

Research Article

<https://doi.org/10.1631/jzus.A2600200>

A guided differential dilated convolutional network for fault diagnosis of hydraulic manipulators

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Abstract: Fault diagnosis for hydraulic manipulators plays a crucial role in ensuring operational safety but still faces challenges in fault localization. To address this issue, a guided differential dilated convolutional network (GDDCN) is proposed in this paper. First, a novel interference masking mechanism is designed to provide dual guidance for feature extraction and classification. Then, a learnable differential kernel with the center parameter fixed at zero and side parameters opposite in sign is designed to adaptively extract gradient features. Afterward, a multiscale gated dilated convolution module is developed to capture global temporal features across multiple scales and achieve gated feature fusion. Finally, the fused features are fed into a fully connected classification module for fault classification. The results show that the GDDCN achieves diagnosis of the faulty joint with an average accuracy of 99.39% on a hydraulic manipulator platform. The superiority and effectiveness of the GDDCN is further confirmed through comparative and ablation studies.

Key words: Hydraulic manipulator; Fault diagnosis; Dual guidance; Gradient feature; Dilated convolutional

1 Introduction

Hydraulic manipulators are widely used in deep-sea operations, industrial manufacturing, and other fields due to their advantages of fast response, strong load capacity, and broad environmental adaptability (Yang et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the highly coupled hydraulic systems and mechanical structures of hydraulic manipulators are prone to issues such as internal leakage and valve sticking during operation. Once these faults occur, severe consequences such as abnormal system responses and operational interruption may arise, posing a serious threat to operational safety (Meng et al., 2025; Cheng et al., 2025; Jose et al., 2021). To solve this, it is necessary to localize the faulty joint for designing fault-tolerant

control methods or for replacing the faulty joint to restore the normal state. Therefore, it is of great significance to design a fault diagnosis method for locating the broken-down joint.

Fault diagnosis methods for manipulators can be divided into model-based methods and data-driven methods (Hong et al., 2025). The former construct mathematical models of the manipulator system (Wang et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019) and detect faults by comparing actual operating data with outputs generated by the model. For example, Ma and Yang (2016) proposed a nonlinear adaptive observer for diagnosing actuator and sensor faults in robotic manipulators. Wu et al. (2016) developed a fault detection filter based on a markovian jump model for underactuated manipulators. Sabry et al. (2020) built an energy consumption model to diagnose the joint faults of robotic manipulators. Such methods do not rely on large amounts of training data or extensive sensor deployment, herein with the advantage of relatively low diagnostic costs.

In contrast, data-driven intelligent diagnosis techniques can be applied without explicit modeling

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Received Apr. 2, 2026; Revision accepted June 17, 2026;
Crosschecked

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of the coupled system of manipulators by directly extracting fault features from operational data (Guan et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2025; Ding et al., 2025; Han et al., 2026). Due to the excellent performance in diagnostic accuracy and diagnosable types, data-based methods have become a research hotspot in manipulator fault diagnosis.

As a typical data-driven approach, machine learning (ML) is widely applied in fault diagnosis tasks. For example, Jose et al. (2021) employed support vector machine (SVM) to diagnose leakage faults of hydraulic actuators. Muradore and Fiorini (2012) applied partial least squares for the fault detection of manipulators. Eski et al. (2011) implemented fault diagnosis of manipulators by means of artificial neural network. Wu et al. (2024) used particle swarm optimization combined with random forest to achieve fault diagnosis for industrial robots. Nevertheless, traditional ML methods rely on expert knowledge to manually extract features and have limited modeling ability for nonlinear features, which restricts their learning capability, making them unsuitable for complex diagnostic tasks and diverse operational environments (Li et al., 2024).

In recent years, deep learning (DL) has demonstrated superior performance over traditional ML methods in feature extraction and fault identification for complex tasks (Li et al., 2025; Patil et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2023). In the field of manipulator fault diagnosis, Long et al. (2021) combined SVM and sparse autoencoders for industrial robot joint reducer fault diagnosis. On the basis of this work, Long et al. (2023) further proposed a deep learning method that incorporates convolutional neural network (CNN) and capsule network to improve fault diagnosis performance. Jiang et al. (2025) designed a novel CNN and a loss function to diagnose the gear faults of manipulators under imbalanced samples. Wang et al. (2025) fused gated recurrent unit (GRU), CNN, and attention mechanisms for fault diagnosis of quadruped robots. Wang et al. (2024) developed a novel transformer model with strong generalization ability for diagnosing faults of industrial robot harmonic reducers. Bilal et al. (2024) proposed diagnosing the joint bearing faults of manipulators by using hybrid CNN and recurrent neural network (RNN). He et al.

(2024) constructed an attention residual network to diagnose compound faults in multiple joints of industrial robots, which are mainly caused by harmonic reducers. Chen et al. (2022) designed a novel CNN and a feature classification guidance function for diagnosing the faults of industrial robots. In the field of hydraulic system fault diagnosis, Yang et al. (2026) proposed a novel architecture that integrates physical information, graph neural network (GNN), and attention mechanisms for hydraulic system fault diagnosis. Tang and Wang (2026) proposed an improved temporal CNN for hydraulic system fault diagnosis in the presence of limited samples and sensor signal absence. Wu et al. (2026) combined generative adversarial network with contrastive learning to achieve hydraulic system fault diagnosis. Deep learning methods have strong nonlinear modeling capabilities and can automatically extract multilayer features from data, which improves the classification accuracy and demonstrates their great potential in large-scale data-driven fault diagnosis (Miao et al., 2022).

However, existing studies mainly focus on electrically driven manipulators and general hydraulic systems (Wang et al., 2024; Yin et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2025). In contrast, the hydraulically driven manipulator system, which contains hydraulic power units, control valve assemblies, actuation mechanisms, and associated fluid transmission pipelines, is more complex and shows pronounced nonlinear characteristics, increasing the difficulty of fault localization (Chen et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2025).

To accurately localize the broken-down joint of the hydraulic manipulator, this paper proposes a novel GDDCN that consists of a target guidance module (TG), a learnable differential module (LD), a multiscale gated dilated convolution module (MGDC), and a fully connected classification module (FCC). The key contributions are as follows:

- 1) A novel target guidance module is constructed to guide feature extraction and classification by masking the position signals and the classification logits corresponding to untested joints, which can highlight the features of the tested joint and improve diagnostic accuracy and specificity.

- 2) A channel-wise learnable differential kernel

with the center parameter fixed at zero and side parameters opposite in sign is designed to automatically learn the differential coefficients, enabling adaptive extraction of gradient features from the modified position signals.

3) A multiscale gated dilated convolution module is developed, which combines multiscale 1D dilated convolution and a scale gated weighted mechanism. It can effectively capture global temporal features at different scales and achieve efficient feature fusion by scale weights, which are calculated based on the global representation of the input features.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a detailed introduction to the data preprocessing and key modules of the proposed GDDCN. In Section 3, the superiority and

effectiveness of GDDCN are verified on a hydraulic manipulator platform by comparative and ablation studies. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2 Proposed GDDCN

The proposed framework of GDDCN is illustrated in Fig. 1. First, the control voltages are fed into the TG, which masks the position signals from the untested joints to generate the modified position signals. Then, the modified position signals are sent to the LD to extract differential features. These differential features, together with the modified position signals, are input into the MGDC for further feature extraction. Next, the extracted features are fed into the FCC module, leading to the original classification logits. Finally, the classification result is obtained under the guidance of the TG module.

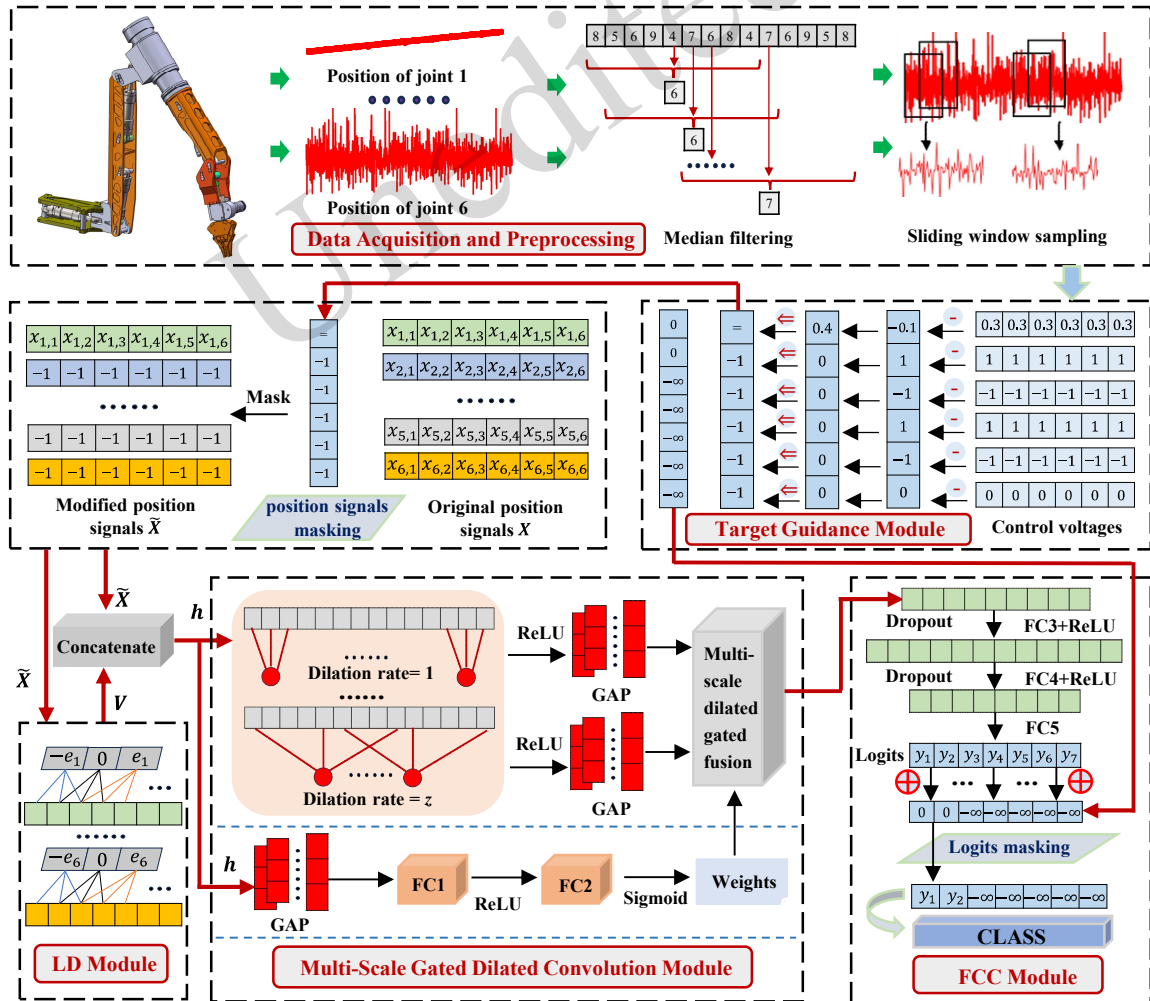


Fig. 1 The fault diagnosis framework for hydraulic manipulators based on GDDCN.

2.1 Data acquisition and preprocessing

During the data acquisition process, the position

signals and control voltages of six joints are recorded simultaneously. Considering the presence of sharp noise in the original position signals, this paper adopts median filtering for signal preprocessing to improve signal quality (Wang et al., 2025).

$$x_{c,i}^{\text{filter}} = \text{median} \left\{ x_{c,i-\frac{\rho-1}{2}}, \dots, x_{c,i}, \dots, x_{c,i+\frac{\rho-1}{2}} \right\} \quad (1)$$

$$T = T_0 - \rho + 1 \quad (2)$$

where $x_{c,i}^{\text{filter}}$ denotes the i -th position signals of the c -th channel after the median filtering operation, the median operation selects the middle value within the filtering window, T_0 is the initial length of the joint position signals, T is the output length after filtering and ρ is the filtering window size, which is an odd integer.

To cover the different temporal segments of joint motion, this paper adopts the sliding window sampling method after the median filtering operation. This method can generate partially overlapping subsequences by setting the sliding window length and step size, which not only increases the number of samples but also improves the robustness of the model in diagnosing different time series segments.

2.2 Target guidance module (TG)

During the data acquisition process of the hydraulic manipulator, only one joint is in motion in each experiment, and the other joints remain at their limit positions under limit position voltages. If the position signals of all joints are directly used as model inputs, the inclusion of signals from untested joints will introduce noise, which negatively affects the model's convergence speed and accuracy. To address this, this paper designs a TG module that identifies the tested joint by analyzing the control voltages $\mathbf{U} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times l}$, and then masks the position signals $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times l}$ to generate the modified position signals $\tilde{\mathbf{X}} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times l}$. The process is as follows:

$$g_c^f = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } U_{c,1} \neq r_c \\ 0 & \text{if } U_{c,1} = r_c \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

$$\tilde{\mathbf{X}}_c = \mathbf{X}_c \odot \mathbf{g}_c^f + (\boldsymbol{\varphi} - \mathbf{g}_c^f) \odot \boldsymbol{\eta} \quad (4)$$

where $U_{c,1}$ represents the first element of the c -th channel of $\mathbf{U}$, r_c indicates the limit position voltage of the c -th joint, $\mathbf{g}_c^f$ is the state binary encoding of the c -th joint, $\mathbf{X}_c \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times l}$ denotes the c -th channel of $\mathbf{X}$, $\mathbf{g}_c^f \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times l}$ is the state binary

encoding vector obtained by repeating $\mathbf{g}_c^f$ to match the length of $\mathbf{X}_c$, $\boldsymbol{\eta}$ represents the masking vector, $\boldsymbol{\varphi} \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times l}$ represents the all-ones vector, $\odot$ denotes element-wise multiplication, and $\tilde{\mathbf{X}}_c \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times l}$ represents the c -th channel of $\tilde{\mathbf{X}}$. This method preserves the position information of the tested joint while uniformly assigning the position values of untested joints to a masking value (outside the valid range).

To further improve the convergence speed, GDDCN guides classification by retaining the classification logits of the normal and fault classes of the tested joint while assigning negative infinity to the classification logits of the untested joints, which effectively suppresses the interference of the untested joints. The process is described as follows:

$$\lambda_c = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } U_{c,1} \neq r_c \\ -\infty & \text{if } U_{c,1} = r_c \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

$$\mathbf{g}_{\text{class}} = [0, \lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_n]^T \quad (6)$$

$$\tilde{\mathbf{y}} = \mathbf{y} + \mathbf{g}_{\text{class}} \quad (7)$$

where λ_c is the classification masking value of the c -th joint, n represents the total number of joints, $\mathbf{g}_{\text{class}} \in \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$ adds 0 before λ_1 to preserve the classification logit of the normal class, $\mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$ represents the original classification logits, and $\tilde{\mathbf{y}} \in \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$ denotes the modified logits.

2.3 Learnable differential module (LD)

Differential operations are widely used to extract gradient features from 2D images (Zhang et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2025; Wei et al., 2024). To extract the gradient features in the 1D position signal, this paper proposes an LD module with a differential kernel $\mathbf{D} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times 3}$. The differential kernel consists of a nontrainable center parameter (set to zero) and trainable parameters (equal value and opposite signs) on two sides. By performing convolution operations with this differential kernel, a differential feature sequence $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times l}$ that has the same length as the input is produced. The differential operation is defined as follows:

$$\mathbf{D}_c = [-e_c, 0, e_c] \quad (8)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_c = \tilde{\mathbf{X}}_c * \mathbf{D}_c \quad (9)$$

where $\mathbf{D}_c \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times 3}$ denotes the c -th channel of $\mathbf{D}$, e_c is the trainable parameter, $*$ denotes the convolution operation and $\mathbf{V}_c \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times l}$ represents the c -th channel of $\mathbf{V}$.

The LD module has the following advantages over standard fixed-difference operators and unconstrained 1D convolutions. Compared with standard fixed-difference operators, the learnable parameters in the LD module can adaptively adjust the differential intensity according to the data distribution of each channel, while the coefficients of standard fixed-difference operators are manually preset and require parameter tuning to find suitable differential coefficients. Compared with unconstrained 1D convolutions, the output of the differential kernel in the LD module has a clear physical meaning (the gradient feature of the signal). In addition, the number of parameters of the differential kernel is only one-third of the unconstrained 1D convolution with three parameters.

2.4 Multiscale gated dilated convolution module (MGDC)

The kernel of a standard convolution is continuous, while the kernel of dilated convolution has a certain interval. This design can expand the receptive field without increasing the number of parameters. By adjusting this interval (dilation rates), features at different time scales can be extracted (Liu et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2021). In this paper, 1D multiscale dilated convolution is used to extract multiscale features from the data by setting different dilation rates. The input sequence is obtained by the following operation:

$$\mathbf{h} = \text{cat}(\mathbf{V}, \tilde{\mathbf{X}}) \quad (10)$$

where $\text{cat}(\cdot)$ represents the concatenate operation, and the multiscale dilated convolution input sequence $\mathbf{h} \in \mathbb{R}^{2n \times l}$ is obtained by concatenating $\mathbf{V}$ and $\tilde{\mathbf{X}}$ along the channel dimension. The detailed calculation of the multiscale dilated convolution operation is as follows:

$$\Gamma_{c',k}^m = f\left(\sum_{c=1}^{2n} \sum_{\tau=1}^{\varepsilon_\tau} h_{c',k+(\tau-1) \cdot d^m} \cdot w_{c,c',\tau}^m + b_{c'}^m\right) \quad (11)$$

where $h_{c',k+(\tau-1) \cdot d^m}$ denotes the $(k + (\tau - 1) \cdot d^m)$ -th element of the c' -th channel of $\mathbf{h}$, d^m is the dilation rate at scale m , $w_{c,c',\tau}^m$ denotes the τ -th weight of the c' -th channel of the c'' -th dilated convolution kernel at scale m , ε_τ is the length of τ , $b_{c'}^m$ is the c'' -th bias at scale m , $f(\cdot)$ is the activation function, and $\Gamma_{c',k}^m$ is the k -th element in the

c'' -th channel of the output sequence of dilated convolution operation at scale m .

The multiscale dilated convolution features need to be fused. Since the receptive fields of multiscale dilated convolution are different, the lengths of the obtained feature sequences are also different. Directly fusing these multiscale outputs may lead to an imbalance among the fused features. To address this issue, this paper employs a global average pooling (GAP) method to obtain global features $\mathbf{p}^m$ from the output of the dilated convolution operation at scale m . The calculation formula is as follows:

$$p_{c'}^m = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{\varepsilon_1^m} \Gamma_{c',k}^m}{\varepsilon_1^m} \quad (12)$$

where $p_{c'}^m$ denotes the c'' -th element of $\mathbf{p}^m$, and ε_1^m is the length of k at scale m .

If the multiscale features after pooling are directly concatenated, it may lead to parameter redundancy and information dispersion. To address this, this paper introduces a scale gated fusion mechanism that adaptively assigns weights to different scale branches through a gating network. The network input $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}^{2n}$ is obtained by applying the GAP operation to $\mathbf{h}$. The features $\mathbf{p}^m$ are weighted and then summed to produce the feature fusion vector $\mathbf{J}$. The scale weight calculation and multiscale dilated gated fusion process are as follows:

$$\alpha_{c'} = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{\varepsilon_2} h_{c',k}}{\varepsilon_2} \quad (13)$$

$$\mathbf{Q} = \sigma(\text{L}_2(\text{ReLU}(\text{L}_1(\alpha)))) \quad (14)$$

$$\mathbf{J} = \sum_{m=1}^z \mathbf{Q}^m \odot \mathbf{p}^m \quad (15)$$

where $h_{c',k}$ represents the k' -th element at channel c' of $\mathbf{h}$, ε_2 is the length of k' , $\text{L}_1(\cdot)$ and $\text{L}_2(\cdot)$ are fully connected layers (FC layers), $\text{ReLU}(\cdot)$ refers to the rectified linear unit (ReLU) activation function, $\sigma(\cdot)$ denotes the sigmoid activation function, $\mathbf{Q} \in \mathbb{R}^z$ is the weight vector corresponding to each scale branch, $\mathbf{Q}^m$ is obtained by repeating the value of $\mathbf{Q}$ corresponding to scale m to match the length of $\mathbf{p}^m$, and z is the total number of scale branches.

2.5 Fully connected classification module (FCC)

By inputting the features obtained from the MGDC module into the FCC module, the original classification logits $\mathbf{y}$ can be obtained. The process

is as follows:

$$\mathbf{y} = L_5(\text{ReLU}(L_4(\text{ReLU}(L_3(\mathbf{J})))))) \quad (16)$$

where $L_3(\cdot)$, $L_4(\cdot)$, and $L_5(\cdot)$ are fully connected layers. Dropout is applied after the ReLU activation function of $L_3(\cdot)$ and $L_4(\cdot)$ to prevent overfitting.

Based on the original classification logits $\mathbf{y}$, the modified logits $\tilde{\mathbf{y}}$ are generated according to equations (5)-(7). The final classification result is determined by selecting the class with the maximum value from $\tilde{\mathbf{y}}$, while the training loss is computed using the cross-entropy loss.

2.6 General procedure of GDDCN

The signals collected from the hydraulic manipulator are processed through five steps: Data acquisition and preprocessing, TG module, LD module, MGDC module, and FCC module. The details of each step are described as follows:

Step 1: After the data acquisition process, median filtering is applied to remove sharp noise from the position signals, and a sliding window is used to generate samples, including position signals and control voltages.

Step 2: A TG module is constructed based on the joint control voltages. By comparing the control voltage of each joint with its limit position voltage, the tested joint can be determined. Then, the position value of the untested joint is set to a masking value such as -1, while that of the tested joint remains unchanged.

Step 3: A channel-wise self-learnable differential kernel centered at zero with opposite signs at both ends is designed to adaptively extract gradient features from the modified position signals.

Step 4: The modified position signals and their

differential features are jointly input into dilated convolution branches with different dilation rates. The output of each branch is activated using the ReLU activation function and then processed through GAP. Subsequently, a gated network adaptively allocates weights for each branch based on the global representation of the input sequence. The weighted features from all branches are summed to complete feature fusion.

Step 5: The fused features from Step 4 are input into a multilayer fully connected network to output the classification logits of each class. The guidance mechanism is reapplied to suppress the logits of untested joints by masking them to negative infinity while keeping the logits corresponding to the tested joint unchanged. Final classification is performed based on the modified logits.

3 Experimental verification

In this section, a hydraulic manipulator platform is constructed, and data from both normal and faulty operating conditions are collected. Subsequently, the superiority and effectiveness of the GDDCN are validated through comparative and ablation studies.

3.1 Platform setup and data acquisition

To verify the effectiveness of the GDDCN, a 6-DOF hydraulic manipulator platform is constructed, as shown in Fig. 2. The hydraulic manipulator consists of 6 active joints, where joints 1, 2, 3, and 5 are driven by the hydraulic cylinder equipped with a displacement sensor, joint 4 is driven by a hydraulic rotary actuator equipped with a resolver, and joint 6 is driven by a hydraulic motor equipped with an angle sensor. The position state of the manipulator can be monitored in real time.

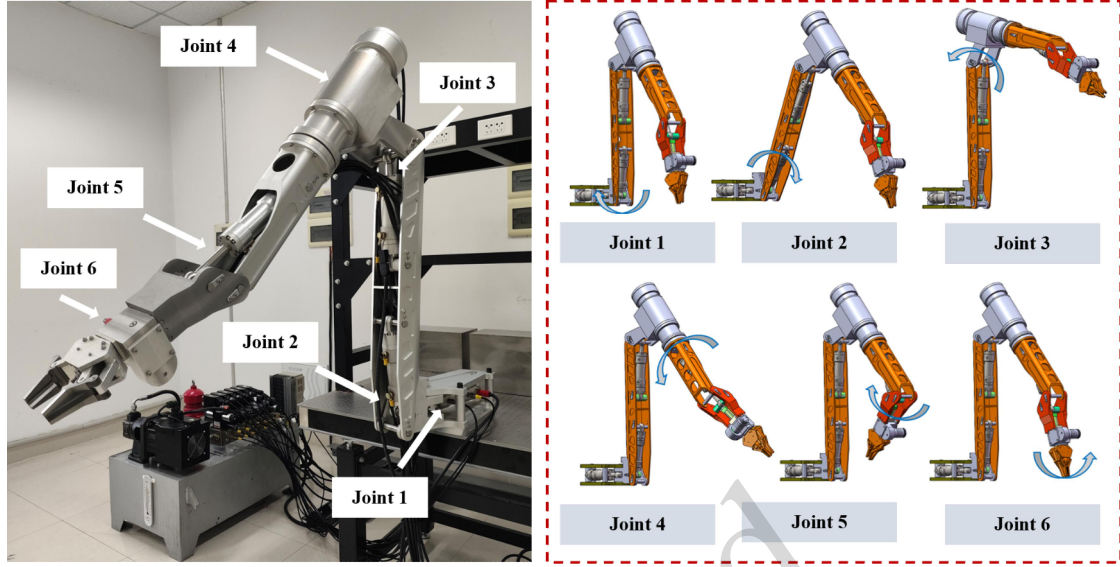


Fig. 2 Hydraulic manipulator experimental platform and schematic diagram of joint motion.

Faults in the hydraulic manipulator may originate from the electrical control system, hydraulic system, or mechanical structure. It is very difficult to directly pinpoint the source of the fault. Nevertheless, regardless of the source, it will ultimately affect the motion performance of the joint.

Based on the flow equation of the proportional valve, the flow continuity equation of the actuator and the force balance equation of the actuator (Feng et al., 2021), the motion of the hydraulic actuator can be described by the following transfer function:

$$X_{\text{lap}} = \frac{K_U \frac{K_2}{A_p} U_{\text{lap}} - K_F \frac{K_4}{A_p^2} \left(1 + \frac{O_t}{4\beta K_4} s\right) F_{\text{lap}}}{s \left(\frac{s^2}{\omega^2} + \frac{2\zeta}{\omega} s + 1\right)} \quad (17)$$

where X_{lap} denotes the displacement (linear or angular) response of the hydraulic actuator, U_{lap} denotes the control voltage command, F_{lap} denotes

the external load (force or torque), K_U is the voltage fault coefficient, K_F is the load fault coefficient, A_p is the effective piston area of the hydraulic cylinder or displacement of the hydraulic motor, K_2 is the flow gain coefficient, O_t is the total compression volume, β is the effective bulk modulus, K_4 is the total flow pressure coefficient, ω is the natural frequency, and ζ is the damping ratio.

Two types of faults (gain fault and failure fault) are defined based on the transfer function. It is regarded as a gain fault if $K_U \neq 1$, indicating that the displacement response is abnormal under the same control voltage input. Additionally, it is regarded as a failure fault if $K_U = 0$ and $K_F = 0$, indicating that the joint does not respond at all regardless of the input U_{lap} and load F_{lap} .

Table 1 Limit position voltage, normal voltage, and gain voltage of each joint of the manipulator.

Joint	Limit position voltage	Normal voltage	Gain voltage
Joint 1	-0.1	0.3	0.26
Joint 2	1	-0.16	-0.12
Joint 3	-1	0.3	0.26
Joint 4	1	-0.3	-0.26
Joint 5	-1	0.44	0.4
Joint 6	0	1	0.70

Table 2 Sample size for training and testing.

Joint state	Train dataset	Test dataset	Class
Normal-joint 1	297×12×100	148×12×100	1
Normal-joint 2	112×12×100	57×12×100	1
Normal-joint 3	292×12×100	146×12×100	1
Normal-joint 4	154×12×100	79×12×100	1

Normal-joint 5	376×12×100	186×12×100	1
Normal-joint 6	266×12×100	132×12×100	1
Gain fault -joint 1	366×12×100	182×12×100	2
Failure fault -joint 1	190×12×100	90×12×100	2
Gain fault -joint 2	164×12×100	84×12×100	3
Failure fault -joint 2	190×12×100	90×12×100	3
Gain fault -joint 3	393×12×100	194×12×100	4
Failure fault -joint 3	190×12×100	90×12×100	4
Gain fault -joint 4	215×12×100	109×12×100	5
Failure fault -joint 4	190×12×100	90×12×100	5
Gain fault -joint 5	431×12×100	216×12×100	6
Failure fault -joint 5	190×12×100	90×12×100	6
Gain fault -joint 6	403×12×100	199×12×100	7
Failure fault -joint 6	190×12×100	90×12×100	7

The experimental procedure for data acquisition is as follows. First, limit position voltages are applied to all joints to drive them to their respective mechanical limits. Then, each of the six joints is sequentially selected as the tested target. To collect data under normal operating conditions, the tested joint performs reciprocating motion under a normal voltage while the other joints remain at their limit positions. Next, a gain fault is simulated by changing the control voltage of the tested joint from a normal voltage to a gain voltage ($K_U \neq 1$) while all other joints remain fixed at their limit positions. Thus, the dynamic response of the tested joint differs from that under normal conditions. Furthermore, a failure fault ($K_U = 0$ and $K_F = 0$) is simulated by cutting off the power supply to the proportional valve of the tested joint, resulting in no motion response under the normal voltage, while all other joints remain at their limit positions. Table 1 lists the limit position voltage, normal voltage, and gain voltage for each joint.

Following the collection of signals at a sampling frequency of 200 Hz, the position signals are processed by applying median filtering with a window size of 9 and a step size of 1. Then, the position signals and control voltages are sampled using the sliding window method, with a window size of 100 (corresponding to 0.5 s) and a step size of 10. The size of the samples is shown in Table 2. Each sample consists of 12 channels, and each channel contains

100 elements. For each sample, channels 1-6 correspond to the position signals $\mathbf{X}$ of 6 joints, while channels 7-12 correspond to the control voltages $\mathbf{U}$ of 6 joints. The number of samples differs for each joint state.

3.2 Evaluation metrics and model parameters

In this study, four performance evaluation metrics (accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score) are employed. Considering the imbalance of samples among different classes, macro-average precision (MP), macro-average recall (MR), and macro-average F1-score (MF1) are adopted (Liu et al., 2024). The formulas of the four metrics are as follows:

$$\text{Accuracy} = \frac{\sum_{\delta=1}^{\mu} \text{TP}_{\delta}}{N} \quad (18)$$

$$\text{MP} = \frac{1}{\mu} \sum_{\delta=1}^{\mu} \frac{\text{TP}_{\delta}}{\text{TP}_{\delta} + \text{FP}_{\delta}} \quad (19)$$

$$\text{MR} = \frac{1}{\mu} \sum_{\delta=1}^{\mu} \frac{\text{TP}_{\delta}}{\text{TP}_{\delta} + \text{FN}_{\delta}} \quad (20)$$

$$\text{MF1} = \frac{2 \cdot \text{MP} \cdot \text{MR}}{\text{MP} + \text{MR}} \quad (21)$$

where N is the total number of samples in the test dataset, μ is the total number of classes, TP_{δ} is the number of samples correctly predicted as class δ (true positives for class δ), FP_{δ} is the number of samples incorrectly predicted as class δ (false positives for class δ), and FN_{δ} is the number of samples belonging to class δ but incorrectly predicted as another class (false negatives for class δ).

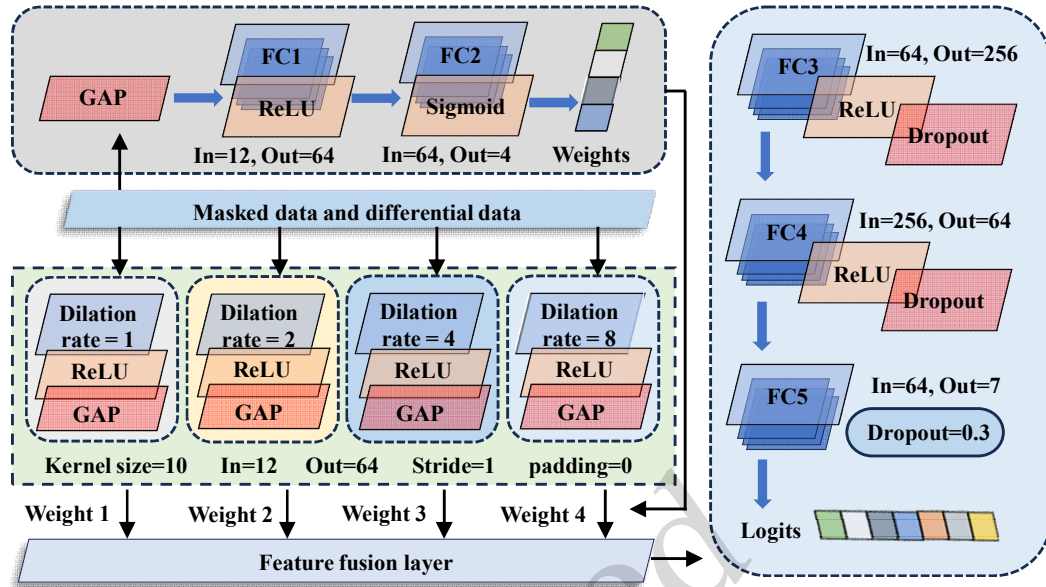


Fig. 3 Parameter settings of the MGDC module and the FCC module.

The experiments are conducted using PyTorch 2.3.0 with CUDA 11.8 on an Intel Core i7-10870H CPU and an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2060 GPU. The model is trained for 200 epochs using the Adam optimizer with an initial learning rate of 0.0001 and batch size of 64. A learning rate decay strategy is employed with a step size of 80 epochs and a decay factor of 0.5. The specific parameter settings of the MGDC module and the subsequent FCC module are shown in Fig. 3. 'in' and 'out' represent the input channel and output channel, respectively. The settings of kernel size, input channel, output channel, stride, and padding are consistent across the different dilated branches.

3.3 Comparative study

3.3.1 Impact of position signals and logits masking in the TG module

The TG module integrates position signals masking and classification logits masking to provide guidance for feature extraction and classification. To validate its effectiveness, this section compares GDDCN with three variants, including a method without any masking operation (DDCN), a method that only masks position signals (G1DDCN), and a method that only masks classification logits (G2DDCN). The accuracy comparison curves are shown in Fig. 4. Each point is the average accuracy

of 10 consecutive epochs.

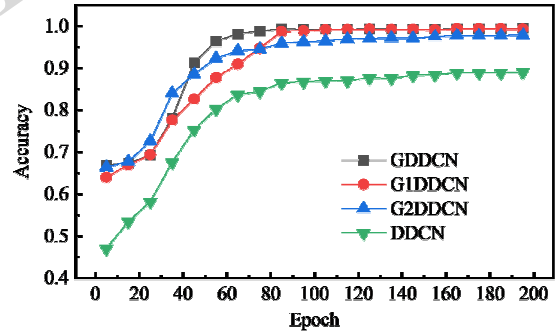


Fig. 4 Comparison of different approaches using TG.

As shown in the figure, the G2DDCN shows slightly higher accuracy than GDDCN during the early stages but demonstrates poorer convergence performance, which reflects the limitations of guidance solely at the classification. Although G1DDCN eventually achieves an accuracy close to that of GDDCN, its accuracy during early epochs is noticeably lower than that of GDDCN. The comparison results indicate that the guidance of feature extraction and classification are complementary, confirming the effectiveness of the dual guidance mechanism in enhancing model performance.

To investigate the influence of different position masking values, four masking values (-1 , -3 , -5 , and -10) are tested. The accuracy comparison curves are shown in Fig. 5. When the position masking value is

-1, the accuracy increases rapidly and achieves the best convergence. As the masking value gradually decreases to -3, -5, and -10, the accuracy improvement becomes gradually slower, and it shows oscillations in later epochs. This indicates that the position masking value should be set within an appropriate range to be effectively processed by the model.

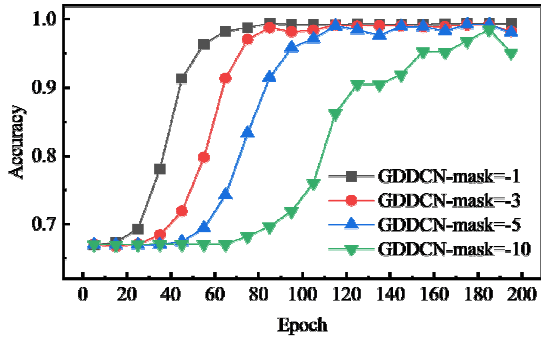


Fig. 5 Comparison under different position masking values.

3.3.2 Comparison between using the LD module and using fixed-parameter differential methods

To validate the superiority of the learnable differential kernel, experiments are designed to compare it with fixed-parameter differential kernels set to values of 1, 10, and 20. The fixed kernel parameters are kept constant and not updated during training. The experimental results are shown in Fig. 6. When the fixed kernel parameters are set to 1, 10, and 20, there are significant differences in the model's accuracy. In contrast, the proposed GDDCN can automatically learn the appropriate kernel parameters and achieve superior performance simultaneously.

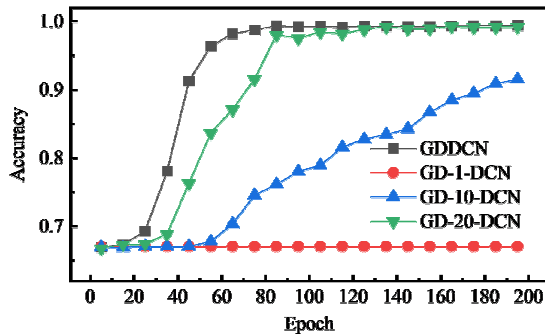


Fig. 6 Comparison under different differential parameters.

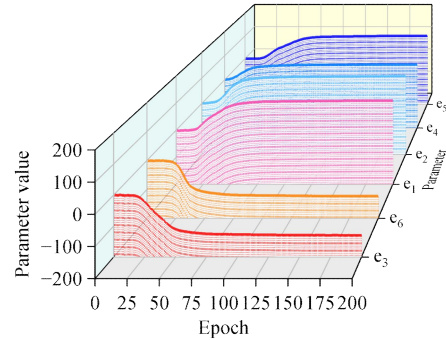


Fig. 7 Changes in differential kernel parameters across epochs.

To clearly study the training process of the differential kernel parameters across the six channels, Fig. 7 presents their variation curves with respect to training epochs. As shown in the figure, the kernel parameters continuously adjust from their initial values (the parameters are initialized uniformly in the range $[-1, 1]$) and eventually converge to the parameters suitable for the model, which improves the adaptability of gradient feature extraction.

3.3.3 Comparison with using a single-scale dilated convolution branch in the MGDC module

After the LD module, this study further introduces an MGDC module based on four dilation rates of 1, 2, 4, and 8 to enhance the feature extraction capability. To investigate the impact of multiscale settings on diagnostic performance, comparative experiments are designed by constructing four models, each retaining a single dilation rate branch (named GDDCN-1, GDDCN-2, GDDCN-4, and GDDCN-8). Their performance is compared with GDDCN. To mitigate randomness, the final performance metrics are reported as the average of the last 20 epochs (denoted as average accuracy, average MP, average MR, and average MF1).

As shown in Table 3, the evaluation metrics of GDDCN-1 (traditional convolution) and GDDCN-8 are below 99%, while GDDCN-2 and GDDCN-4 show better performance, which suggests that moderate dilation rates have advantages in feature extraction. In contrast, the proposed GDDCN achieves an average accuracy of 99.39% and outperforms other models in overall performance, validating the effectiveness of the multiscale convolution structure in enhancing feature extraction

capability.

Table 3 Comparison between GDDCN and single dilation rate models.

Model	Average accuracy	Average MP	Average MR	Average MF1
GDDCN	99.39	99.53	99.50	99.51
GDDCN-1	98.62	98.85	98.99	98.92
GDDCN-2	99.03	99.15	99.30	99.22
GDDCN-4	99.04	99.18	99.29	99.23
GDDCN-8	98.39	98.58	98.89	98.73

3.3.4 Comparison with using global max pooling in the MGDC module

To produce uniform length sequences of global features, a global pooling operation is introduced after multiscale feature extraction. To investigate the impact of pooling methods on model performance, a comparative experiment between GAP and global max pooling (GMP) is conducted. The experimental result in Fig. 8 indicates that GAP outperforms GMP across four evaluation metrics and is therefore more suitable for the feature compression strategy.

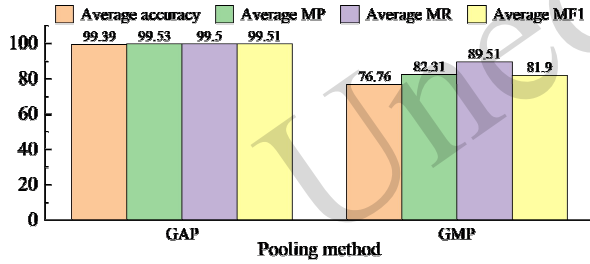
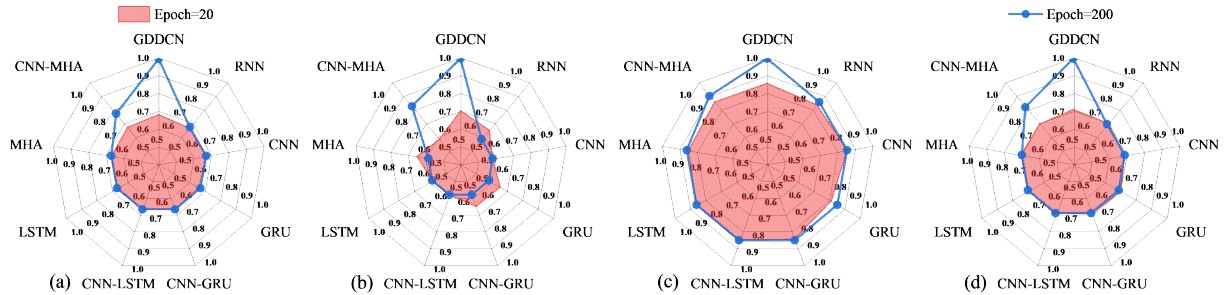


Fig. 8 Comparison between GAP and GMP.

3.3.5 Comparison with prevalent DL methods

To further validate the superiority of the proposed GDDCN, comparative experiments are carried out with several deep learning models, including the CNN, RNN, GRU, long short-term memory (LSTM), multi-head attention (MHA), CNN-GRU, CNN-LSTM, and CNN-MHA. Fig. 9 shows the accuracy, MP, MR, and MF1 for each method under different training epochs (20 and 200).



As shown in the figure, the accuracy and MF1 of most deep learning models converge to values below 0.7, their MR converges to values below 0.9, and their MP converges to values below 0.6. Moreover, the evaluation metrics of most models show little improvement from epochs 20 and 200, indicating that their learning capacity is limited. Among them, CNN-MHA performs relatively better, with accuracy exceeding 0.75, MP and MF1 exceeding 0.8, and MR exceeding 0.9. In contrast, the metrics of the proposed GDDCN converge to values approaching 1 and show significant improvements from epoch 20 to 200. These results further validate the superiority of GDDCN.

3.4 Ablation Study

To further evaluate the effectiveness of the GDDCN, ablation studies are conducted. The ablation models include GDDCN without the TG module (DDCN), GDDCN without the LD module (GDCN), and GDDCN without the MGDC module (GDN). Table 4 presents the comparison results of GDDCN with ablation models across four evaluation metrics. The average accuracy, average MP, average MR, and average MF1 of DDCN and GDCN are all lower than 90%, while GDN is close to 98%. In contrast, the corresponding metrics of GDDCN are 99.39%, 99.53%, 99.50%, and 99.51%, respectively, which outperform the ablation models and demonstrate its effectiveness in overall performance.

Fig. 9 Comparison with widely used deep learning models at different epochs: (a) Accuracy, (b) MP, (c) MR, and (d) MF1.

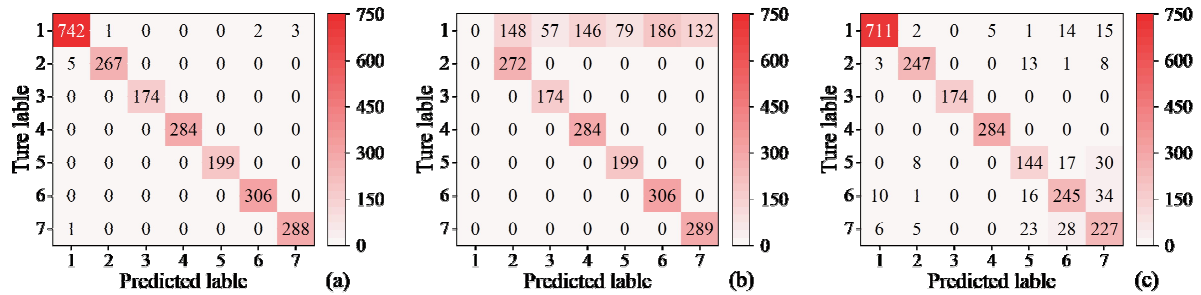


Fig. 10 Confusion matrices using (a) GDDCN, (b) GDCN, and (c) DDCN.

Table 4 Performance comparison of the GDDCN and its variants.

Model	Average accuracy	Average MP	Average MR	Average MF1
GDDCN	99.39	99.53	99.50	99.51
DDCN	88.96	87.64	87.47	87.48
GDCN	67.08	58.37	85.71	69.38
GDN	97.65	97.91	98.49	98.17

Table 5 Regional interpretations of samples per category.

Joint state	Class	Region	Joint state	Class	Region
Normal-joint 1	1	1	Failure - joint 2	3	2
Normal-joint 2	1	2	Gain - joint 3	4	1
Normal-joint 3	1	3	Failure - joint 3	4	2
Normal-joint 4	1	4	Gain - joint 4	5	1
Normal-joint 5	1	5	Failure - joint 4	5	2
Normal-joint 6	1	6	Gain - joint 5	6	1
Gain - joint 1	2	1	Failure - joint 5	6	2
Failure - joint 1	2	2	Gain - joint 6	7	1
Gain - joint 2	3	1	Failure - joint 6	7	2

To visually demonstrate the advantages of GDDCN over GDCN and DDCN, Fig. 10 presents the confusion matrices of the three methods. The GDCN has difficulty distinguishing normal and broken-down joints because of the lack of differential features; the DDCN is prone to confusing faults in different joints due to the lack of a TG module. These results further confirm the importance of incorporating differential feature extraction and target guidance mechanisms for accurate fault identification.

To show the superiority of GDDCN over GDN, Fig. 11 shows the classification results of these two methods for each class in the test dataset. As shown in the figure, the gray dashed line is the joint state

boundary, the black solid line indicates the predicted labels of the test sample, and the red vertical line represents the true labels of the test sample. In the figure, the regions divided by the gray dashed line in class 1 correspond to the normal samples of joints 1 to 6, and the regions in classes 2 to 7 represent the gain and failure faults of each joint, respectively (details can be found in Table 5). It can be observed that GDDCN and GDN perform well in identifying failure faults. However, the majority of the samples that are misclassified by GDDCN are also incorrectly labeled by GDN, and GDN exhibits more misclassifications in the identification of gain failures. This indicates that GDDCN is more effective in distinguishing gain faults.

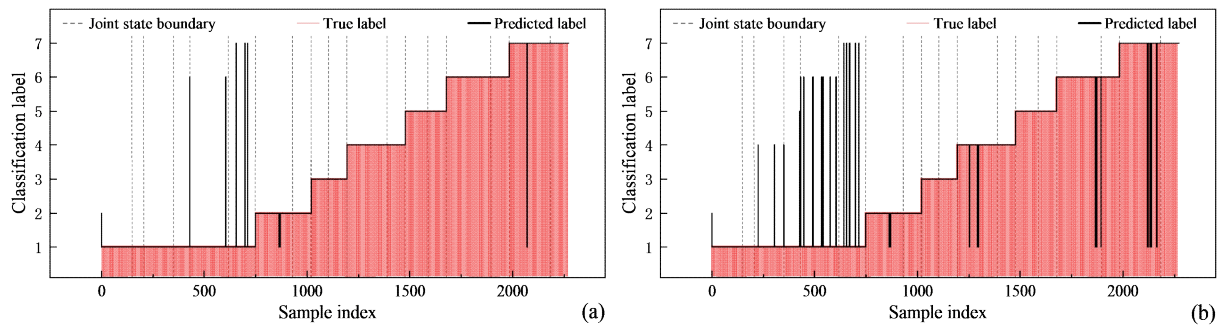


Fig. 11 Classification results during the testing phase using (a) GDDCN and (b) GDN.

4 Conclusions

To address the challenges of fault localization, a guided differential dilated convolutional network is proposed in this paper. First, a TG module is designed to jointly guide feature extraction and classification decision, making the model more attentive to the features of the tested joint. Then, a learnable differential kernel with its center parameter fixed at zero and side parameters opposite in sign is introduced to adaptively capture gradient features from positional signals. Finally, a multiscale dilated convolution combined with a scale fusion strategy effectively extracts cross-scale global features. The effectiveness of these modules is validated on a hydraulic manipulator platform. The main conclusions are as follows:

1) The proposed GDDCN achieves an average classification accuracy of 99.39% in the test dataset of the hydraulic manipulator platform. It outperforms the ablation variants and widely used methods in four evaluation metrics, which indicates its advantage in overall performance.

2) The comparative study shows that the guidance of feature extraction and classification has complementary effects. The learnable difference kernel can update its parameters automatically, demonstrating stronger adaptability than the traditional fixed-parameter difference operator. The performance of the MGDC module is superior to that of its single-scale version, and GAP is more effective than GMP in extracting features. Comparative experiments with several mainstream deep learning methods demonstrate that GDDCN exhibits significant advantages in diagnosis.

3) The ablation study shows that the absence of the TG module leads to confusion among joint faults, the lack of the LD module impairs the model's

ability to distinguish normal from faulty states, and removing the MGDC module diminishes the ability to identify gain faults despite achieving an average accuracy of approximately 98%. These results validate the effectiveness of GDDCN.

Although GDDCN has achieved strong results in both comparative and ablation studies, the following limitations and challenges still exist. First, the current diagnosis can only locate the faulty joint but cannot further identify the faulty components within the joint. Second, this experiment was completed in a conventional environment, and the effectiveness of the model in harsh environments such as underwater environments needs to be further verified. In the future, we will conduct relevant research in response to the above limitations. Meanwhile, fault-tolerant control strategies will be developed based on the diagnostic results to ensure the performance of the joints in case of faults.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (Grant number: 52175018), and the Taishan Scholars Program (Grant number: tsqn202507038 and tsqn202408291).

Author contributions

Daocheng FU: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Xu YANG: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Validation, Writing – review & editing. Haitao LIU: Investigation. Yugang REN: Funding acquisition. Xianpeng SHI: Resources. Limin ZHU: Supervision.

Conflict of interest

Daocheng FU, Xu YANG, Haitao LIU, Yugang REN, Xianpeng SHI, and Limin ZHU declare that they have no

conflict of interest.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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中文概要

题目：一种用于液压机械臂故障诊断的引导差分空洞卷积网络

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目的：液压机械臂高度耦合的液压系统与机械结构在运行过程中易发生内部泄漏、阀芯卡滞等问题。一旦故障发生, 会引发系统响应异常, 甚至造成作业中断等严重后果, 对作业安全构成严重威胁。本文旨在提出一种引导差分空洞卷积网络, 以实现液压机械臂故障关节的精准定位。

创新点：1. 设计了一种干扰屏蔽机制, 为特征提取和分类提供双重引导; 2. 设计了一种可学习差分卷积核, 其中心参数固定为零、两侧参数互为相反数, 可自适应提取梯度特征; 3. 构建了多尺度门控空洞卷积模块, 在多个时间尺度上捕获特征并实现门控特征融合。

方法：1. 在液压机械臂平台上采集各关节的位置信号与控制电压, 对采集的位置信号进行中值滤波去除尖锐噪声, 采用滑动窗口切分生成包含位置信号与控制电压的样本, 划分训练集与测试集; 2. 构建目标引导模块 (TG), 通过比较控制电压与极限位置电压判断受测关节, 将受测关节的位置信号保留、未受测关节的位置信号屏蔽; 3. 构建可学习差分模块 (LD), 设计中心为零、两端互为相反数的可学习差分核, 自适应提取梯度特征; 4. 构建多尺度门控空洞卷积模块 (MGDC), 采用多空洞率并行分支提取多尺度特征, 并通过门控网络自适应加权融合; 5. 构建全连接分类模块 (FCC), 得到健康与各关节故障状态的 logits, 通过 TG 模块屏蔽未受测关节的 logits, 基于分类结果实现故障关节定位; 6. 基于上述方法, 利用训练集训练模型, 将训练好的模型在测试集上评估, 并开展对比与消融实验验证方法有效性。

结论：1. 提出的 GDDCN 在液压机械臂平台测试集上的平均分类准确率达到 99.39%, 优于消融变体及主流对比方法, 验证了其整体性能优势; 2. 对比实验表明, 特征提取与分类的双重引导具有互补效果, 可学习差分核能自动更新参数, 优于传统固定参数差分算子; 3. 消融实验表明, 去除 TG 模块会导致不同关节故障混淆, 去除 LD 模块会削弱模型区分正常与故障状态的能力, 去除 MGDC 模块对增益型故障的识别能力下降, 验证了各模块的

有效性。

关键词：液压机械臂；故障诊断；双重引导；梯度特征；
空洞卷积

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