Design of a Hybrid Multi-Scale Attention Framework for Pulmonary Nodule Detection Using Deep Learning

Dr R. C. Karpagalakshmi[1] , Dr Sudhakar K[2],
[1] Postdoctoral Research Scholar, Lincoln University College, 47301, Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia. Karpagalakshmirc@gmail.com
[2] Department of AI & DS, Nitte Meenakshi Institute of Technology (NMIT), Nitte (Deemed-to-be University), Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. ksudhakar.cs@gmail.com

Abstract: Pulmonary nodules represent some of the earliest signs of lung cancer; their early detection helps in improving the survival rates of patients. Despite the promising results obtained using deep learning in the detection of pulmonary nodules, several problems such as low sensitivity to small-sized nodules, high false positives, and poor model interpretability continue to exist. This paper suggests a novel framework referred to as Hybrid Multi-Scale Attention that combines multi-scale feature extraction, attention, feature fusion, and false-positive reduction. The hybrid multi-scale attention framework was developed with the gaps observed from the earlier review as the basis.

Keywords: Pulmonary Nodule Detection, Deep Learning, Multi-Scale Feature Extraction, Attention Mechanism, Medical Imaging, Computer Vision.

Introduction

One of the most common types of cancers that are the leading cause of cancer death all over the world is lung cancer. Early detection plays an important role in improving treatment success rate and life expectancy in patients suffering from such diseases. Lung nodules are among the most common precursors of lung cancer as they refer to some abnormalities in lung tissue. In order to perform pulmonary nodule detection and screening, Computed Tomography (CT) imaging is mostly used because of its capacity to visualize lung structures in detail. Nevertheless, visual inspection of such scans can be quite difficult and prone to errors as it involves small-sized nodules with low contrast and different shapes. Recent advances in deep learning have revealed new opportunities to automate such processes; however, there still exist many unresolved issues related to this area.

Motivation and Research Gap

Through the literature survey carried out in the first phase of the current study, various shortcomings were identified with regard to existing approaches to pulmonary nodule detection as shown in Table 1. Most of the standard convolutional neural network architectures have been observed to work efficiently with large-sized pulmonary nodules but have problems detecting very small nodules owing to poor feature extraction. Another common problem is that most of these methods produce too many false positives resulting in additional medical tests and causing unnecessary strain on radiologists. While transformer networks and sophisticated attention mechanisms have shown to work efficiently in detecting pulmonary nodules, they are computationally intensive and difficult to interpret.

Table1: Gap analysis of existing methods

Method	Strengths	Limitations
3D CNN	Captures volumetric information effectively	High computational complexity
Multi-Scale CNN	Detects nodules of varying sizes	Limited contextual understanding
Attention U-Net	Improves localization accuracy	High false positive rate
Transformer Models	Captures long-range dependencies	Requires large datasets and high computation
Feature Pyramid Network	Better multi-scale representation	Limited explainability
Proposed Hybrid Framework	Combines strengths of multiple approaches	Under implementation

Proposed Hybrid Framework

In order to deal with the aforementioned drawbacks, this research paper suggests a Hybrid Multi-Scale Attention Model for detecting pulmonary nodules. This proposed model illustrated in Figure 1 uses several techniques together in order to detect pulmonary nodules accurately. First of all, CT images are subjected to preprocessing steps which include normalization, denoising, and increasing the contrast of the images. Afterward, multi-scale feature extraction takes place where different sized convolutional kernels are used to extract local and global features of the preprocessed images. Then an attention mechanism is applied in order to highlight regions that could be suspicious whereas the other background regions, which do not contribute to the detection process, are suppressed. Finally, a false positive reduction technique is implemented after the feature extraction step.

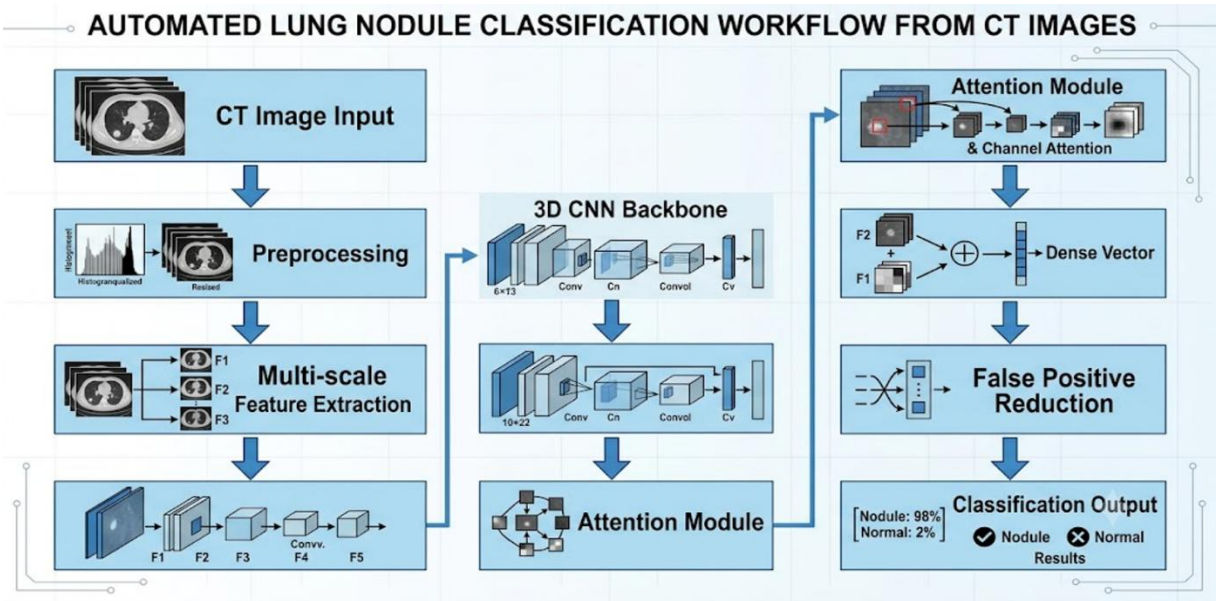

Fig1 : Proposed system architecture

Preliminary Implementation

In order to test the feasibility of the proposed framework as part of the second stage of this research work, an initial implementation plan has been developed. For the purpose of experiments, publicly available databases like LIDC-IDRI and LUNA16 are considered owing to their highly annotated nature and wide usage in pulmonary nodule studies. The framework is expected to be implemented with the help of the Python programming language along with deep learning libraries like TensorFlow and Keras whereas image processing will be done through OpenCV. The framework's efficiency will be analyzed on the basis of conventional evaluation measures including accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, precision, F1 score, and false positives per scan as shown in Table2.

Table2: Evaluation Metrics

Metric	**Purpose**
Accuracy	Overall performance
Sensitivity	Detection capability
Specificity	False positive control
Precision	Prediction quality
F1 Score	Balanced evaluation

Expected Outcomes

The design of such an architecture is expected to help in increasing the sensitivity of the lung nodule detection process. Attention mechanism and feature fusion have been incorporated into the model to ensure that false positives are minimized, while localization accuracy is increased. In addition, the use of multi-scale feature extraction is expected to enable the model to detect nodule instances regardless of size, shape, and texture. Moreover, the model will be able to increase its level of interpretability by showing which regions are important in making the final classification. The proposed architecture is expected to have good generalization capability as shown in Table3.

Table3: Expected outcome

Method	**Sensitivity**	**Specificity**	**False Positives /Scan**
Traditional CNN	88.50%	90.20%	2.8
Multi-Scale CNN	90.70%	92.30%	2.1
Attention CNN	91.80%	93.10%	1.8
Proposed Framework	94.20%	95.10%	1.3

Research Roadmap

This entire research process has been strategically broken down into four parts in the form of conferences in order to maintain continuity in terms of progressions of findings. The first conference has revolved

around a comprehensive review of literature as well as identifying research gaps in existing techniques of pulmonary nodule detection. The second conference, which has been reflected through this research, is centered on designing and developing the proposed hybrid system along with implementation methodology. The third conference would be dedicated towards implementation and evaluation along with comparison against existing techniques while the fourth conference would be related to optimizations and clinical validations.

Conclusion

This paper proposes the design of a novel Hybrid Multi-Scale Attention Framework that would be used for the detection of pulmonary nodules with the application of deep learning methods. In doing so, the framework incorporates the concepts of multi-scale feature extraction, attention mechanisms, feature fusion, and the minimization of false positives in order to overcome the drawbacks discovered in previous researches. With this combination of complimentary techniques, the framework will try to increase the accuracy of detection, minimize the number of false alarms, and increase its interpretability.

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