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Exocentric To Egocentric Transfer For Action Recognition

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of the requirements for the degree of

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To my family for all the support.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Exocentric To Egocentric Transfer For Action Recognition

by

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Dr. Amit K. Roy-Chowdhury, Chairperson

Egocentric vision captures the scene from the point of the view of the camera wearer while exocentric vision captures the overall scene context. Jointly modelling ego and exo views is a crucial step towards developing next-generation AI agents. The community has regained interest in the field of egocentric vision. While, third-person view and first-person has been thoroughly investigated, very few works aim to study the both synchronously. Exocentric videos contain many relevant signals transferrable to egocentric videos. We propose a multimodal-LLM model that leverages large-scale exocentric information for the task of egocentric action recognition. This thesis also provides a broad overview of works combining both the egocentric and exocentric vision.

Contents

List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	x
1 Introduction	1
2 Datasets	5
3 Related work	8
3.0.1 Identification	8
3.0.2 Action Recognition	10
3.0.3 Tracking	10
3.0.4 Generation	11
3.0.5 Affordance	12
3.0.6 Exo-Ego Transfer	12
3.0.7 Joint ego-exo works	13
3.0.8 Miscellaneous applications	14
4 Methodology	18
4.0.1 Problem Definition	19
4.0.2 Network architecture	19
4.0.3 Experiments	20
4.0.4 Analysis	22
5 Conclusion and Future Works	24
Bibliography	25

List of Figures

1.1	Hand-object interactions in the 3rd person view(right) are useful for identifying the action from the 1st person viewpoint(left).	2
1.2	Ego-Exo Datasets and corresponding tasks. This figure illustrates the different Ego-Exo datasets in literature and compares them with respect to the associated benchmarks. Newly released Ego-Exo4D [44], EgoExoLearn [57], EgoExoFitness [76] constitute a large suite of novel tasks to further research in this arena.	4
3.1	Overview of the landscape of various joint egocentric and exocentric applications.	15
3.2	Ego and corresponding exo-view images taken from Ego2Top [6]	16
3.3	Top and side view-images taken from DMHA dataset released in [48]. Image taken from [48].	16
3.4	Example ego-exo frames taken from the CVMHT dataset released in [47]. Image taken from [47].	17
3.5	Pairs from simultaneously recorded Ego-Top and Ego-Side dataset. Image taken from [34].	17
3.6	Frames from the Demo2Vec paper	17
4.1	This presents a figure of our approach. Firstly, a frozen visual encoder extracts features. Then, a trainable video Q-former extracts k queries and project to LLM’s embedding space. Finally, the visual prompts and concatenated with the textual prompts and passed to the LLM.	18
4.2	Analyzing the qualitative results of our method on Ego4D.	23

List of Tables

2.1	Comparison of existing datasets across various parameters, arranged in a chronological order.	6
4.1	Comparison of our technique vs the existing state-of-the-art methods on Ego4D action recognition	21
4.2	Comparison of our technique vs the existing state-of-the-art methods on EPIC-Kitchens100 action recognition	22

Chapter 1

Introduction

Human beings perceive the world from multiple viewpoints. We watch Do-it-yourself videos to learn new skills. A bicycle repair video alternates between the ego (1st-person) and exo (3rd-person) viewpoints. An ego (close-up) view of the bicycle captures vital hand-object interactions and an exo (third-person) view captures the overall context in the environment. We are able to relate the object from 3rd-person to 1st person perspective. Being able to map skills to one's own body has been a well-studied problem in cognitive science [40, 94, 119]. Capturing video from both the **ego** and **exo** views is a vital frontier for AI to understand human activities. Widespread applications exist in augmented reality [113, 95] and robotics [64, 92, 116].

Despite the importance of multi-view learning, most efforts into video understanding have focused to only one view, 3rd-person (exocentric) viewpoint [127, 35, 20, 3, 4, 71] or 1st-person (egocentric) viewpoints [43] separately. While existing algorithms perform considerably well on 3rd-person settings [1], a significant gap exists in the egocentric



Figure 1.1: Hand-object interactions in the 3rd person view(right) are useful for identifying the action from the 1st person viewpoint(left).

settings [44, 24, 23].

Exocentric view contains many relevant cues for recognizing in the egocentric view. For example in Fig 1.1, the hand-object interaction of "cutting" in 3rd-person view can be useful to recognize in the 1st-person view.

Existing vision-language models [107, 61] trained on large amounts of 3rd person perspective contain many signals that can be transferable for egocentric tasks. Previous works like [75, 11] utilize simpler architectures to learn egocentric representations from 3rd-person data. VLMs are more capable of learning stronger representations.

The intention of this thesis is twofold:

- Propose an approach that leverages the exocentric signals embedded in VLMs for solving egocentric vision task.
- Provide a high-level overview of the various egocentric-exocentric learning tasks.

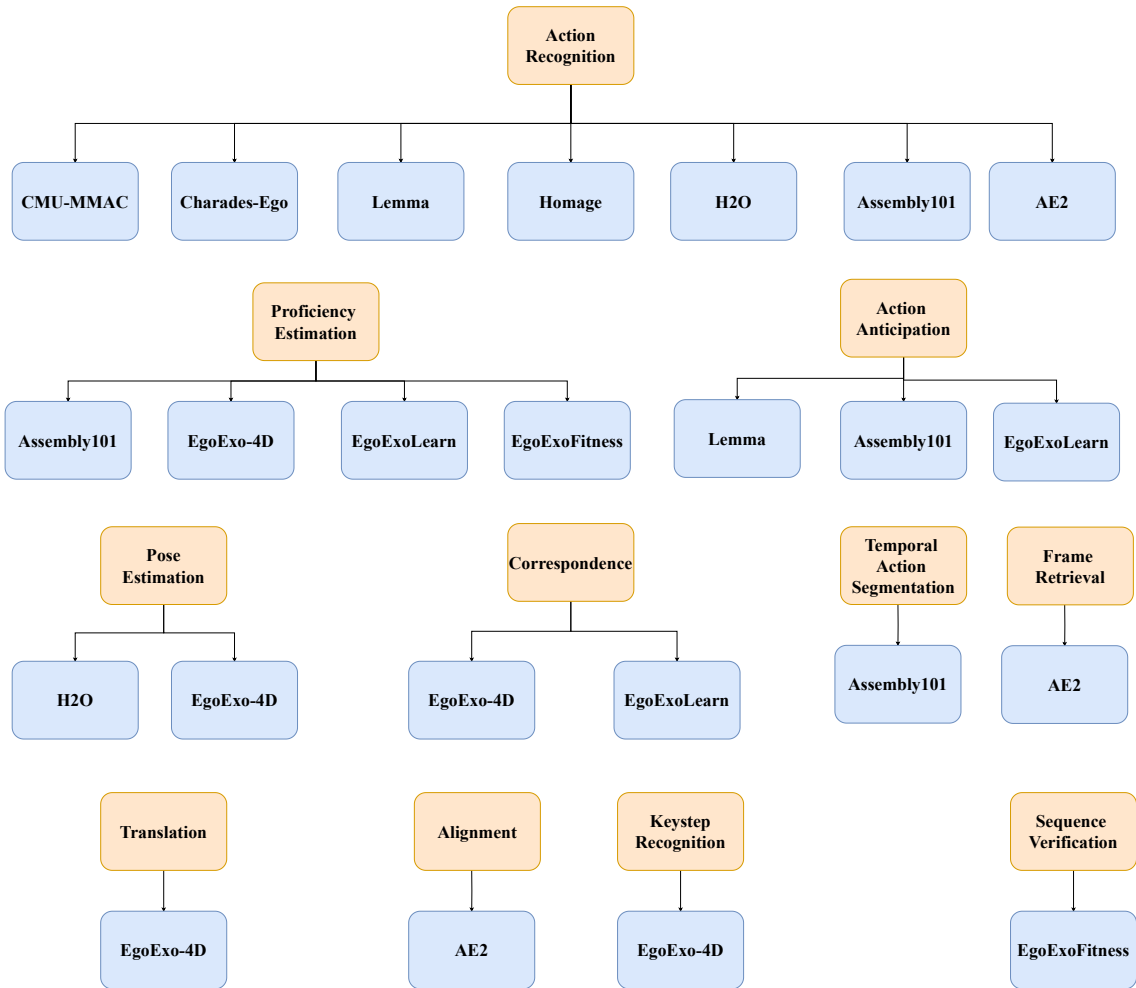


Figure 1.2: **Ego-Exo Datasets and corresponding tasks.** This figure illustrates the different Ego-Exo datasets in literature and compares them with respect to the associated benchmarks. Newly released Ego-Exo4D [44], EgoExoLearn [57], EgoExoFitness [76] constitute a large suite of novel tasks to further research in this arena.

Chapter 2

Datasets

Several datasets containing paired ego-exo views have been proposed in the literature [69, 70, 110, 122, 125]. "Mixed" ego-exo views have been covered by [89, 133, 160, 161, 146, 19, 22, 67, 145]. Zhang *et al.* [154] captures egocentric interactions in a 3D viewpoint. Xue *et al.*'s AE2 dataset [145] is sampled from multiple existing ego and exo datasets. These datasets have several shortcomings: lack of magnitude, weak synchronization and poor diversity. The release of two new large-scale datasets [44, 57, 76] attempts to bridge this gap. Refer Table 2.1 for an in-depth review.

The **CMU-MMAC dataset** [70] is one of the earliest dataset that captures ego and exo video. It is composed of 43 participants cooking 5 recipes in the kitchen setting. Multiple modalities like audio, video, accelerations, and motion capture are present in this dataset.

The **Charades-Ego dataset** [125] was one of the former large-scale joint multi-view dataset efforts containing 68.8 hours of first and third-person video. 112 actors hired

Table 2.1: Comparison of existing datasets across various parameters, arranged in a chronological order.

Dataset	Year Published	Hours	Num. action clips	Num. scenarios	Num. subjects	Num. verb classes	Num. noun classes	Num. action classes
CMU-MMAC [70]	2009	-	5	1	43	-	-	8
Charades-Ego [125]	2018	68.8	68536	15	112	33	36	157
Lemma [60]	2020	10.1	324	15	8	24	64	641
Homage [110]	2021	25.4	453	70	27	29	86	-
H2o [69]	2021	5	500	36	4	11	8	36
Assembly101 [122]	2022	513	4321	15	53	24	90	1380
AE2 [145]	2023	-	322	6	-	-	-	4
Ego-Exo4D [44]	2024	1286	5035	43	740	1481	2924	689
EgoExoLearn [57]	2024	120	747	8	-	95	254	39
EgoExo-Fitness [76]	2024	31	1248	1	49	-	-	76

by Amazon Mechanical Turk recorded 34 hours of scripted scenarios.

The **Lemma dataset** [60] is composed of multi-view and multi-agent daily-life activities. 3D skeletons and RGB-D are collected to give a broad perspective.

The **Homage dataset** [110] is a synchronized multi-view dataset consisting of 30 hours of ego-exo video from 27 participants performing household activities in the same environment. It is well annotated with both the hierarchical and atomic action-labels.

The **H2O dataset** [69] focuses on 3D egocentric object-level manipulations. It is composed of 3D hand-poses, 6D object poses, camera poses, object meshes and scene-point clouds. 4 different participants perform 36 unique actions in three unique environments.

The **Assembly101 dataset** [122] features non-scripted multi-step activities. 101 toy-vehicles are manipulated in 4321 video sequences for a total of 513 hours. It constitutes

1380 fine-grained and 202 coarse-grained action classes. **AssemblyHands** [99] is a subset of Assembly101 to study the challenging problem of 3D hand pose estimation and action classification.

The **AE2 dataset** [145] is one of the premier attempts to learn a view-invariant self-supervised embedding from unpaired ego and exo videos. To this end, they create a new benchmark, sampled from five public datasets [23, 70, 68, 69, 156], and a self-collected tennis dataset. It is composed of 322 clips.

The **Ego-Exo4D dataset** [44] is the largest multi-view dataset including egocentric view and the corresponding exocentric information. Moreover, it also offers multiple natural language descriptions including expert commentary, narrate-and-act descriptions and atomic action descriptions. It is rich in modalities like audio, IMU, video, depth, gaze, stereo, 3D environments, thermal IR, GPS, motion capture, 6DOF, barometer and magnetometer readings. 740 subjects shot 123 scenes across different cities. It releases new challenging benchmarks like keystone recognition, efficient action detection and proficiency estimation.

The **EgoExoLearn dataset** [57] is another concurrent large-scale ego-exo synchronized dataset. It contains 120 hours of demonstration activities recorded in the lab and daily-life settings. It is richly annotated with fine-grained captions. Unlike previous datasets, it releases benchmarks on cross-view action anticipation and proficiency estimation.

The **EgoExo-Fitness dataset** [76] was also concurrently released along with the previous two ego-exo datasets. While the previous datasets extensively explored daily-life activities, EgoExo-Fitness focuses exercise-related activities. It comes with a new set of benchmarks for cross-view sequence verification.

Chapter 3

Related work

Egocentric vision focuses on camera-wearer centric cues while exocentric vision focuses on a broader perspective of the subject in the context of the entire scene. Leveraging the complementary signals from both the viewpoints will enable us to learn human skill effectively.

Some early work has investigated the task of jointly relating egocentric and exocentric vision [5, 128]. In this section, we discuss important tasks jointly modelling vision from first-person and third-person perspective.

3.0.1 Identification

It is the task of matching a camera wearers in a egocentric video to an exocentric video. Lack of visibility in the egocentric video makes this task challenging. Being able to match a participant in both views is an important preliminary task for joint ego-exo learning. It is a well-researched problem. Ardeshir *et al.*[6, 7] is one of the first works that proposes a

graph-matching technique to solve this problem. Ardeshir *et al.*[9, 7] further propose a joint approach to tackle temporal alignment and person re-identification. Fig 3.2 shows some examples of this dataset. Similarly, Han *et al.* [50] propose a different matching function based on spatial distributions. Fan *et al.* [36] learns a joint-embedding space. The model proposed by Ardeshir *et al.* [10] extended to focus on temporal alignment. In Han *et al.* [51], a conditional random field is proposed to identify the subjects in different viewpoints. Xu *et al.* [144] perform simultaneous matching and segmentation of the subject across both the views.

While identification focuses on solely matching the camera wearer, re-identification aims to learn the associations between the different subjects present in the egocentric and exocentric views. Work by Ardeshir *et al.* [12] is one of the earliest approaches exploring the task of re-identification between the different views. To enable further research in multi-view video-based re-identification, Basaran *et al.*[18] release a novel multimodal dataset, consisting of around 176,000 detections. Han *et al.* [50] utilizes the spatial information such as the view-angle of the camera to perform the association. Han *et al.* [48] attempts to solve a challenging version of the problem by assuming limited appearance matching and different viewing angles in the ego and exo image. Example images from this dataset can be seen in 3.3. Han *et al.*[49] considers another challenging variant of this matching problem having minimal overlap of the field-of-view.

3.0.2 Action Recognition

Action Recognition is the task of identifying or assigning a category or multiple categories to the action performed by the subject in the video. The release of GoPro wearable cameras led to a large production of first-person videos. However, limited works have combined ego and exo views for identifying actions. The earliest attempt to recognize human activity across first and multiple third-person cameras was done in [128]. It presents a learnable weighted importance classification approach. Truong *et al.* [136] learns a geometric constraint to transfer knowledge between the multiple views. Rocha *et. al* [120] learns an invariant space, based on skeleton pose information. Huang *et al.* [56] extends to a multi-domain scenario, learning a holographic feature space based on both view-invariant and view-specific features. In Peng *et al.*[101], virtual features from first-person perspective are synthesized and combined to perform action recognition. Different from other works, Ramirez *et al.* [111] incorporates gaze information into the robot’s internal representation for improved imitation of human behaviour.

3.0.3 Tracking

Tracking is an important Computer Vision problem, where we estimate the global trajectories and match subjects across the video. Yang *et al.* [148] is one of the earliest works that jointly identifies and tracks the subjects across the first and third-person views. A deep neural network (DNN), robust to action and motion changes is used to generate the 3D trajectory. Han *et al.* [47] learns a spatio-temporal correspondence between the images of different viewpoints. 3.4 shows some sample frames released in their dataset [47].

In a follow-up work, Han *et al.* [?] treats the task as a joint optimization problem. Han *et al.*[45] extends the optimization approach for relating a single third-person view with multiple first-person view images. Recent work by DivoTrack [52] presents a new baseline for multi-view object tracking. Multi-view tracking has also gained importance in other areas like robotics [78].

3.0.4 Generation

In generation, we aim to synthesize an egocentric image, conditioned on an exocentric image and vice versa. Elfeki *et al.* [34] was the first landmark dataset for exo-ego synthesis and retrieval. A conditional GAN [91] is used to synthesize first-person images. Refer to Fig. 3.5 for example frames. Liu *et al.* [80] also utilize a variation of a GAN. Similarly, Tang *et al.* [132, 131] utilize semantic information to generate images in different views. Liu *et al.* [79] utilize a shared network between the ego-exo frames to aid generation. Liu *et al.* [81] synthesize egocentric videos by combining the semantic map with GANs. Recent work by Luo *et al.* [87] presents a diffusion-based technique [54] for exocentric to egocentric video synthesis. Different from all the other works, Luo *et al.* [86] uses action description and egocentric frames to synthesize a video from the third-person perspective. The new Ego-Exo4D dataset [44] constitutes a benchmark for synthesis.

A lot of progress has been made in a related problem of aerial view to ground view synthesis [117, 134, 130].

3.0.5 Affordance

Much attention has been drawn to affordance [41, 63, 14]. The objective is to understand the different possible actions that can be performed with an object. Luo *et al.* [84, 85] extracts affordance-level features from exocentric human-object interactions and transfers it to the egocentric view. Li *et. al* [73] extend the same work, but use a weakly-supervised technique. Chen *et al.* [21] extends affordance learning from videos using an attention-based network. Xu *et al.* [?] also uses a weakly-supervised technique leveraging cross-view knowledge. Recent work by Zhang *et al.* [157] integrates a self-explainable module to aid affordance learning. Yang *et al.* [147] presents a joint coarse and fine-grained feature extraction technique. Different from other techniques, Rai *et al.* [109] leverage VLM’s knowledge as an auxiliary mask for the task of grounding. Check Fig. 3.6 for images and corresponding affordance.

3.0.6 Exo-Ego Transfer

A vast amount of knowledge in the form of motion cues is embedded in exocentric videos that can be transferred to the egocentric domain. Ardeshir *et al.* [11] is a premier work that learns mappings between the ego-exo views. In Ardeshir *et al.* [8], the authors propose a two-stream view-specific architecture to adapt from exo to ego view. Ho *et al.* [53] utilizes a semi-supervised domain adaptation technique to adapt exocentric visual cues to egocentric videos. Xu *et al.* [141] uses a prompt-masking technique for transferring information for egocentric hand-object interaction. Different from previous approaches, Li *et al.* [75] proposes an improved pre-training approach to extract signals from exocentric

videos helpful for the egocentric domain. Ohkawa *et al.* [100] aids further adaptation by performing view-invariant pretraining and finetuning. Different from previous techniques, Quattrocchi *et al.* [106] proposes an adaptation technique for temporal action segmentation.

In Nishimura *et al.* [97], geometric transformation is used to tackle a novel problem of view-birdification (bird’s eye-view trajectory estimation) is computed from the egocentric movement. Qian *et al.* [105] is an extension to a more challenging problem of bird’s eye view estimation in the absence of proper calibration.

3.0.7 Joint ego-exo works

This section outlines works that aim to learn a joint ego-exo representation. Sigurdsson *et al.* [124] makes the first attempt to jointly relate first-person and third-person viewpoints. Yu *et al.* [150, 151] leverages a joint attention mechanism to extract a shared representation between the views. In Wang *et al.* [138], a sentence-bert language model [118] is utilized to semantically align the unpaired exocentric and egocentric videos. Xue *et al.* [145] became the first work to propose a self-supervised learning approach to learn a view-invariant representation. Zhao *et al.* [159] solves a novel task of identifying and segmenting the egocentric camera wearer in a third-person view.

3D egocentric pose estimation has also benefited from a joint ego-exo learning framework [27, 82]. A novel thermal image-based 3D hand-pose dataset has been released in ThermoHands [29]. Lu *et al.* [83] covers a scene-graph generation technique based on a self-attention mechanism between the ego and exo views. The authors of Wen *et al.* [139] present a solution combining 3rd person and 1st person images to predict the subject’s location in the 3rd person viewpoint. Jia *et al.* [62] extracts exocentric and egocentric

conversational signals to generate a scene-graph. Xu *et al.* [142] shows an improvement in egocentric captioning by retrieving semantically relevant 3rd person videos [15].

3.0.8 Miscellaneous applications

Jointly relating exocentric and egocentric vision has applications in Robotics and Virtual Reality. Kennedy *et al.* [66] illustrate the importance of combining egocentric and exocentric information for mapping. Multi-view visual feedback to the robots of the swarm can improve performance [115]. This has been corroborated in robotics manipulation as well [59]. Supervision from third-person videos have been well-adapted to egocentric vision in robotics [123, 17, 129]. A combination of hand and third-person perspective has been used in [55]. Young *et al.* [149] demonstrates the superior performance on the aerial telemanipulation task using egocentric-exocentric views. Abdullash *et al.* [2] synthesize third-person view from first-person view for enhanced teleoperation. Video captioning has also benefited from a joint ego-exo information [64].

Combining ego and exo views has been thoroughly researched in virtual reality [25, 90, 31]. Multiple works [42, 112, 152] demonstrate the possibility of using a mixed viewpoint space for collaboration. Soares *et al.* [126] proposes a novel cooperative virtual environment with fixed freedom of movement per user. Peschel *et al.* [102] illustrates the use-case of a joint ego-exo system for unmanned aerial systems. Automatic rendezvous and docking (ARD) also benefits from a joint view system [72]. Duncan *et al.* [30]’s work proposes a camera system to reconstruct embodied experiences in real-time.

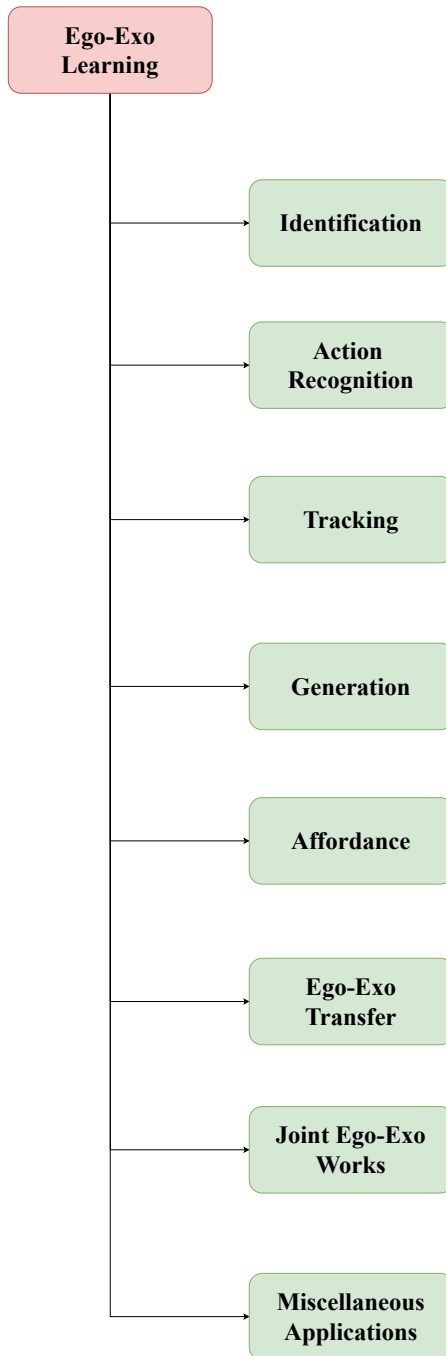


Figure 3.1: Overview of the landscape of various joint egocentric and exocentric applications.

Egocentric Views



Top View



Figure 3.2: Ego and corresponding exo-view images taken from Ego2Top [6]

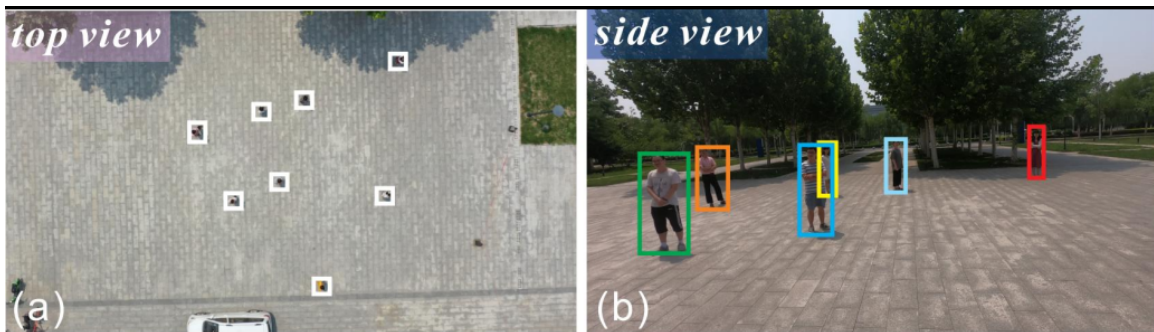


Figure 3.3: Top and side view-images taken from DMHA dataset released in [48]. Image taken from [48].

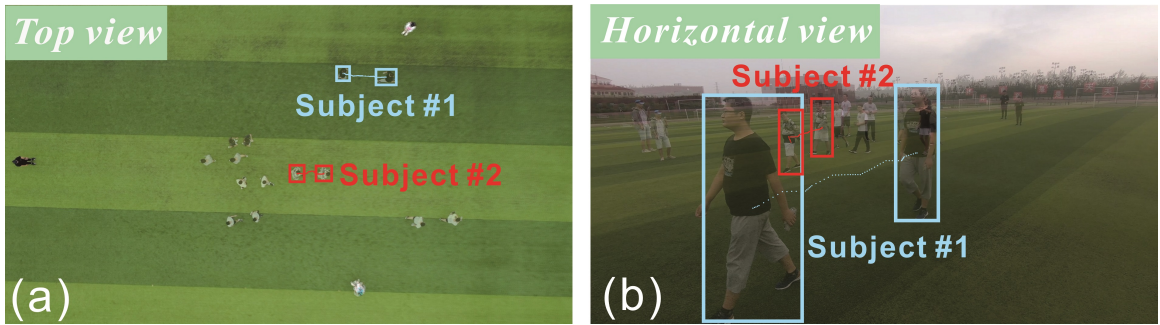


Figure 3.4: Example ego-exo frames taken from the CVMHT dataset released in [47]. Image taken from [47].



Figure 3.5: Pairs from simultaneously recorded Ego-Top and Ego-Side dataset. Image taken from [34].



Figure 3.6: Frames from the Demo2Vec paper

Chapter 4

Methodology

In this section, we describe our approach for recognizing egocentric actions using prior exocentric knowledge. We leverage the large-scale information encoded in vision-language models [107] and large language models [155, 135] for solving the task of egocentric action recognition. Our approach is illustrated in the figure 4.1.

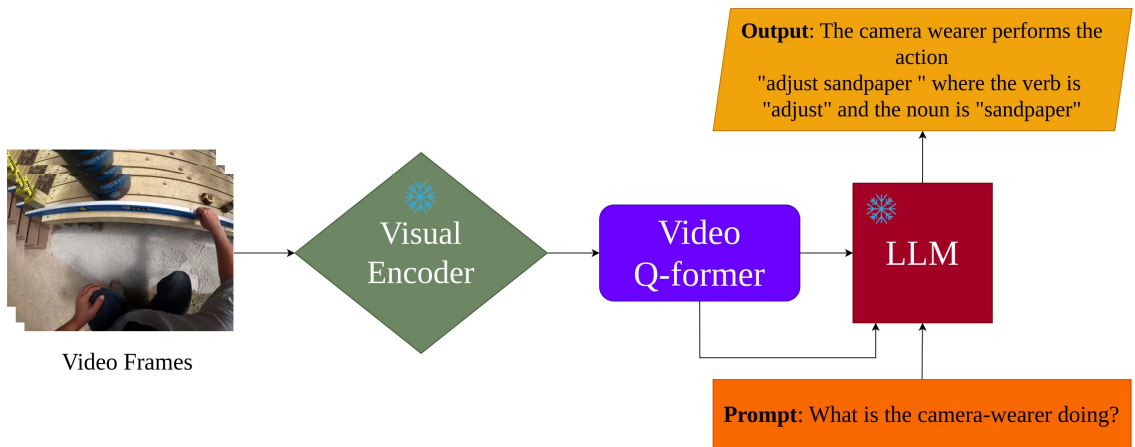


Figure 4.1: This presents a figure of our approach. Firstly, a frozen visual encoder extracts features. Then, a trainable video Q-former extracts k queries and project to LLM’s embedding space. Finally, the visual prompts and concatenated with the textual prompts and passed to the LLM.

4.0.1 Problem Definition

We describe the problem statement of egocentric action recognition. We follow the same approach as given in [24]. Formally, given a video clip A , we aim to classify to the action class, which is a tuple $C_a = \{(c_v, c_n)\}$, where $c_v \in C_v$ is the possible set of verbs and $c_n \in C_n$ is the possible set of nouns. For an accurate classification, we want to correctly predict both the verb and noun. Top-1 accuracy is used as a metric. A good survey of previous approaches can be found in Nunez *et. al* [98]. While previous approaches have achieved good verb-level accuracy, a significant gap exists in the noun-level and action-level accuracies.

4.0.2 Network architecture

Our architecture is based on the BLIP-2 architecture [74] and [153]. BLIP-2 proposes a novel and efficient training strategy, bootstrapping from a pretrained CLIP-based image encoder [107] and LLM. We use a hand-crafted prompt for the task of action recognition. It is a computationally efficient approach focusing on only training a lightweight Querying Transformer. It is pre-trained on a large-scale Internet-image dataset of 129M images, mostly composed of exocentric images. We hypothesize that exo-pre-trained VLM encodes useful signals that can be transferrable to egocentric images. Similar approaches are covered in ???. Our model consists of three major components: 1) a pretrained frozen visual encoder, 2) Lightweight Trainable Video Query-former and 3) Frozen LLM. We describe the components below in more detail.

- 1) **Visual encoder.** This is a ViT-L/14 CLIP-based image-encoder, a dark-green

block in the 4.1. We sample T frames from a video (usually chosen to be 8/16). They are preprocessed to a shape of (224×224) before passing into the image encoder. The last layer of the ViT is used, having shape $(P * T \times D)$, where P is the number of patches and D is the dimension of the image-encoder. The output of this layer is $V \in \mathbb{R}^{B \times K \times D}$, where K is the product of the number of patches across all the frames and B is the batch-size.

2) **Video Q-former**. It is an attention-based transformer [137] that generates a visual representation via self-attention between the shared layers. For a detailed overview, check the BLIP-2 paper by Li. *et. al* [74]. A fixed number of query tokens, t are learned. V is input to this layer and we get an output $Q \in \mathbb{R}^{B \times t \times D}$. We set t as 32 and the dimension D as 768.

3) **LLM**. We use a pre-trained, frozen LLM, OPT-175B [155] from Meta. LLMs encode commonsense knowledge that we can utilize for the task of action recognition. The previous layer’s input Q is projected to the LLM’s embedding space, $I \in \mathbb{R}^{B \times t \times D}$, where D is the LLM’s input-embedding dimension. The textual prompt ”What is the camera wearer doing?” is also converted to LLM’s embedding space. $J \in \mathbb{R}^{B \times N \times D}$, where N is the number of input ids obtained from the input text. We concatenate I and J and pass it to the LLM.

The model is end-to-end trained using a cross-entropy loss with the next-token prediction objective for the LLM. However, only the parameters of Video Q-former are trained.

4.0.3 Experiments

We provide a comprehensive overview to the various experiments that we performed and compare with the existing state-of-the art methodologies. We analyze the results

thoroughly and understand the gaps.

We conduct evaluations on the two largest egocentric action recognition datasets: Ego4D [43] and EPIC-Kitchens100[23]. The top-1 verb, noun and action accuracy is used for the comparison. Refer to Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for results.

Table 4.1: Comparison of our technique vs the existing state-of-the-art methods on Ego4D action recognition

Method	Prior Exo knowledge	Verb Acc.	Noun Acc.	Action Acc.
MViT [37]	✓	19.87	2.55	0.51
SlowFast [39]	✓	19.42	14.65	3.12
StillFast [108]	✓	19.12	19.41	4.06
OURS + full response	✓	24.56	37.62	10.88
OURS + action response	✓	24.74	37.1	11.52
EgoVLPv2 [104]	×	33.84	40.63	16.31
EgoVLP [77]	×	40.32	45.53	20.63

In the table 4.1, **OURS + full response** means that the LLM response is the entire sentence *The camera wearer is performing the action "wear shirt", where the verb is "wear" and "noun" is shirt* and the **OURS + action response** forces the LLM to predict *wear shirt*. We can see a slight improvement when we predict only the verb-noun pair rather than the entire sentence.

From the table 4.1, we can see that our technique outperforms other exo-to-ego transfer techniques. This is due to the large-scale information embedded in VLM and LLMs. However, we are still behind EgoVLP [77] and EgoVLPv2 [104], that are large-scale

Table 4.2: Comparison of our technique vs the existing state-of-the-art methods on EPIC-Kitchens100 action recognition

Method	Verb Acc.	Noun Acc.	Action Acc.
OURS + full response	24.86	34.68	12.8
TAdaFormer-L/14 [58]	71.7	64.1	51.8
M&M [140]	72	66.3	53.6
Avion [158]	73	65.4	54.4

egocentric pretrained models. We hypothesize that large-scale pretraining on egocentric data learns better egocentric cues for classification. Similarly, from table 4.2, we observe that Avion, a large-scale video pretrained model outperforms other approaches by a huge margin.

4.0.4 Analysis

We analyze the limitations behind our technique in this section. Some of the possible drawbacks are:

a) noun recognition. A huge drawback behind noun-based recognition is the difficulty to accurately predict nouns in the egocentric view. Since our model is trained on the objects captured from the third person view, detecting the same from the egocentric view is challenging. Additionally, challenges of occlusion and cluttered scene makes it difficult to accurately detect the objects. From (c) Figure 4.2, we can see that the ground-truth object **multimeter** is composed of many different parts and the model is unable to accurately

detect it.

b) verb recognition. The (a) Figure 4.2 shows that the model struggles to identify the ground-truth verb *cut* and is confused by the background noise.

c) action recognition. Predicting both the verb and noun exactly in the case of egocentric action recognition is very challenging. Due to the presence of the motorcycle in (b) of Figure 4.2, the model misses the hand-object interaction with the bucket.



Figure 4.2: Analyzing the qualitative results of our method on Ego4D.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Future Works

This thesis is an attempt to transfer exocentric knowledge for egocentric tasks. Large-scale exocentric pretrained VLMs contain relevant cues that can be transferrable to downstream egocentric tasks. In our work, we propose a computationally efficient model for the task of egocentric action recognition. While, we are able to outperform previous exo-to-ego transfer techniques for egocentric action recognition, we lag behind pure ego-to-ego methods. In the future work, we will focus on utilizing the paired ego-exo data present in the new datasets [44, 57, 76] and focus on learning hand-object centric cues during training.

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