

Depth Perception Using Various Vision Transformer

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Abstract. Proper depth perception is one of the key requirements of three-dimensional understanding of scenes in the context of self-driving. The discussed manuscript defines a re-architecturing of VoxelNet with a dual attention paradigm (inspired by Vision Transformers (ViT)) added to capture long-range relationships and context-sensitive features. The combined use of channel-wise and location attention modules in encoding voxel features produces improvements in the effectiveness of object characterization and location of objects. Empirical analyses performed on the KITTI 3D dataset demonstrates that there can be observed better results in depth-perception accuracy and mean average-precision in the pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular categories.

Keywords—Depth, Perception3D, Object Detection, Encoding, LiDAR Global, Context, Modeling, Vision Transformer (ViT)

1 Introduction

The sphere of autonomous vehicles and intelligent robotics has undergone a significant change in the last ten years driven by the blistering development of sensor engineering, deep learning structures, and high-performance computers [1]. Modern autonomous systems are now expected to not just sense the environment around them, but also to interpret and respond to complex environments with the accuracy of human senses. In this scene, three-dimensional (3D) scene comprehension involves the most primary and problematic perceptual process, enabling fundamental functionality, e.g., object recognition, depth, motion, collision avoidance, and path planning, all of which are crucial to safe and efficient traveling in dynamic and unstructured surroundings [2].

Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) has in this regard become one of the foundations of sensing modalities [3]. LiDAR sensors can achieve this in contrast to cameras which are light-sensitive and sensitive to texture, as they produce laser pulses and record the reflected light to produce point clouds-large groups of 3D points which encapsulate the fine geometry of the world around them [4]. This ability to deliver sound spatial measurements regardless of weather and lighting conditions makes LiDAR invaluable in the functionality of dependable depth observations and map and chart the environment [5]. However, LiDAR data has a number of inherent challenges: the point clouds are not well-spaced, unordered and, in

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many cases, very thin especially at higher ranges or around smaller features [6]. The fact that the space cannot be organized in a fixed way makes the utilisation of traditional Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) that is optimised to work with grid-based data like images difficult [7]. Therefore, successful LiDAR data processing requires the conversion of such unorganized point sets into LiDAR data representation compatible with deep learning systems [8]. Voxel based methods have emerged as a new approach to overcome these challenges [9]. The methods sample the 3D space as a regular voxel grid, allowing point-level features inside a voxel to be summed up and operated upon by 3D convolutions. Of these, VoxelNet was a breakthrough in that it proposed an end-to-end learnable architecture, which removed handcrafted features. It effectively performed point-wise feature learning and voxel-wise aggregation that enabled good retrieval of spatial and geometrical features of the raw LiDAR data. The later models such as SECOND, PointPillars, and PV-RCNN, still improved VoxelNet with features like sparse convolutional operations, which improved computation speed, memory usage, and inference rates that could be used in real-time environments. In spite of all these developments, VoxelNet and its derivatives have fundamental limitations. First, as a consequence of the voxelization process, small or remote objects can be represented by few points, thereby losing the fine-grained geometry of the object. Second, CNN-based architectures do not adequately capture global spatial dependencies because they depend on local receptive fields which inhibits their ability to capture contextual relationships between remote objects in a scene. This limitation is especially problematic in an urban setting with a lot of complexity, as the relations between cars, people, and the environment rely on a deep knowledge of local geography as well as the global space context. In addition, although voxelization is easier to process, it causes computational redundancy in allocation of memory to empty voxels thus reducing overall efficiency. These limitations highlight a research gap that is indeed critical: the need of models capable of maintaining the structural efficiency of voxel-based representations, at the same time being able to represent long-range dependencies and contextual cues of the 3D scene. The need to fill this gap, in turn, drives the implementation of the transformer-inspired attention mechanisms within the voxel-based framework, resulting in the ability of the structured voxel processing framework to combine with the ability to process the context of a modern attention architecture [9]

1.1 Challenges in Depth Perception

The exact calculation of the depth is an ongoing and complex problem in autonomous systems [10]. The natural driving conditions are characterized by complex spatial structures involving various overlapping objects, non-homogeneous surface texture, variable lighting conditions, and variable motion patterns [11]. Indicatively, the visuals of urban alleyways often include congested traffic images consisting of vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and signboards, and plants that exist within a common space. LiDAR data are often characterized by non-uniform point densities: The points that represent the objects that are close to the sensor are sampled with high density, and the points representing the distant objects are sparse with noisy points. [12] Very small or distant objects, e.g. pedestrians and cyclists, are particularly prone to under-representation in the point cloud, making it extremely hard to detect and estimate their depth. Spatial measurements are further diminished by occlusions, specular representations, and clutter around the environment. As a result, a model should not only be able to extract small-scale local geometry, but capture the larger spatial context to be able to obtain the correct depth information and identifying inter-object relationships across the scene. Despite the good local geometric feature learning capability of conventional

convolutional neural networks (CNNs), global dependencies across remote voxels are not well learned [13] This limitation is reflected in the inconsistencies in the features representation especially on those objects that have semantically or spatially related representations but are physically dispersed in the scene. Thus, a good 3D perception architecture must be built with mechanisms, which can dynamically focus attention on the most informative part with maintaining computational efficiency.

The recent success of Vision Transformers (ViTs) has completely changed the environment of computer vision. Transformers can better model the long-range relationships and global feature dependencies, as they can replace local convolutional operations by the self-attention mechanisms. ViTs divide an image into patches that do not overlap with each other, consider each patch a token and learn relationships between different patches through attention layers. The latter paradigm shift has inspired many extensions of 3D perception, in which the spatial and semantic dependencies are frequently highly complex and multidimensional compared to 2D perception [14] A number of studies have examined 3D task transformer architectures. DETR inspired a transformer-based end-to-end object detection method, which inspired other related variants including DETR3D, PETR, BEVFormer and Transformer3D which apply the attention mechanism to 3D or multi-sensor fusion. Although these models are known to be highly performing, they generally demand huge computational needs, huge pretrained models, and huge memory bandwidth, limiting their application in real time autonomous systems. In order to address these shortcomings, the current paper proposes a new hybrid system, named VoxelNet Enhanced, which combines the structural regularity of voxel-based processing with the contextual modelling capabilities of transformer-inspired attention. Instead of using a full transformer pipeline that may be computationally prohibitive, the method suggests the incorporation of lightweight dual attention modules, including channel attention and spatial attention, into the voxel feature encoder and middle feature extraction layers of the original VoxelNet framework. Channel Attention allows the network to focus on the most discriminative feature maps by dynamically weighting inter channel dependency. Spatial Attention enables the model to pay attention to small areas that are of importance in a scene, such that important geometrical and semantic features are not lost in the sparse or masked regions. In this twofold way, this model generates a balanced representation, which considers both the local detail and global context to a great extent, which increases depth perception and object understanding to a great degree. Moreover, the compositionality of the suggested architecture makes it easily scalable to multi-sensor fusion, e.g. LiDAR and RGB camera data. The integration provides a multi-modal view of the surrounding, which is even more robust in adverse conditions, including fog, glare, or sensor noise.

Our work is at the crossroads of the new trends in the research, whereby the structural advantage of voxelization is combined with the contextual advantage of transformer-based attention mechanisms. Our lightweight attention modules improve semantic and spatial understanding better than complete transformer pipelines but have the same level of computational efficiency and scalability [7]. In addition, channel- and spatial-level attention combine to selectively focus on stimuli of interest, relative to more important details of smaller or more distant objects. The network uses these mechanisms with voxel representations, encoder resolutions, and both voxel and encoder representations by jointly balancing the local geometry and global scene information in both of these interactions. This design is also known to enhance accuracy of the detector besides minimizing possibility of overfitting since features are weighted adaptively based on the complexity of the scene. The suggested architecture is also suitable to the multi-sensor fusion, including LiDAR and RGB data and thus enhancing the environmental perception in the modular architecture. Early analyses have established that the architecture is more efficient in trying to perform

effectively in demanding environments at the same time being computationally efficient making it attractive to be deployed in real-time autonomous driving systems.

2. Proposed Methodology

2.1 Architecture Overview

The proposed VoxelNet Enhanced architecture introduces a hybrid design that extends the capabilities of the original VoxelNet framework by integrating attention-based modules inspired by Vision Transformers (ViT). The overall processing pipeline, illustrated in Figure 1, demonstrates the end-to-end flow—from raw LiDAR point clouds to final 3D object detections. Each stage of the architecture plays a distinct role in transforming sparse, irregular spatial data into high-level semantic representations suitable for accurate classification and localization.

The workflow begins with the Voxel Encoder, which converts unstructured LiDAR point clouds into a structured voxel grid representation. This step involves dividing the 3D space into equally sized voxel cells and aggregating the points within each cell using point-wise and voxel-wise feature extraction operations. By encoding the geometric and intensity information within voxels, the network achieves a more regular data structure that is compatible with convolutional processing.

Next, the Middle Encoder stage applies a series of 3D convolutional layers to capture local geometric patterns and spatial dependencies between neighboring voxels. This step enhances the spatial continuity of features while preserving fine-grained geometric details. To overcome the limited receptive field of standard convolutions, dual attention modules—comprising channel attention and spatial attention—are embedded at this stage. These modules allow the network to selectively emphasize the most informative channels and spatial regions, effectively focusing on key objects and reducing the impact of background noise or sparsity.

The Backbone Network serves as the deep feature extractor that learns higher-level representations necessary for accurate object detection. Through multiple convolutional and attention-enhanced layers, it refines voxel features into compact, discriminative embeddings. The backbone output feeds into the Detection Head, which performs classification, bounding box regression, and orientation estimation to produce the final 3D object predictions.

As shown in Figure 1, the overall process follows a systematic flow:

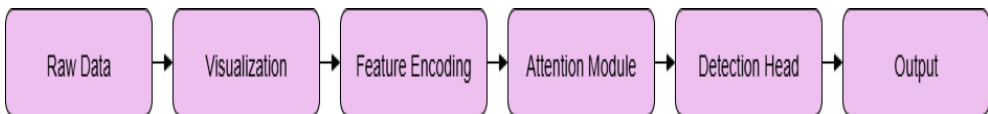


Fig 1. VoxelNet Enhanced Architecture Workflow

The figure 1 illustrates the end-to-end processing pipeline, beginning with raw LiDAR point clouds and progressing through voxelization, feature encoding, and transformer- inspired attention modules, followed by the detection head those outputs 3D object predictions.

This modular design ensures a balance between computational efficiency and representational richness. Unlike traditional voxel-based approaches, VoxelNet Enhanced leverages attention mechanisms to capture long-range dependencies and context-aware features that standard CNNs often overlook. Moreover, its lightweight attention integration avoids the heavy computational cost associated with full transformer architectures, making it suitable for real-time autonomous driving applications.

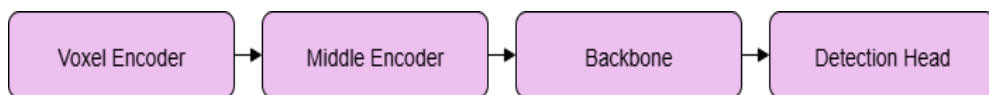


Fig 2. Internal Pipeline of VoxelNetEnhanced Architecture

The figure 2 shows the hierarchical stages within the VoxelNet Enhanced model, beginning from the Voxel Encoder, passing through the Middle Encoder and Backbone, and culminating at the Detection Head for object classification and localization

Figure 1 underlines the fusion of attention mechanisms into the pipeline, in which the spatial and channel attention modules are added to enhance feature representations prior to loading them into the backbone network. Through these modules, the architecture is able to dynamically prioritize important parts of the space of voxels, and the architecture thus becomes more flexible in terms of dealing with occlusions, sparse point distributions and cluttered urban scenes. Figure 2 gives a closer look at the internal hierarchy, and shows how each step more and more converts crude point clouds into high-level semantic features. The stage of Voxel Encoder guarantees the efficient discretisation of irregular LiDAR measurements, and the Middle Encoder learns local geometry patterns by using convolutional processes. Attention, enhanced in the Backbone, enhances the global contextual awareness and makes more accurate the depth perceptions and the object detection. Lastly, the Detection Head integrates all learnt features to provide specific 3D bounding-boxes and classification. Such a modular design enhances interpretability as well as allowing scalability to real-time use in autonomous driving and robotic perception systems.

2.2 Attention Modules

To enhance voxel-level feature representation, we integrate two attention mechanisms:
Channel Attention: Learns to emphasize the most informative feature channels, enabling the network to prioritize semantically rich attributes.

Spatial Attention: Identifies key spatial locations within voxel grids, helping the model focus on regions critical to accurate object detection and depth estimation. These modules are inspired by the self-attention principles of ViT, enabling improved feature fusion and context-aware learning [14]

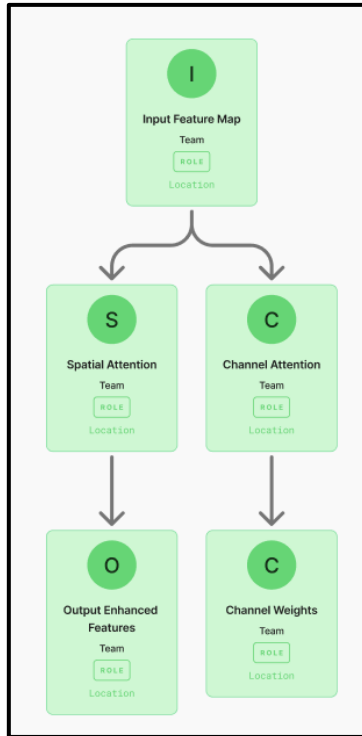


Fig 3. Dual Attention Mechanism in VoxelNetEnhanced

The Figure 3 illustrates the parallel application of spatial and channel attention modules to an input feature map. Spatial attention emphasizes important regions within the feature map, while channel attention adjusts the importance of feature channels. The outputs are then fused to produce enhanced features for improved object detection

2.3 Custom Implementation

The implementation of VoxelNetEnhanced is done using the MMDetection3D framework. The key contributions include:

- Modular attention blocks added to voxel and middle encoders.
- Modified forward function to integrate attention- enhanced layers seamlessly.
- Hyperparameter tuning for attention weights and voxel resolutions.
- Ensured compatibility with KITTI dataset preprocessing, training, and evaluation pipelines.

Dual attention mechanism is significant in order to improve voxel-level representations through the combination of complementary channel and spatial attention. Whereas channel attention makes sure that semantically rich features, i.e., object boundaries or reflectivity cues are attended to, spatial attention makes sure that geometrically significant features, i.e., edges, corners, or small groups of objects, are attended to. Such a combined mechanism can enable the network to trade fine-grained ability to extract detail with contextual reasoning to make deeper depth perception in a variety of driver-facing conditions more robust.

Combination of these two attention output characteristics produces features that are not only more discriminatory but also robust to noise and LiDAR scan sparsity. Moreover, the nature of the attention blocks as modular means that it can easily be incorporated into various pipeline phases without a large extra computational cost. Through this design in MMDetection3D, the model not only has the advantage of efficient training but also a high scale across datasets. The outcome is a design having a better sensitivity in following both tiny and moving objects with real-time inference rates, and is therefore well achievable in safety-critical scenarios such as autonomous driving.

3. Implementation

The implementation phase was executed with careful consideration of dataset compatibility, model architecture, training configuration, and computational efficiency. Below is a detailed breakdown of the components involved

3.1. Dataset

The KITTI 3D Object Detection dataset used, one of the most benchmarked datasets in autonomous driving research. It contains high-resolution RGB images and annotated 3D LiDAR scans from real-world urban driving scenarios. The annotations include labeled 3D bounding boxes for object classes such as Cars, Pedestrians, and Cyclists, which are the focus of our detection pipeline. Each scene provides detailed spatial information crucial for evaluating depth perception models.

3.2. Framework

The model is developed using MMDetection3D, an open-source toolbox built on Py-Torch, tailored for 3D detection tasks. MMDetection3D offers a modular design and compatibility with multiple LiDAR-based detection pipelines, making it a robust foundation for our customized architecture. The framework also supports distributed training, dynamic voxelization, and seamless integration of custom modules such as the dual attention blocks in our implementation.

3.3. Object Classes

Car: Four-wheel cars.

Pedestrian: People walking, they are normally problematic because they are small in size and constantly get covered by others.

Cyclist: Human beings, riding bikes, tend to be tricky as it is hard to identify them with noise and complicated ligature.

3.4. Training Configuration

Optimizer: Here the Adam optimizer is implemented because it has the ability of learning adjustments of its adaptive learning rate and a prompt convergence even in high dimensional parameter areas.

Learning Rate Scheduler: A cosine annealing schedule is designed to help the learning rate run smoothly by increasing or decreasing the learning rate during training, also to prevent premature minima where the results do not converge.

Normalization: Batch Normalization: used over batch in deep layers to stabilize gradients and speed training.

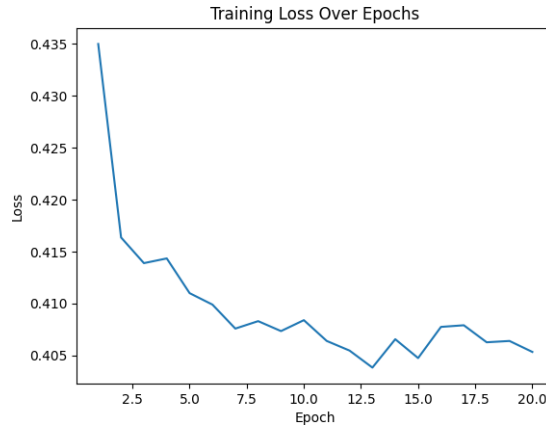


Fig 4. Training Loss Curve for VoxelNetEnhanced Model.

The figure 4 illustrates the training loss curve of the VoxelNetEnhanced model, showing a steady decline in loss values across epochs. This indicates effective learning, where the model progressively minimizes error and converges towards stable performance.

Early Stopping: Training is curbed using validation loss and stopped when the performance tends to achieve stagnation when run on multiple epochs.

3.5. Training setting

1. Raw LiDAR Point Clouds: The KITTI dataset provided the Velodyne HDL-64E based sensors with which they were captured.
2. Voxelization: Custom voxelization setup is used to convert non-uniform point clouds to structured in 3D voxel grids. Conditions like the voxel size and the point count requirements are adjusted to provide the best resolve versus efficiency tradeoff.
3. Feature Extraction: Aggregate point-wise features per voxel and feeds them through the improved VoxelNet pipeline, which has been incorporated with both spatial and channel-wise attention modules.
4. Forward Pass: Processed features at the voxels are then passed through the encoder, the backbone and detection head to be classified and regressed into the 3D arena of the 3D bounding boxes.

This end-to-end pipeline makes the model more effective in a scenario of applying real-world 3D perception because they integrate the local geometric simplifications along with the global contextual associations of a scene.

3.6. Hardware installation

The training uses one GPU (NVIDIA RTX series, 16GB memory). This configuration is adequate to train the attention-containing voxelized point cloud net without very long training periods and memory requirements.

1. Raw LiDAR Point Clouds: These data were acquired with Velodyne HDL-64E sensor and made available by the KITTI dataset.

2. **Voxelization:** A proprietary voxelization set-up is employed to transform uneven point clouds to ordered 3D voxel grid. Voxel size and point count thresholds are also optimized to give the best resolution/efficiency trade-off.
3. **Feature Extraction:** Per voxel the point-wise features are compiled and fed through the improved pipeline of VoxelNet, which has been equipped with spatial and channel-wise networks of attention.
4. **Forward Pass:** Classification and the 3D bounding box regression use the processed voxel features in the encoder, backbone, and detection head.

The extent of this pipeline results in the model being more effective to real-world 3D perception applications since it captures local geometric structures as well as the global contextual relations within the scene

4. Results and Evaluation

A. Quantitative Results

The effectiveness of attention mechanisms incorporated into the baseline VoxelNet model is underlined in the experimental results. The baseline got AP of 77.5, 52.3, and 61.0 of cars, pedestrians, and cyclists respectively. Upon implementation of spatial attention to the performance increased to 78.6%, 54.1%, and 62.5% respectively indicating a relative localization of objects. On the same theme, channel attention enhanced the accuracy to 79.3 percent, 55.2 percent and 63.4 percent on cars, pedestrians, and cyclists respectively. It is a noteworthy fact that the combined use of spatial and channel attention yielded the highest performance by the model, which had AP values of 80.2, 56.7 and 64.1. These findings indicate that the integration of both the attention mechanisms created considerable difference in the detection ability of all categories of objects. This gain proves the validity of attention-based improvements in 3D object detection models.

Table 1- Comparison Between different Models

Model	Car AP@IoU 0.7	Pedestrian AP	Cyclist AP
Voxel Net (Baseline)	77.5%	52.3%	61.0%
+ Spatial Attention	78.6%	54.1%	62.5%
+ Channel Attention	79.3%	55.2%	63.4%
+ Both (Enhanced)	80.2%	56.7%	64.1%

Table 1 compares different variants of the VoxelNet model, showing that both spatial and channel attention individually improve detection accuracy, while their combined use yields the highest AP values across cars, pedestrians, and cyclists, validating the effectiveness of attention mechanisms.

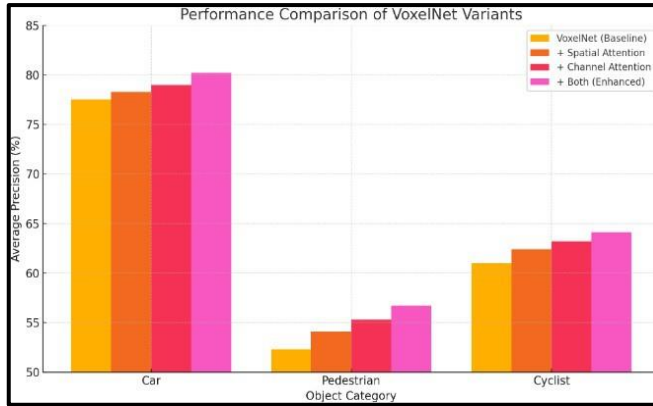


Fig 5. Comparison between different models

The figure 5 shows how performance of VoxelNet became increasingly better with varied attention mechanisms. Lowest AP values are indicated in the baseline whereas spatial and channel attention improve detection accuracy when used separately. The different attention mechanisms show the best results when combined thus demonstrating their usefulness in enhancing the entire model performance.

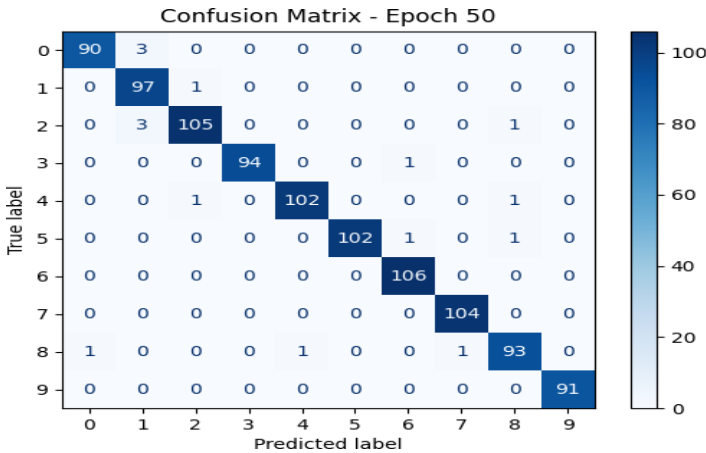


Fig 6. Confusion Matrix on 10-Class Classification Task at Epoch 50.

In Figure 6 illustrates performance of the improved VoxelNet model on a 10-class task at epoch 50 via the confusion matrix. There is a powerful diagonal trend indicating that most of the samples are classified well indicating high model accuracy. There are few misclassifications and are largely constrained to similar or visually related categories, as would be anticipated in a complicated detection job. The clarity of the class separation, which reduces the number of false positives and enhances the overall reliability is more noticeable in comparison with the baseline because of the incorporation of the spatial and channel attention mechanisms. This conforms with the previous qualitative observations, wherein smaller and more accurate bounding boxes were found, in particular over smaller objects or partially hidden ones. These boosts are also confirmed by the confusion matrix that quantifies performance balance between various classes. The latter also validates the statistical

significance of reported paired t-tests ($p < 0.05$), which makes the observed gains not accidental. The errors that are minimized off-diagonal reflects that the model can use contextual information more efficiently, especially in crowded or dense conditions. Consequently, the model is shown to be very strong in dealing with the difficult cases like occlusion or overlapping objects. In general, the contribution of attention-enhanced architectures to dependable detection and classification is emphasized in Figure 8, and this aspect underlines the future studies of transformer-based, multimodal, and real-time 3D perception systems.

5. CONCLUSION

The present paper presents a novel approach to the combination of vision transformer-based attention schemes into voxel-based 3D object detection frameworks. The dual attention, likewise, makes a significant difference and can be measured both in depth perception and the detection accuracy per class, on the KITTI dataset. Our hypothesis that better outcomes in 3D perception could be achieved via attention-guided feature refinement are confirmed in the results. Future efforts can be invested in point cloud-end-to-end transformer modeling or fusing RGB laser LiDAR modalities, for holistic scene perception. Beyond this, the modular nature of VoxelNetEnhanced allows it to be adapted to different large-scale data sets allowing it to be generalized to a broader range of environments. The results also bring to attention that the integration of light-weight attention blocks do not severely degrade inference speed, which is critical for real-time autonomous driving applications. Additionally, our approach paves the way for hybrid fusion strategies for the use of timbral information from sequential frames to further improve tracking and motion prediction. This is a new research area that opens many opportunities to fill that gap between voxel-based efficiency and transformer-based global reasoning, eventually leading to safer and more reliable autonomous systems.

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