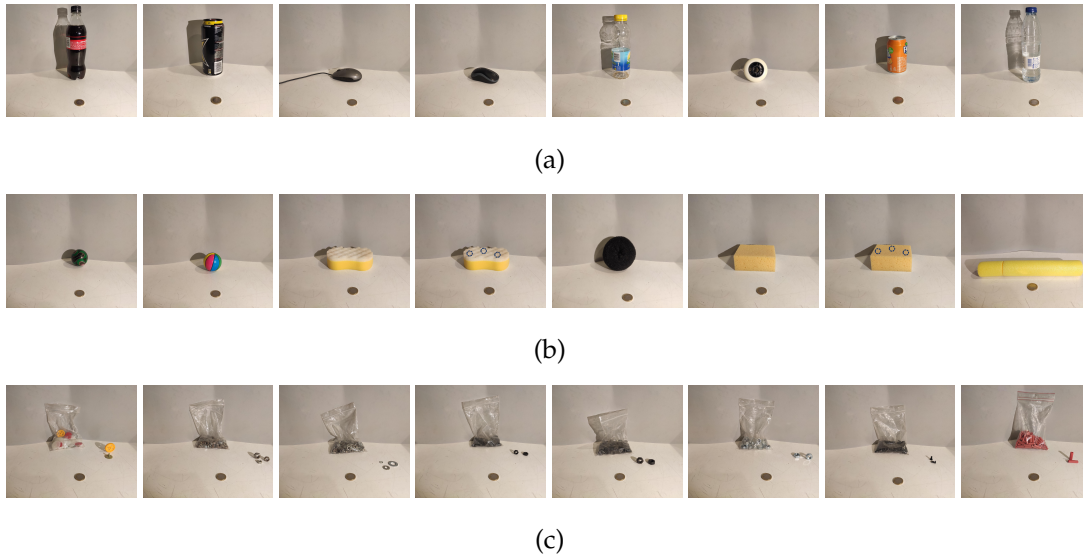


Figure 5. Pictures of the 24 objects used in experiments. Rigid objects (a), from left to right: bottle of coke, energy drink can, mouse 1, mouse 2, bottle of ice tea, skate wheel, soda can, and bottle of water. Deformable objects (b), from left to right: ball 1, ball 2, sponge rough, sponge rough with inclusions, sponge scrunchy, sponge soft, sponge soft with inclusions, and sponge pipe. In-bag objects (c), from left to right: gears, mixed nuts, mixed washer, M6 nuts, M8 nuts, M10 nuts, rivets and rubber pipes

213 4. Experimental Protocol and Results

214 This section presents the procedure for the dataset collection and the experiments. The dataset is
 215 conformed by 3 subsets of data: Rigid, deformable, and in-bag objects, which are described in more
 216 detailed below. Similarly, 4 experiments have been carried out to show the performance of the method
 217 and compare the results of dynamic and static methods: Experiment 1 for rigid objects, experiment 2
 218 for deformable objects, experiment 3 for in-bag objects, and experiment 4 for the whole dataset.

219 4.1. Dataset

220 4.1.1. Collection process

221 The dataset collection process consists of capturing sequences of tactile images and creating a 3D
 222 tactile tensor. For this purpose, the underactuated gripper holds an object and applies incremental
 223 forces while recording images over the whole palpation process. Each object, depending on its internal
 224 physical attributes, has a unique tactile frame for each amount of applied force. The dataset collection
 225 has been carried out by the gripper, recording 51 tactile frames per squeeze. This process is made by
 226 the two active fingers of the gripper, which are moved by the two smart servos in torque control mode
 227 with incremental torque references. Finally, 1440 3D tactile tensors have been obtained, for a total of 24
 228 objects with 60 tactile tensors each. In Fig. 1 (c), a grasping sequence is shown. The sequence at the top,
 229 from the left to the right, shows the grasping sequence due to the progressive forces applied by the
 230 underactuated gripper to the ball 2, and the sequence at the bottom, from the left to the right, shows
 231 the tactile images captured by the pressure sensor.

232 For machine learning methods, it is important to have the greatest possible variety in the dataset.
 233 In order to achieve this goal, the incremental torque is increased in random steps, so that the applied
 234 forces between two consecutive frames is different in each case. This randomness is also applied due
 235 to the intention to take a dataset that imitates the palpation procedure that could be carried out by a
 236 human, in which the exact forces are not known. Another fact that has been considered for the dataset
 237 collection process is that the force is applied to the object through the fingers of the gripper, therefore

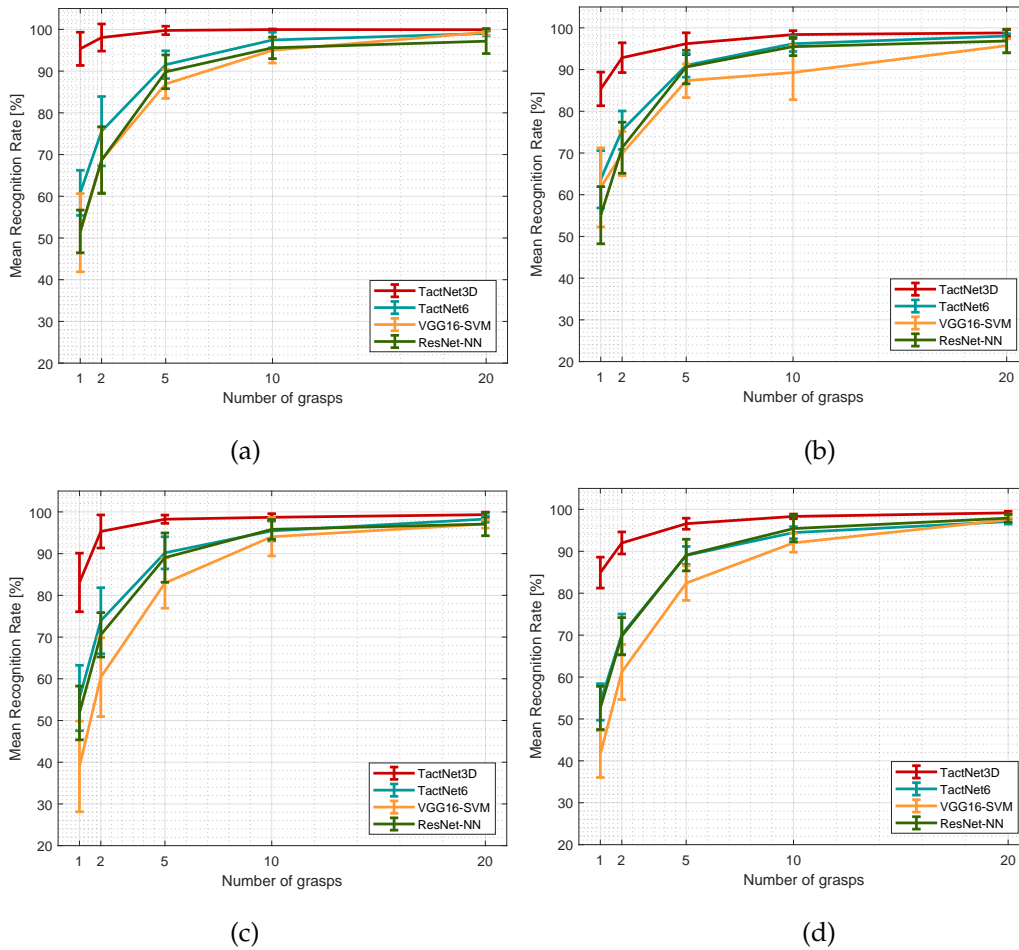


Figure 6. Experimental results of the experiment with rigid objects (a), deformable objects (b), in-bag objects (c), and all objects (d). Error bars represent the standard deviation σ of each recognition rate distribution over a 20 sample testing process.

238 non homogeneous pressure is exerted on the whole surface of the object. Therefore, in order to obtain
 239 all of the internal features of the objects, multiple grasps with random positions and orientations of the
 240 objects have been obtained.

241 4.1.2. Rigid objects

242 Eight objects of the dataset are considered as rigid because they barely change their shape when
 243 the gripper tightens them. The rigid dataset is composed of subsets of objects with similar features
 244 (e.g., the subset of bottles and the subset of cans) which are very different from each other. The subset
 245 of rigid objects is shown in 5 (a).

246 4.1.3. Deformable objects

247 Another subset of the dataset are the deformable objects. This subset consists of eight objects that
 248 change substantially his initial shape when a pressure is applied over it, but recover its initial shape
 249 when the pressure ends. This subgroup also has objects with similar elasticity (e.g., balls and sponges).
 250 The set of deformable objects is shown in 5 (b).

251 4.1.4. In-bag objects

252 The last subset of objects included in the dataset is composed by plastic bags with a number of
 253 small objects. Bags are shuffled before every grasp, so that the objects in the bag are placed in different

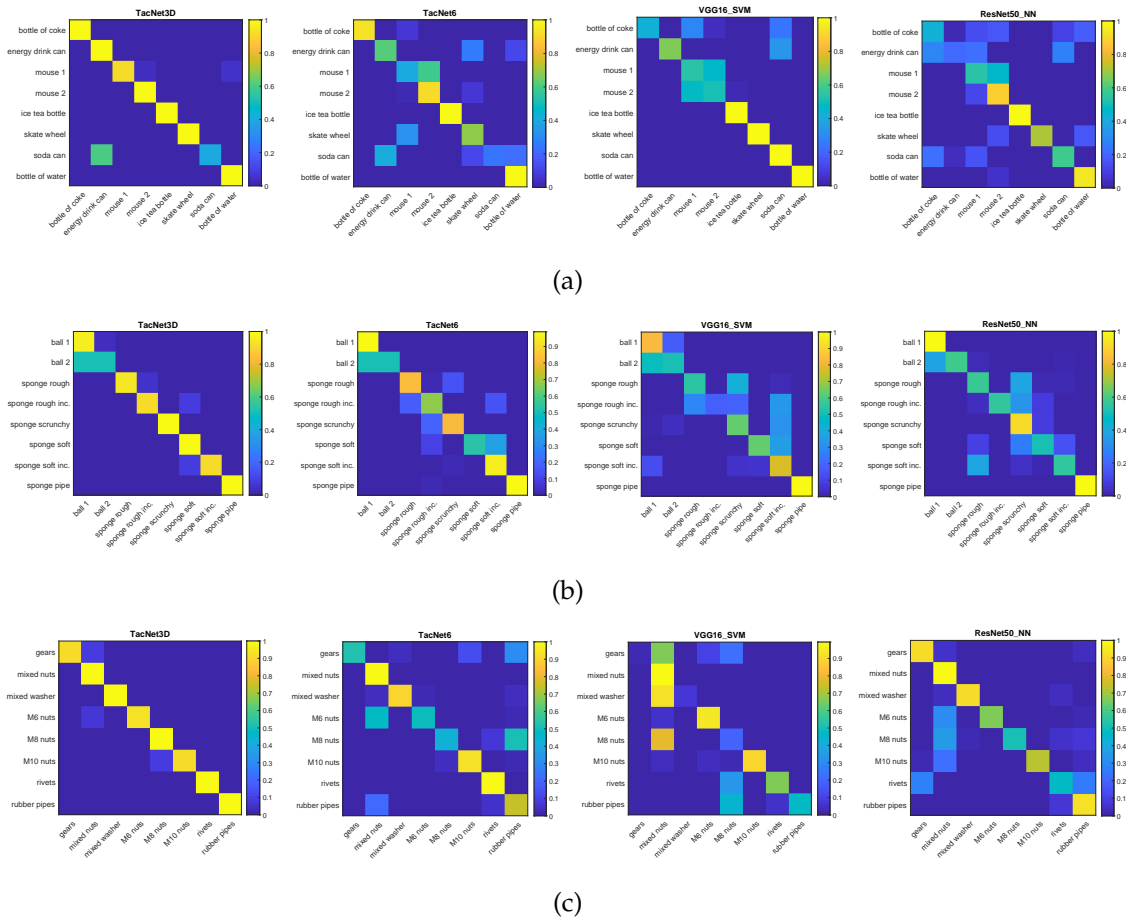


Figure 7. Confusion matrices of the methods, from left to right, TactNet3D, TactNet6, VGG16_SVM and ResNet50_NN, in experiments with rigid objects (a), deformable objects (b) and in-bag objects (c). All the methods are trained using data from 2 grasps.

254 positions and orientations. Hence, the tactile images are different depending on the position of the
 255 objects. Another characteristic of this group is that in-bag objects may change their position randomly
 256 during the grasping process. As in the other subgroups, bags with similar objects have been chosen
 257 (e.g., M6, M8 or M10 nuts). In-bag objects are shown in 5 (c).

258 4.2. Experiments and results

259 According to [45], three approaches can be followed to classify tactile data with 2D CNNs: training
 260 the network from scratch (method 1), using a pre-trained network with standard images and re-training
 261 the last classification layers (method 2), or changing the last layers by other estimator (method 3).
 262 The best results for each approach were obtained by TactNet6, ResNet50_NN, and VGG16_SVM,
 263 respectively. In this work, four experiments have been carried out to validate and compare the
 264 performance of TactNet3D against these 2D CNNs structures considering only the subset of rigid
 265 objects, the subset of deformable objects, the subset of in-bag objects, and the whole dataset. The
 266 training, validation and test sets to train the 2D CNN-based methods are formed using the individual
 267 images extracted from the 3D tactile tensors.

268 The performance of each method has been measured in terms of recognition accuracy. Each
 269 network has been trained 20 times with each subset and the mean recognition rate and standard
 270 deviation for each set of 20 samples have been compared in Fig. 6, where for each experiment, the
 271 results of each method have been obtained using data from 1, 2, 5, 10 and 20 grasps of each object.

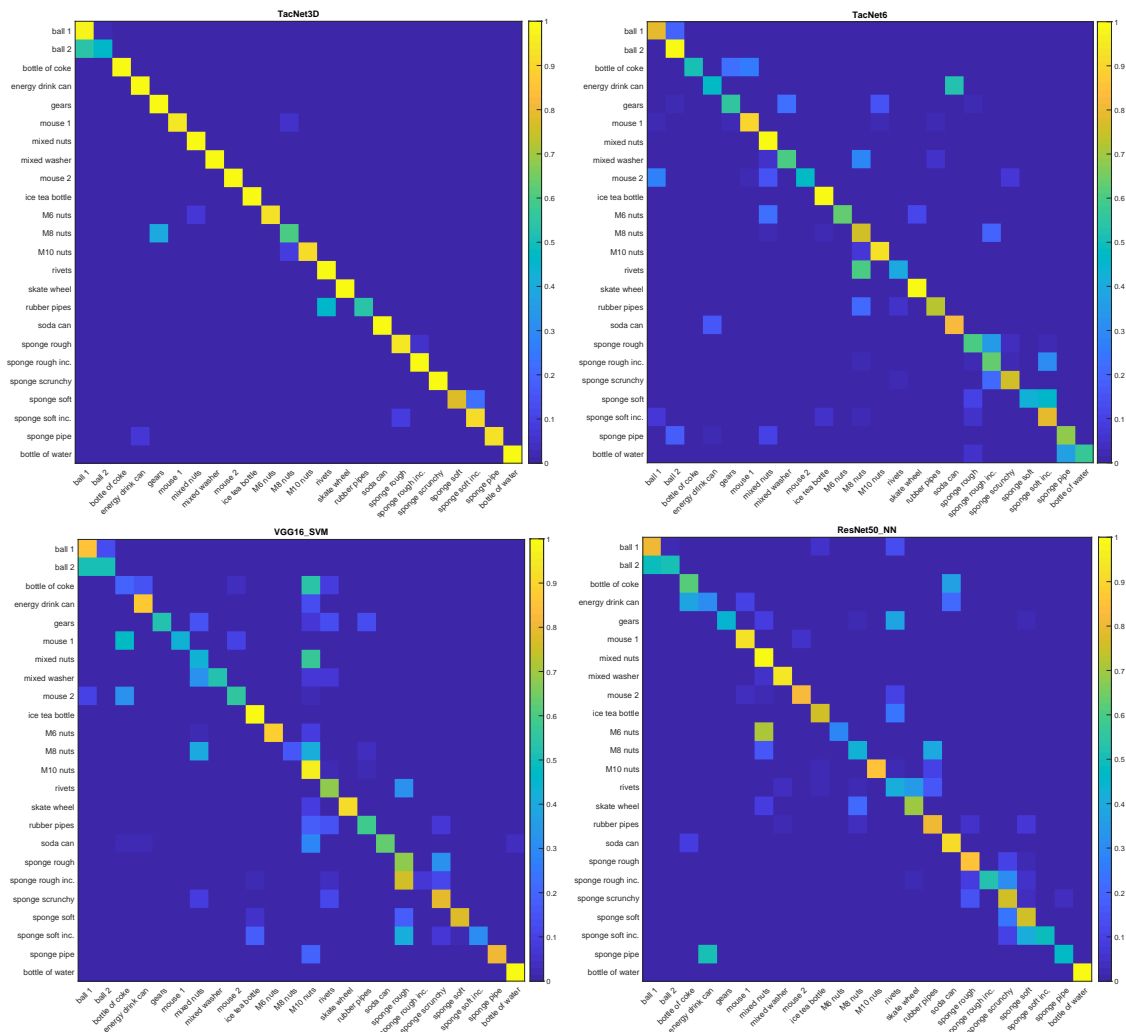


Figure 8. Confusion matrices of the methods, from left to right, TactNet3D, TactNet6, VGG16_SVM and ResNet50_NN, in the experiments with the whole dataset. All the methods are trained using data from 2 grasps.

272 Moreover, representative confusion matrices for each method trained in subsets of rigid,
 273 deformable, and in-bag objects are presented in Fig. 7. In contrast, the confusion matrices related to
 274 the whole dataset are presented in Fig. 8. These confusion matrices have been obtained for the case
 275 in which each method is trained using data from two grasps to show the differences in classification
 276 performance.

277 5. Discussion

278 Regarding the performance of TactNet3D in comparison with 2D CNN-based methods, the results
 279 shown in 6 prove that the recognition rate of the first one is better than the latter in all the studied cases.
 280 For all kinds of objects, rigid, deformable, or in-bag, and all the amount of grasps used as training data,
 281 TactNet3D outperforms 2D CNNs.

282 Also, the differences in classification accuracy are higher when the number of training data is
 283 lower, getting better results when training TactNet3D with one or two grasps than 2D CNNs with
 284 five or ten grips in some cases. Therefore, it is not only shown that the performance is better, but also
 285 the adaptability of TactNet3D as the amount of data needed to train the network is lower, which is
 286 especially interesting for online-learning.

287 Besides, in the misclassification cases, the resulting object class given by TactNet3D has almost
288 indistinguishable physical features to those of the grasped object, unlike 2D CNNs, which may provide
289 disparate results, as can be seen in the confusion matrices presented in Fig. 7 and 8. Looking at some
290 object subsets with similar physical features such as the sponges, the different bag of nuts or the cans,
291 it can be observed that the output given by TactNet3D corresponds to objects from the same subset,
292 whereas 2D CNNs output classes of objects with different features in some cases (e.g., bottle of coke
293 and M10 nuts in Fig. 8 bottom left). This phenomena is interesting from the neurological point of view
294 of artificial touch sense as 3DTactNet behaves more similar to human beings' sense of touch. However,
295 a broad study of this aspect is out of the scope of this paper and will be considered in future works.

296 6. Conclusions

297 A novel method for the active tactile perception based on 3D CNN has been presented and used for
298 an object recognition problem in a new robot gripper design. This gripper includes two underactuated
299 fingers that accommodate to the shape of different objects, and have additional proprioceptive sensors
300 to get its actual position. A tactile sensor has been integrated into the gripper, and a novel representation
301 of sequences of tactile images as 3D tactile tensors has been described.

302 A new 3D CNN has been designed and tested with a set of 24 objects classified in three main
303 categories that include rigid, deformable, and in-bag objects. There are very similar objects in the set,
304 and objects that have changing and complex shapes such as sponges or bags of nuts, to assess the
305 recognition capabilities. 3D CNN and classical CNN with 2D tensors have been tested for comparison.
306 Both perform well with high recognition rates when the amount of training data is high. Nevertheless,
307 3D CNN gets higher performance even with a lower number of training samples, and misclassification
308 is obtained just in very similar classes.

309 As future works, we propose the use of additional proprioceptive information to train
310 multi-channel neural networks using the kinesthetic information about the shape of the grasped
311 object, along with the tactile images for multi-modal tactile perception. Also, the use of other dynamic
312 approaches, such as temporal methods (e.g., LSTMs), for both tactile-based and multi-modal-based
313 perception strategies, need to be addressed in more detail. Moreover, a comparison of new active
314 tactile perception methods will be studied in depth.

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