SLPRNet: A 6D Object Pose Regression Network by Sample Learning

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Abstract: Visual grasping holds important implications for robot manipulation situations. As a core procedure in such grasping tasks, pose regression has attracted lots of research attention, among which point cloud based deep learning methods achieve relatively better result. The usual backbone of such network architectures includes sampling, grouping and feature extracting processes. We argue that common sampling techniques like Farthest Point Sampling(FPS), Random Sampling(RS) and Geometry Sampling(GS) hold potential defectiveness. So we devise a pre-posed network which aims at learning to sample the most suitable points in the whole point cloud for a downstream pose regression task and show its superiority comparing to the above-mentioned sampling methods. In conclusion, we propose a Sample Learning Pose Regression network (SLPRNet) to regress each instances pose in a standard grasping situation. Meanwhile, we build a point cloud dataset to train and test our network. In experiment, we reach an average precision(AP) up to 89.8% on dataset generated from Silane and an average distance(ADD) up to 91.0% on YCB. Real-world grasp experiments also verify the validity of our work.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the robot industry, grasping tasks are really common and important. Given different kinds of instances in a scene, robots are required to pick the exact target out. During this process, the executor should have accurate information as input, which contains targets translation and rotation information basically. Standard translation information is represented by a 3 dimensional vector including *x y* and *z* values in cartesian space, while rotation information contains three Euler angles $\alpha \beta$ and γ which also form a 3 dimensional vector. Combining these two vectors together, a pose regression task mainly aims to get the 6Dof representation of a particular instance.

Previous approaches usually treat this regression problem as a feature matching problem (et al., 2012; Deng et al., 2010), where an original template is required to search matching features. But these methods are not accurate enough when applied to cluttered and occluded scenes. Therefore, recent works always turn to deep learning method (Xiang et al., 2018) and treat this problem in an end-to-end man-

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ner. The work (Xiang et al., 2018) takes RGB images as input and uses convolutional neural networks to solve the pose regression problem. However, with the growth of the input scale, especially in 3D scenes, RGB-based methods show their deficiency. RGB images are always divided into regular pixels in grid space, which could not reflect the actual relationship among points in 3D space. Thus, point cloud based deep leaning methods (Qi et al., 2017a) are proposed recently, which outperform RGB-based ones to a considerable degree, particularly in 3D scenes.

In point cloud based method, limited by the computing power, the usual treatment to point cloud **P** is to sample some representative points constituting a subset S first. The most common used approaches include Random Sampling(RS) and Farthest Point Sampling(FPS) (Moenning and Dodgson, 2003). FPS holds the idea that taking into account the structure of a point cloud, points that are far away with each other may represent the point cloud better comparing with those points gathering in a small area. Many deep learning methods use FPS to handle their original point cloud (Qi et al., 2017a). However, it is obvious that different sampled subsets should contribute differently to a particular task. Thus, draw on the idea of (Dovrat et al., 2019), we design a sample network to choose a best subset for pose regression task using

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deep learning method.

The SLPRNet mainly contains two parts: the first part is a sample-learning network which takes raw point cloud \mathbf{P} as input and outputs a particular subset \mathbf{S} for pose regression task; the second part is a pose-regression network which takes \mathbf{S} as input and outputs the exact 6Dof pose of each instance in the original point cloud \mathbf{P} . Architecture of SLPRNet is shown in Fig.1. During this process, we also create a new dataset based on Silane and YCB to validate our performance, which contains the 6Dof pose information of the object that each point belongs to.

In summary, this work mainly contributes in the following aspects:

(a) We devise a sample-learning network to sample the raw point cloud to a best-suitable subset for pose regression task;

(b) We propose a pose-regression network to regress the 6Dof pose of each instance from a point cloud. Combining with the sample-learning network, we achieve a better pose regression result—an AP up to 89.8% and ADD up to 91.0%—than current nonlearning sampling methods;

(c) We create a synthetic dataset on which our network can be trained and validated, which is also publicly available at Kaggle: https://www.kaggle.com/shawnzhengzhang/slprnetdataset.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Sec II reviews related works about pose regression and sampling on point clouds. Sec III introduces the structure of our network and method in detail. Sec IV shows some experiment results of our method. And Sec V includes the conclusion and future work.

2 RELATED WORK

In this section, we mainly review some typical work on pose regression and point cloud sampling.

2.1 Pose Regression

Typically, pose regression is based on point cloud registration, which aims to find a spatial transformation that aligns two point sets. Rusu (R. B. Rusu and Beetz, 2009) proposed a coarse registration approach SAC-IA, which exploits hand-crafted local features FPFH for point pair matching and uses RANSAC for pose hypotheses. Coarse alignment can then be refined by ICP based methods (Besl and McKay, 1992). Drost (Deng et al., 2010) proposed to use Point Pair Features for building a hash table as model global descriptors and retrieve poses from scene point cloud via voting scheme, which is then extended by (Hinterstoisser et al., 2016) for better performance under noise and occlusion.

In recent years, with the progress of deep learning, network based pose regression methods becomes more popular. Among these methods, point cloud data instead of RGB or RGB-D data has gradually dominated the area thanks to the pioneer work of Pointnet (Qi et al., 2017a) and Pointnet++ (Qi et al., 2017b). Pointnet (Qi et al., 2017a) can extract features from raw point cloud directly using symmetry function such as max pooling. And Pointnet++ (Qi et al., 2017b) porposed the classical hierachical architecture including sampling layer, grouping layer and feature extracting layer, in which way furthermore improve the network performance. Many works handling object detection or segmentation use Pointnet++ as their backbone and achieve impressive effect, such as (Aoki et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020; Z et al., 2019).

The work (Qi et al., 2019) is a more representative work. Kaiming He combines Pointnet and hough voting (Gall and Lempitsky, 2009) together and gets 3D bounding boxes from the raw point cloud, which contains the pose information of an instance. Work (Qi et al., 2019) verifies the effectiveness of hough voting in pose regression tasks. Our pose-regression network also uses the thought of hough voting, but to be more specific, we execute hough voting to each of the sampled points and get better results.

2.2 Point Cloud Sampling

Several techniques for point cloud sampling have been proposed in the literature. The most commonly used sampling method (Moenning and Dodgson, 2003) Farthest Point Sampling(FPS) was adopted in the work of Moenning as a means to simplify point clouds of geometric shapes, in a uniform as well as feature-sensitive manner. Recently, Chen (Chen et al., 2018) employed graph-based filters to extract per point features. Points that preserve specific information are likely to be selected by their sampling strategy. The desired information is assumed to be beneficial to a subsequent application.

Other point cloud sampling methods include Random Sampling(RS) and Geometry Sampling(GS). RS is a rather direct and simple method which just randomly samples required number of points from a raw point cloud without considering the relative position of the sampled points. Intutively, RS holds very low computational complexity, whereas sacrifices the sampling quality. GS takes the geometry information of the point cloud into account and uses the angle be-



Figure 1: Architecture of SLPRNet. SLPRNet contains two parts: (a) sample-learning network which learns to sample a suitable subset of input point cloud to a fixed size and (b) pose-regression network. which takes sampled point cloud as input and regresses the pose of target instance. SLPRNet is trained on our proposed dataset and generats well in real-world applacations in test stage. \oplus represents a weighted sum as Eq. (11).

tween normals of neighber points as the approximate curvature. By comparing these curvatures with a preset threshhold, geometry regions and non-geometry regions are seprated. In each region, a different sample ratio is employed. As a result, more points will be sampled in regions with richer geometry information, thus the sampled subset preserves higher quality than uniform sampling methods (*e.g.* RS and FPS).

However, the above-mentioned sampling methods do not consider the objective of the following task. Dovrat first proposed the thought of learning-based sampling method (Dovrat et al., 2019), which optimizes the sampled subsets for a downstream task. In this paper, we design a sampling network following Dovrats idea.

3 APPROACH

In this section, we mainly discuss the mathematical details and the concrete structure of our SLPRNet.

Specifically, SLPRNet is consisted by two parts: sample-learning network and pose-regression network. In this section, we describe our work in the following manner: sub-section III-A describes the sample-learning network; sub-section III-B describes the pose-regression network; sub-section III-C introduces how we generate the dataset used for our pose regression task.

Table 1: Architecture of sample-learning network.

	NO. of Layer	Layer Description	Output Size and Feature
1	1-4	1×1 convs(bn, relu)	n×1024
	5	max pooling	1×1024
	6-9	deconvs(bn, relu)	k×96
	10-13	fully connected	k×3

3.1 Sample-learning Network

To find a suitable subset in a given point cloud to perform a downstream task (here it means the pose regression task), we can define the problem as follows:

Given a point cloud $\mathbf{P} = \{p_i \in \mathbb{R}^3, i = 1, 2, \dots, n\}$, a sample size $k \le n$ and a task network *T*, find a subset \mathbf{S}^* of *k* points that minimizes the task networks objective function *f*:

$$S^* = \arg\min f(T(S)), S \in P, |S| = k \le n$$
(1)

The architecture of the proposed sample-learning network is inpired by Pointnet (Qi et al., 2017a). The input points undergo a set of 1×1 convolution layers, resulting in a per point feature vector. Then, a symmetric feature-wise max pooling operation is used to obtain a global feature vector. After this, deconvolutional layers are used to decode the feature vector to a suitable size. Finally, we use several fully connected layers to get the output: a generated point set **S**. Table 1 shows the details of sample-learning network architecture.

During training, we define the loss function of sample-learning network as Eq.(2). Here weights in L_{sl} will be given in experiment implementation detail

section. And items in L_{sl} are illustrated in the next 3 equations. L_a and L_w keep the points in **S** close to those in **P** in average and worst cases respectively, while L_s keeps the points in **S** well spread among **P**.

$$L_{sl} = L_a + \gamma L_w + (\eta + \sigma |S|)L_s$$
⁽²⁾

$$L_a = \frac{1}{|S|} \sum_{s \in S} \min_{p \in P} \|s - p\|_2^2$$
(3)

$$L_{w} = \max_{s \in S} \min_{p \in P} \|s - p\|_{2}^{2}$$
(4)

$$L_{s} = \frac{1}{|P|} \sum_{p \in P} \min_{s \in S} \|s - p\|_{2}^{2}$$
(5)

Through this network, a point set **S** is obtained from point set **P** in reference stage. But it is not guaranteed that the point set **S** is strictly one of the subsets of the original point set **P**, for including this condition will change the loss function into a discrete form which is difficult for the network to train. So we perform a matching stage by Earth Mover's Distance(EMD) between point set **S** and **P** so as to generate a *real sub-set* **S**^{*} of **P** which is further applied to a downstream task.

3.2 Pose-regression Network

The proposed pose-regression network takes Pointnet++ (Qi et al., 2017b) as its backbone. It first feeds a sampled point set S of N_s points through a feedforward network for feature extraction. And then Pointnet++ (Qi et al., 2017b) is capable for extracting both global and local features from point set S. The output feature F_e is the size of $N_s \times N_e$, in which each row represents the high dimensional features of each point. After acquiring the feature F_e , we use MLP to further obtain three different metrics: semantic segmentation, transformation regression and visibility prediction. Corresponding to each metric, we design three kind of losses which are aggregated together as the final loss of the pose-regression network. The over-all architecture of pose-regression network is depicted in Fig.2.

Semantic Segmentation Loss. Semantic segmentation is vital in cluttered scenes where multiple types of objects exits. The purpose of semantic segmentation is to perform classification for each point. We pass extracted features F_e of size $N_s \times N_e$ through an MLP and produce the semantic prediction of size $N_s \times N_c$, where N_c is the number of different object classes. This semantic prediction indicates the type of object to which each point belongs, and we denote it as S_e . Each element $S_e(i, j)$ represents the probability that *ith* point belongs to object of class *j*. The semantic segmentation loss L_{se} is the sum of the cross entropy soft-max loss between predicted S_e and ground truth labels. After getting the semantic segmentation result, we concatenate S_e to F_e to form feature F_{se} based on a simple idea that semantic label may be beneficial for other learning tasks such as transformation regression.

Transformation Regression Loss. We use feature F_{se} as input, applying two separate MLPs to regress center position and rotation separately. Here, to ensure a translation invariance, for each point p, we regress the relative coordinate between p and the center position of its corresponding object. And we use Euler angle to represent rotation due to its convenience. Thus, a transform τ can be formulated by combining these two parts. For a rigid body, τ corresponds to a unique pose P, and P can be represented in Euclidean space as a finite set of points R_P at most 12 dimensions as work (Bregier et al., 2018) illustrates. Also, to obtain a loss function with relavant to the pose of rigid bodies, we should define the distance between two poses in pose sapce. Thanks to the work (Bregier et al., 2018) which proposed a method to measure the distance between different poses in both symmetry and non-symmetry situation, we can build our tranformation regression loss L_{tr} as Eq. (6) where $R(P_{pred})$ represents the prediction pose and $R(P_{gt})$ represents the ground truth pose. For readers who are interested in the concrete mathematical expression that *dist* represents, please refer to (Bregier et al., 2018) for we quote it without modification.

$$L_{tr} = \sum_{S} dist(R(P_{pred}, R(P_{gt})))$$
(6)

Visibility Loss. Visibility is a common problem in grasping tasks. Always, low visible objects also suffer a low possibility to be grasped, thus they are not the focus targets when executing detection and grasping. Let N_i denotes the number of points of the instance to which ith point belongs and N_{max} denotes the number of point of instance with most points in the scene. In this manner, the visibility of the *ith* point can be defined simply as follows:

$$V_i = \frac{N_i}{N_{max}} \tag{7}$$

And the visibility loss L_v could naturally be written as:

$$L_{v} = \sum_{S} \left\| V_{i}^{pred} - V_{i}^{gt} \right\|_{2}^{2} \tag{8}$$

Total Loss of Pose-regression Network. To introduce visibility effect to tranformation regression



Figure 2: Architecture of Pose-regression Network. \bigcirc represents the operation of Eq. (9). \oplus represents a weighted sum as Eq. (10). \otimes represents concatenation.

branch, loss L_{tr} can be modified with V_i as Eq. (9).

$$L_{tr} = \sum_{S} V_i^{gt} \times dist(R(P_{pred}, R(P_{gt})))$$
(9)

In this way, we assign a higher transformation regression loss to those objects with higher visibility. In this manner, our network can focus more on those instances that are lying on the top of the box, and as a result improve the average accuracy. To conclude, after defining the three specific losses as above, we can finally define the total loss of our pose-regression network in a weighted summation manner as

$$L_{pr} = L_{se} + \alpha L_{tr} + \beta L_{\nu} \tag{10}$$

Now, we have introduced the two parts of our network in details. But to make our whole network an end-to-end solution, it is necessary to combine these two parts together. Remember that the goal of our sample-learning network is to optimize the point sampling result corresponding to a specific downstream task, which is the pose regression task here, we further add a wighted L_{pr} to L_{sl} to form the loss of SLPRNet as Eq.(11) shows.

$$L_{SLPR} = L_{sl} + \phi L_{pr} \tag{11}$$

3.3 Generating Dataset

We mainly use the physics engine Bullet to simulate different instances randomly dropping into a bin and use Blender to perform scene rendering. Taking the result poses of different instances generated by Bullet as input, Blender can produce RGB-D images, which are furthermore converted into point cloud. More details on how we generate the dataset can be found on https://www.kaggle.com/shawnzhengzhang/slprnetdataset.

4 EVALUATION

In this section, we present some experiment results of our proposed SLPRNet.

Section IV-A gives the implementation details in our experiment and the metric we use to evaluate the network. Section IV-B compares the average precision(AP) with other state-of-the-art methods. The result shows that SLPRNet outperforms previous methods to some extent. Section IV-C discusses the effect of sample-learning network to emphasis the importance of suitable sampling derived by auto-learning method. And in section IV-D we conduct a realworld grasp task to demonstrate the effectiveness of our work.

4.1 Implementation Details and Metric

Implementation Details. We evaluate our network on two datasets: Silane dataset and YCB dataset. Silane dataset does not provide training data for deep learning based approaches, so we choose five objects from Silane dataset(object_4e, bunny, pepper, tless-20 and candlestick) to generate synthetic training data of our own as section III-C illustrates. As for YCB dataset, we directly perform section III-C (c) to the RGB-D images it provides. During training reference, we set N_e to 128 and use a batch-size of 32. The network is prototyped with Tensorflow 1.3 with Nvidia GTX 2080Ti GPU on a Ubuntu 16.04 system. Training the whole network on our synthetic dataset takes about 14 hours. The hyper-parameters mentioned earlier in the article are listed in Table 2 (including dataset generation hyper-parameters which are described in detail on

Table 2: Hyper-parameters in network foundation and dataset generation.

Parameter	Value	Meaning
box_lenght	60cm	length of containing box
box_width	60cm	width of containing box
box_height	30cm	height of containing box
min_obj_num	5	minimum object number dropped into box
max_ojb_num	45	maximum object number dropped into box
sim_round	100	rounds when simulating per-object
num_point	16384	number of points sampled from depth image to point cloud
αβ	51	wights in pose-regression network loss
γήσ	110.5	wights in sample-learning network loss
φ.	0.3	wight when constructing whole network loss

https://www.kaggle.com/shawnzhengzhang/slprnetdataset).

Metric. Performance of pose regression is measured by average precision(AP) on Silane dataset, which consists in area under the precision-recall curve, given the goal of retrieving instances with relative complete appearance. Appearance completeness is parameterized by occlusion rate, here we take 50% as threshold. A pose hypothesis is considered as a true positive if its pose distance to ground-truth is smaller than 0.1 times the diameter of the smallest bounding sphere. On YCB dataset, we naturally use ADD(for non-symmetric objects) and ADD-S(for symmetric objects) metric as PoseCNN (Xiang et al., 2018) proposed. To calculate the ADD or ADD-S metric with respect to a specific object in YCB, we simply calculate the mean value among the scores of the same object in different scenes.

4.2 **Pose Regression Result**

Table 3 summarizes the AP scores of different methods applied to our synthetic dataset based on Silane. And Table 4 summarizes the ADD or ADD-S scores of SLPRNet, PoseCNN (Xiang et al., 2018) and some 3D coordinate based methods (Brachmann et al., 2014; Brachmann et al., 2016; Michel et al., 2017) on YCB dataset. It is obvious that our work outperforms the referred non-learning methods by a large margin(Linemod and PPF). This is reasonable for deep learning methods naturally hold superiority. It is worth noting that our work also achieves better AP scores than existing deep learning based approaches(Sock's and PPRnet) which validates the effectiveness of SLPRNet. Our pose-regression network applies similar processing pipline with PPRnet but is more powerful according to the experiment. We argue that this mainly results from the samplelearning network which is capable to sample a more suitable point set for pose regression task. This will be discussed in another experiment shown in section IV-C.

Table 3: AP scores of different methods on Silane dataset.

method	AP					
method	object_4e	bunny	pepper	tless-20	candlestick	
Lienmod (et al., 2012)	0.23	0.39	0.04	0.25	0.38	
Linemod+ (Aldoma et al., 2012)	0.26	0.45	0.03	0.31	0.49	
PPF (Deng et al., 2010)	0.30	0.29	0.06	0.20	0.16	
PPF+ (Aldoma et al., 2012)	0.35	0.37	0.12	0.23	0.22	
Sock et al. (J. Sock and Kim, 2018)	0.62	0.74	0.43	-	0.64	
PPRnet+ICP (Z et al., 2019)	0.85	0.89	0.84	0.85	0.95	
Ours+ICP	0.90	0.90	0.89	0.88	0.90	

Table 4: ADD(-S) scores of different methods on YCB dataset.

method	AD	D	ADD-S		
method	banana	mug	bowl	large_clamp	
3D coordinate+ICP (Michel et al., 2017)	0.74	0.67	0.80	0.75	
PoseCNN+ICP (Xiang et al., 2018)	0.92	0.81	0.78	0.75	
Ours+ICP	0.90	0.92	0.92	0.90	

Note that in experiments above, we all perform iterative closest point(ICP) algorithm after the mentioned methods get the 6Dof pose.

4.3 Discussion on Sample Learning

PPRnet (Z et al., 2019) follows Pointnet++ (Qi et al., 2017b) structure, which contains sampling, grouping and feature extracting layers. In sampling stage, farthest point sampling(FPS) is adopted. In section IV-B, we have shown that our work outperforms PPRnet (Z et al., 2019). To demenstrate that this mainly benefits from the proposed sample-learning network, we conducted another experiment. First, we trained our pose-regression network on an oject_4e single-class-object dataset with different number of points(by modifying parameter: *num_point*) sampled by FPS, RS, GS, and sample-learing network respectively. And in test stage, we fed pose-regression network with a point cloud sampled to the same size as that during training to get the predicted 6Dof object pose. AP scores are summarized in Table 5. And Fig.4 is a more intutive presentation. As the sampled point cloud gets sparser, our method not only holds the best AP score, but also keeps it decrease in a relatively gentler manner comparing to other methods.

RS can not guarantee the sampled points spread well in the whole point cloud, thus underperforms when the sampled point sets are sparse. GS holds some superiority when adopted on detection or classication tasks where sampling is taken on the object, because in such occastions geometry primitives on object are very essantial. However, when we should sample points from a whole scene, the motivation of GS is hardly to come into effect. FPS is a widely used technique in point cloud sampling, and many works have verify the validity of the algorithm. However, we can also see a significant decline in pose re-

num_point	AP			
num_point	RS	FPS	GS	sample-learning network
16384	0.84	0.85	0.83	0.90
8192	0.84	0.85	0.82	0.89
4096	0.82	0.80	0.79	0.86
2048	0.75	0.78	0.76	0.82
1024	0.67	0.72	0.70	0.79
512	0.42	0.56	0.50	0.65

Table 5: AP scores with different sampling methods and scales on object_4e.



Figure 3: Performance of Different Methods Applied on Multi-scale Point Cloud.

gression precision when the sampled point sets turn sparser. This is reasonable since FPS tends to sample points that are far away from each other without considering some representative points whose relationship may help to regress the poses to a considerable degree. This is what the sample-learning network solves. By automatically learning which points contribute to the regression task most, sample-learning network succeed to counteract the influence of information loss caused by small scale sampling. As a result, we can search for a balance between regression precision and sampling scale, which will significantly influence training efficiency and calculating pressure.

4.4 Real-world Grasp Task

We conduct a grasp task in real world to show SL-PRNet could correctly regress the 6Dof pose of target objects in a scattered scene which is shown in Fig.5. The grasp executer is a Robotiq 2-fingered manipulator connected by a fixed joint to a 6Dof robotic arm UR5. We capture the scenes using a Kinect V2 camera into RGB-D images which are transferred into point cloud as input of SLPRNet. Output object poses are then performed transformation from camera coordinate to world coordinate and the *ikfast* inverse kinetic algorithm is adopted to calculate the six joint



Figure 4: Real-word Grasping Experiment. (a) our experiment platform. (b) point cloud captured by kinect V2. (c) regressed pose of target objects(object_4e). (d) UR5 perfroms grasping.

angles of UR5. Finally, we use RRT^* to plan an executable obstacal-free path for performing a grasp by UR5. The above-mentioned procedures are first simulated in ROS and then transferred into real movement of UR5 through Moveit!. Experiment shows that our pipeline is able to pick the target instances with a high success rate.

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5 CONCLUSIONS

In this work, we proposed a novel architecture, SL-PRNet, to accomplish pose regression task with input scene information in point cloud data format. The sampling process in most other networks to achieve this goal is replaced from FPS to an auto-learning framework. In this way, we find the performance is lifted in many aspects including precision, times cost and resistance to sparse distribution of input point cloud. At meantime, we generate a publicly available synthetic dataset in which each point is labled by the 6Dof pose of the object it belongs to. Real-world experiment is conducted to verify the effectiveness of the proposed work. In the future, we will (a) keep to update our dataset and (b) search for a probability to simplify our network to a more lightweight manner.

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