Multiple Knowledge-Enhanced Interactive Graph Network for Multimodal Conversational Emotion Recognition

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Abstract

Multimodal Emotion Recognition in Conversations (ERC) aims to identify emotions in conversational videos. Current efforts focus on modeling both context-sensitive and speakersensitive dependencies and multimodal fusion. Despite the progress, models in Multimodal ERC (MERC) still struggle due to a lack of CommonSense Knowledge (CSK). In contrast, models in textual ERC typically employ CSK to enhance emotion inference. However, in multimodal scenarios, relying solely on textual CSK while neglecting visual CSK may hinder the understanding of visual emotional cues. To address this, we introduce a novel approach called Multiple Knowledge Enhanced Interactive Graph Network (MKE-IGN) to integrate multiple knowledge, such as textual and visual CSK, into the edge representations, thereby facilitating the modeling of relations between utterances and different types of CSK. Furthermore, considering that irrelevant CSK might be retained as noise, MKE-IGN adaptively selects this CSK guided by the mood-congruent effect and refines it based on contexts. Experimental results show that MKE-IGN outperforms stateof-the-art methods on two popular datasets.

1 Introduction

Emotion recognition in conversations (ERC) is challenging due to its dynamic and spontaneous nature, as individuals express various emotions (Zheng et al., 2023). Recently, ERC has garnered substantial interest because of its valuable applications in recommendation systems (Zou et al., 2022) and dialogue generation (Zhu et al., 2022; Saha et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2023).

Traditional ERC paradigms primarily focus on the textual modality and typically require modeling both context-sensitive and speaker-sensitive dependencies (Lian et al., 2021; Tu et al., 2023a;



Figure 1: An example highlights the limitation of relying solely on textual if-then CSK for comprehending visual emotional cues in multimodal scenarios.

Wen et al., 2023b). Unfortunately, these methods struggle to replicate human-like understanding due to challenges in interpreting emotions expressed through Common Sense Knowledge (CSK) (Tu et al., 2023d). Recent research has addressed this limitation by modeling knowledge-sensitive dependencies into ERC models (Zhong and Di Wang, 2019; Tu et al., 2023b; Yang et al., 2023b,c) using knowledge bases such as ConceptNet (Speer et al., 2017), SenticNet (Cambria et al., 2022), and if-then CSK generated by the pre-trained commonsense transformer (COMET) (Bosselut et al., 2019). COMET is trained on ATOMIC (Sap et al., 2019), a collection of everyday inferential if-then commonsense knowledge organized through textual descriptions. This body of knowledge has significantly advanced the field of ERC.

Despite the progress, textual cues prove insufficient for understanding deep emotions (Hazarika et al., 2018). Multimodal ERC (MERC), incorporating audio and visual cues alongside the text, is gaining increasing research attention (Yang et al., 2023a). Existing MERC methods focus on aggregation-based fusion through concatenation (Majumder et al., 2019; Ghosal et al., 2020b; Tu et al., 2022b), attention network (Shi and Huang, 2023; Yang et al., 2023a), and heterogeneous graphbased fusion (Yang et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2022;

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Chen et al., 2023). However, these methods often rely on future utterances to predict the current one's emotion, which is impractical in real-world scenarios. More importantly, integration of CSK in MERC has been overlooked. Relying solely on textual if-then CSK can impede understanding of visual emotional cues, as it fails to incorporate visually contextualized information. For instance, visual if-then CSK can infer from an image that individuals moving a sofa will likely handle it with care later, a nuance that textual if-then CSK misses (see Fig. 1). Moreover, incorporating diverse types of ifthen CSK inevitably introduces irrelevant CSK as noise (Tu et al., 2022a; Jiang et al., 2022; Tu et al., 2023c) in MERC. Yet, research on the selection of multiple CSK still remains unexplored.

To address the above issues, we propose an innovative solution, the Multiple Knowledge-Enhanced Interactive Graph Network (MKE-IGN), which employs a directed graph structure, eliminating the introduction of future utterances. It integrates multiple CSK (visual and textual if-then CSK) from VisualCOMET (Park et al., 2020) and COMET as the edge representations to enhance utterance understanding. This compensates for the deficiency in textual CSK regarding the comprehension of visual emotional clues. Especially, compared to incorporating knowledge into node representations, the edge representations in MKE-IGN enable the modeling of relations between utterances and various types of if-then CSK through diverse edge types. Furthermore, to reduce noise from irrelevant CSK, MKE-IGN leverages LassoNet (Lemhadri et al., 2021) to adaptively select the most emotionally relevant CSK from the generated candidate set, guided by the mood-congruent effect. Considering that ifthen CSK is often regarded as a fixed, gradient-less representation, limiting its adaptability across various conversational contexts, we refine it based on contexts during training. Our main contributions can be summarized as follows:

- Pioneering the exploration of multiple if-then CSK in the MERC task.
- Introducing MKE-IGN, a novel solution that integrates multiple CSK into edge representations, surpassing state-of-the-art methods.
- Proposing an adaptive approach for the knowledge selection guided by the mood-congruent effect and the knowledge refinement based on contextual cues in multimodal scenarios.

2 Related Work

Emotion Recognition in Conversations

Context-sensitive Models: The emotion generation theory (Gross and Barrett, 2011) indicates the importance of contextual information for emotion identification. RNN-based models (Poria et al., 2017) are often used to model context dependencies. However, they are unable to capture the distinction between historical utterances (Lian et al., 2021) when modeling context. To solve this problem, most works began to focus on the memory network (Hazarika et al., 2018; Jiao et al., 2020). In addition, the role of participants in ERC is also important to the speaker's emotional state (Wen et al., 2023a). To model the speaker-sensitive dependency, researchers have a greater emphasis on speaker-specific models (Kim and Vossen, 2021), graph-based models (Nie et al., 2021), and so on. For example, Majumder et al. (2019) utilized three GRUs to track global context, speaker state, and emotional state in conversations. Guo et al. (2024) introduced a speaker-aware network to extract emotional cues by simulating cognitive conversational dynamics. Shen et al. (2021) and Lian et al. (2023) employed a graph-based model to model self- and inter-speaker dependencies.

Knowledge-sensitive Models: Although the above works have achieved respectable performance, they are not able to work like a human because of the lack of commonsense knowledge (Zhong and Di Wang, 2019). Recent research has addressed this limitation by modeling knowledge-sensitive dependencies into ERC models (Ghosal et al., 2020a; Fu et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2022; Tu et al., 2023b; Yang et al., 2023b,c) using knowledge bases such as ConceptNet (Speer et al., 2017), SenticNet (Cambria et al., 2022), and if-then CSK generated by pre-trained commonsense transformers (COMET) (Bosselut et al., 2019), which has significantly advanced the field of ERC. For instance, Fu et al. (2021) proposed a graph-based model to model the knowledge-sensitive dependencies by incorporating concepts retrieved from ConceptNet (Speer et al., 2017). Yang et al. (2023c) introduced if-then CSK into the conversation model through customized architectures, enhancing its emotional reasoning capabilities.

Multimodal Fusion: As multi-modality draws nearer to real-world application scenarios, MERC has been garnering growing research attention in recent years (Shi and Huang, 2023). Multimodal



Figure 2: Illustration of MKE-IGN framework. The mathematical symbols align with the formulas in the paper text. The notation i_Q_j represents the edge between nodes i and j, with its edge representation denoted as Q of node i.

fusion in MERC aims to combine information from different modalities, including aggregation-based methods like concatenation (Hazarika et al., 2018; Tu et al., 2022b) and attention networks (Rahman et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). However, aggregation-based fusion methods overlook the complex interactions between modalities, resulting in insufficient utilization of contextual information (Hu et al., 2022). Recently, researchers have explored graph-based fusion methods to capture intra- and inter-modal interactive information (Hu et al., 2021b, 2022; Zhang and Li, 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

3 Methodology

In this section, we provide a detailed introduction to each component of the proposed MKE-IGN, as depicted in Fig. 2.

3.1 Task Definition

Let $\mathbf{U} = [\mathbf{u}_1, ..., \mathbf{u}_N]$ be a conversation uttered by $\mathbf{M} \geq 2$ speakers, consisting of N utterances. Each utterance \mathbf{u}_i is represented by a triplet $\mathbf{u}_i = {\mathbf{u}_i^a, \mathbf{u}_i^v, \mathbf{u}_i^t}$, where $\mathbf{u}_i^a \in \mathbb{R}^{d_a}, \mathbf{u}_i^v \in \mathbb{R}^{d_v}$, and $\mathbf{u}_i^t \in \mathbb{R}^{d_t}$ denote the acoustic, visual, and text features of \mathbf{u}_i , respectively. Multimodal ERC aims to predict the emotion label of each utterance \mathbf{u}_i .

3.2 Feature Representation

Utterance Feature Extraction¹: Following Chen et al. (2023), we employ layer normalization and average operation on the last four hidden layers of the Roberta Large model (Liu et al., 2019) to obtain textual features. For extracting acoustic and visual features, we utilize OpenSmile (Schuller et al., 2011), an audio feature extraction toolkit, and a pre-trained DenseNet model (Huang et al., 2017) as per previous works (Hu et al., 2021b, 2022; Wen et al., 2023a; Jiang et al., 2023).

Knowledge Feature Extraction²: We employ the COMET model (Bosselut et al., 2019) to extract textual if-then CSK features, which is trained on the ATOMIC dataset (Sap et al., 2019) and categorizes if-then CSK into 9 relation types: *xWant*, *xIntent*, *xAttr*, *xNeed*, *xEffect*, *xReact*, *oWant*, *oEffect*, *oReact*. We utilize VisualCOMET (Park et al., 2020) trained on 1.4 million descriptions from 59,000 images. It extracts visual if-then CSK features categorized into 3 relation types: *Intent*, *before*, *after* using images and event descriptions obtained via Minigpt-4 (Zhu et al., 2023).

In textual if-then CSK, *xIntent* refers to the previous intent of speakers (wanted to do before) (Li et al., 2021), similar to the relation of *before* in visual if-then CSK. Thus, we avoid using them because they create dependencies between future utterances and the current utterance.

3.3 Utterance-level Encoder

Following (Hu et al., 2022), we employ a bidirectional GRU $\overleftarrow{\mathbf{GRU}}_c \in \mathbb{R}^{d_h \times d_t}$ to aggregate the contextual information for textual modality. The contextual representation $\widehat{\mathbf{m}}_i^t = \overleftarrow{\mathbf{GRU}}_c(\mathbf{u}_i^t, \widehat{\mathbf{h}}_{i-1}^t)$, where $\widehat{\mathbf{h}}_{i-1}^t$ is the hidden state. For acoustic and visual modality, we employ a fully connected layer $\mathbf{FC} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_h \times d_a/v}$ to obtain a consistent fixed-size representation \mathbf{m}_i^{η} , where $\eta \in \{a, v\}$.

3.4 Multiple Knowledge-Enhanced Interactive Graph Network

To integrate if-then CSK and its inherent relationships, we construct a directed graph where vari-

¹Please refer to the Appendix A for more details.

²Please refer to Table. 5 in the Appendix for definitions of the relations in textual and visual if-then CSK.

ous types of these CSK serve as heterogeneous edges, representing different relations of connections. Here are the specific details.

3.4.1 Interactive Graph Network

Graph Structure: We suggest a multimodal directed graph $\mathbf{G} = \{\nu, \delta, \mathcal{R}, \mathcal{A}\}$ to prevent future utterances from influencing the emotional inference of the current utterance. $\mathbf{m}_i^{\xi} \in \nu$ is the graph node of the *i*-th uttreance under modality ξ . $\mathbf{r} \in \mathcal{R}$ is the edge type. $\alpha_{(i,j)}^{\xi} \in \mathcal{A}$ is the representation of the edge $\mathbf{e}_{(i,j)}^{\xi} = (\mathbf{m}_i^{\xi}, \mathbf{r}, \mathbf{m}_j^{\xi}) \in \delta$, where $\forall i \leq j$.

Relations: Textual if-then CSK $\alpha_{(i,j)}^t$ is divided into two categories: $\mathbf{X} = \{xWant, xAttr, xNeed, xEf$ *fect, xReact* $\} \in \mathbb{R}^{5d_c}$ of speakers and $\mathbf{O} = \{oWant, oEffect, oReact\} \in \mathbb{R}^{3d_c}$ of listeners. The relation of $\mathbf{u}_i^t \to \mathbf{u}_j^t$ is denoted as \mathbf{X} of node i if they have the same speaker, otherwise as \mathbf{O} of node i.

For the extracted **visual if-then CSK** $\alpha_{(i,j)}^v$, they are also divided into two categories: $\mathbf{P}=\{Intent\} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_c}$ denotes the current speaker's intent, while $\mathbf{Q}=\{after\} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_c}$ represents the subsequent intent of the speaker. The relation of $\mathbf{u}_i^v \to \mathbf{u}_j^v$ is denoted as \mathbf{P} of node *i* if i = j, and as \mathbf{Q} of node *i* if i < j.

Since the acoustic modality *a* lacks if-then CSK, we use a fully connected layer $\mathbf{FC}_{\mathbf{c}}$ to combine nodes *i* and *j* generating $\pi \in \mathbb{R}^{d_c}$ for the alternative formulation of the **acoustic if-then CSK** $\alpha^a_{(i,j)}$. Therefore, the relation of $\mathbf{u}^a_i \to \mathbf{u}^a_j$ can be denoted as π of node *i* if $i \leq j$.

Additionally, the relation of cross-modal connections $\mathbf{u}_{j}^{\xi_{1}} \rightarrow \mathbf{u}_{j}^{\xi_{2}}$ is represented by a zero-filled vector $\mathbb{I} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_{c}}$, where $\xi_{1}, \xi_{2} \in \{a, v, t\}$ and $\xi_{1} \neq \xi_{2}$. **Node Representation Update:** We employ an \mathbf{N}_{ℓ} layer graph transformer (Yun et al., 2019) to propagate interactive information, updating the node representation $\mathbf{h}_{(\ell,j)}^{\xi} \in \mathbf{R}^{d_{h}}$ at each layer ℓ .

$$\mathbf{h}^{\xi}_{(\ell+1,j)} = (1 - \mathbf{g}^{\xi}_{j}) \left(\sum_{i \in \mathcal{N}} \mathbf{\Gamma}^{\Xi}_{(i,j)} \mathbf{z}^{\Xi}_{i} \right) + \mathbf{g}^{\xi}_{i} \mathbf{W}^{\xi}_{h} \mathbf{h}^{\xi}_{(\ell,j)}$$
(1)

where \mathcal{N} denotes neighbor node indices of node j. \mathbf{z}_i^{Ξ} is the passed message involving the selected $\alpha_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\Xi}$, denoted as $\mathbf{c}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\Xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_h}$. Usually, $\xi = \Xi$, but not necessarily when i = j. \mathbf{g}_j^{ξ} is the gate for the residual connections. $\Gamma_{(i,j)}^{\Xi}$ is the attention

score for gathering information.

$$\mathbf{z}_{i}^{\Xi} = \mathbf{F}\mathbf{C}_{z}^{\Xi}(\mathbf{h}_{(\ell,i)}^{\Xi}) + \mathbf{W}_{z}^{\Xi} \mathbf{c}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\Xi} \qquad (2)$$
$$\mathbf{\Gamma}_{(i,j)}^{\Xi} = Softmax \Big(\mathbf{F}\mathbf{C}_{q}^{\xi}(\mathbf{h}_{(\ell,j)}^{\xi}) \Big) \Big(\mathbf{F}\mathbf{C}_{k}^{\Xi}(\mathbf{h}_{(\ell,i)}^{\Xi}) + \mathbf{W}_{h}^{\Xi} \mathbf{c}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\Xi} \Big) / \sqrt{d_{head}} \Big)$$
$$(3)$$

where $\mathbf{W}_{z}^{\Xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_{head} \times d_{h}}$ and $\mathbf{W}_{h}^{\Xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_{head} \times d_{h}}$ are the trainable weights. \mathbf{FC}_{q}^{ξ} and \mathbf{FC}_{k}^{Ξ} are employed for projection to obtain sets of queries and keys. And \mathbf{FC}_{z}^{Ξ} is a fully connected layer that maps from $\mathbb{R}^{d_{h}}$ to $\mathbb{R}^{d_{head}}$. Following (Li et al., 2021), we concatenate outputs from all heads to obtain \mathbf{o}_{j}^{ξ} . Therefore, $\mathbf{g}_{j}^{\xi} = sigmoid(\mathbf{W}_{o}^{\mathbf{T}}[\mathbf{h}_{(\ell,j)}^{\xi}; \mathbf{o}_{j}^{\xi}; \mathbf{h}_{(\ell,j)}^{\xi} - \mathbf{o}_{j}^{\xi}])$, where [;] represents the concatenating operation. We denote the final output as $\mathbf{H}_{(\mathbf{N}_{\ell},j)} = [\mathbf{h}_{(\mathbf{N}_{\ell},j)}^{a}; \mathbf{h}_{(\mathbf{N}_{\ell},j)}^{c}] \in \mathbb{R}^{3d_{h}}$.

3.4.2 Knowledge Selection

In GPT-based models (Radford et al., 2018) such as COMET and VisualCOMET, representations are typically generated sequentially. The hidden state of the final token is viewed as encapsulating the sequence's semantic information, serving as the representation for if-then CSK.

However, relying solely on the last token may not fully capture the semantic information from preceding tokens, potentially leading to incomplete understanding (Reimers and Gurevych, 2019). To address this, we integrate the last token with the previous 4 tokens, creating 5 candidates from which we dynamically select.

$$\Psi_{(\kappa)}^{\xi} = tanh\big(\mathbf{W}_{s}^{\xi} \,\alpha_{(1,i,j,\kappa)}^{\xi}\big),\tag{4}$$

$$\mathbf{\Phi}_{(\kappa)}^{\xi} = Softmax \left(\mathbf{\Psi}_{(\kappa)}^{\xi} \left(\mathbf{h}_{(\ell,i)}^{\xi} \right)^{\mathrm{T}} \right)$$
(5)

$$\widehat{\mathbf{c}}_{(1,i,j)}^{\xi} = \mathbf{F} \mathbf{C}_{\kappa}^{\xi} \left(\sum_{\kappa=1\dots 5} \mathbf{\Phi}_{(\kappa)}^{\xi} \alpha_{(1,i,j,\kappa)}^{\xi} \right) \quad (6)$$

where $\alpha_{(1,i,j,\kappa)}^{\xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_c/3d_c/5d_c}$ is the κ -th candidate. $\mathbf{W}_s^{\xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_h \times d_c/3d_c/5d_c}$ is a trainable weight. **FC**^{ξ} transforms the dimension from $\mathbb{R}^{d_c/3d_c/5d_c}$ to \mathbb{R}^{d_h} . Since acoustic CSK employs zero-filling, no knowledge selection is required.

Emotion-Aware Feature Selection: According to the mood-congruency effect (Mayer et al., 1990), individuals tend to select and process information that is congruent with their current emotional state, exhibiting a form of emotional priming. However, these if-then CSK are often too generic, making

it difficult for models to capture features highly relevant to emotion in knowledge representations.

Inspired by LassoNet (Lemhadri et al., 2021), which introduces Lasso regression-based characteristics (Tibshirani, 1996) into the framework of neural networks by adding an L_1 regularization term to the loss function, resulting in some regression coefficients becoming zero, implying that the network can not only make predictions but also select features highly related to the target variable (such as emotional labels).

$$\mathbf{c}_{(1,i,j)}^{\xi}, \widetilde{\mathbf{Y}}_{i}^{\xi} = \mathbf{LassoNet}^{\xi} \left(\widehat{\mathbf{c}}_{(1,i,j)}^{\xi} \right)$$
(7)

where $\mathbf{c}_{(1,i,j)}^{\xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_h}$ is the edge representation after knowledge selection. $\widetilde{\mathbf{Y}}^{\xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathbf{N}}$ is the predicting emotional label set for the utterance's CSK.

3.4.3 Knowledge Refinement

Previous studies (Tu et al., 2022a) often regarded if-then CSK as a fixed, gradient-less representation, limiting its adaptability across various conversational contexts. To better align knowledge with both the historical utterance i and the current utterance j, we have conducted further refinements.

$$\mathbf{c}_{(\ell+1,i,j)}^{\xi} = \mathbf{F} \mathbf{C}_{\varrho}^{\xi} \left([\mathbf{p}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\xi}; \Delta_{i} \mathbf{p}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\xi}; \Delta_{j} \mathbf{p}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\xi}] \right)$$
(8)

where $\mathbf{p}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\xi} = \mathbf{FC}_{\rho}^{\xi} (\mathbf{c}_{(\ell,i,j)}^{\xi})$. $\mathbf{FC}_{\rho}^{\xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_h \times 3d_{head}}$ and $\mathbf{FC}_{\rho}^{\xi} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_{head} \times d_h}$ are used for projection dimension. Δ represents the attention score, computed similarly to Formula (3).

3.5 Emotion Classifier

We utilize a linear unit to predict the emotion distributions:

$$\widehat{\mathbf{Y}}_{(j)} = Argmax(Softmax(\mathbf{W}_e \, \mathbf{H}_{(\mathbf{N}_\ell, j)} + \mathbf{b}_e))$$
(9)

where $\mathbf{W}_e \in \mathbb{R}^{d_e \times 3d_h}$ and $\mathbf{b}_e \in \mathbb{R}^{d_e}$ are trainable parameters, d_e is the number of emotion categories. $\widehat{\mathbf{Y}} \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathbf{N}}$ is the predicting emotional label set of utterances in a conversation.

$$\mathcal{L}_{all} = \mathcal{L}^{v} + \mathcal{L}^{t} + \mathcal{L}_{ce} \tag{10}$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{ce} = CrossEntropy(\widehat{\mathbf{Y}}, \mathbf{Y}) + \varsigma \|\Theta\|_2 \quad (11)$$

$$\mathcal{L}^{\xi} = CrossEntropy(\widetilde{\mathbf{Y}}^{\xi}, \mathbf{Y}) + \lambda ||\Theta^{\xi}||_{1}$$
(12)

where \mathcal{L}_{ce} is the classification loss. $\mathbf{Y} \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathbf{N}}$ represents the set of true labels. Θ and Θ^{ξ} are the set of projection parameters. ς and λ denotes the coefficient of \mathbf{L}_2 and \mathbf{L}_1 regularization, respectively.

Dataset	Di	alogu	es	U	Classes		
Dataset	train	val	test	train	val	test	Classes
MELD	1039	114	280	9,989	1,109	2610	7
IEMOCAP	12	0	31	5,8	310	1,623	6

Table 1: Statistics of two conversational datasets.

4 Experiments

4.1 Experimental Data and Settings

Datasets: We benchmark MKE-IGN on two datasets: **IEMOCAP** (Busso et al., 2008) has dyadic conversation videos with ten speakers, featuring 7,433 utterances and 151 dialogues. Each utterance has one of six emotions. **MELD** (Poria et al., 2018) contains multiparty conversations collected from the 'Friends' TV series, having 1,433 conversations, 13,708 utterances, and 304 speakers. Each utterance holds one of seven emotions. Following (Ghosal et al., 2020a), the data splitting for datasets is detailed in Table 1. As the IEMOCAP lacks a predefined train/validation split, we allocate 10% of the training dialogues for validation.

Settings: We conduct a hyperparameter search for MKE-IGN using the validation set on each dataset. For IEMOCAP, the model uses a learning rate of 5e-5 with an AdamW optimizer and a batch size of 8. The graph transformer has node dimension $d_h = 200$, head dimension $d_{head} = 50$, and 2 layers ($N_{\ell} = 2$). For MELD, the learning rate is 1e-4, batch size is 16, $d_h = 512$, $d_{head} = 256$, and 5 layers ($N_{\ell} = 5$). All experiments are conducted on a single GeForce RTX 4090 GPU and reported results are averages from 5 random test set runs.

4.2 Comparison Methods

To comprehensively evaluate MKE-IGN, we compare it with the following state-of-the-art methods: DialogueRNN (Majumder et al., 2019) uses three GRUs for tracking speakers and context, while DialogueGCN (Ghosal et al., 2020b) tackles context propagation through a graph network; both use concatenated multimodal features. CTNet (Zhang et al., 2020) utilizes a transformer-based structure to model intra- and inter-modal interaction. SCMM (Yang et al., 2023a) combines context modeling, modal interaction, and path selection for enhanced multimodal features. SACCMA (Guo et al., 2024) integrates speaker-aware cognitive processing with cross-modal attention fusion to capture emotional cues. MMDFN (Hu et al., 2022) utilizes a heterogeneous graph to represent relation-

Methods				IEM	IOCAP							М	ELD				
Wiethous	Нарру	Sad	Neutral	Angry	Excited	Frustrated	Acc	w-F1	Neutral	Surprise	Fear	Sadness	Joy	Disgust	Anger	Acc	w-F1
DialogueRNN [♦]	32.20	80.26	57.89	62.82	73.87	59.76	63.52	62.89	76.97	47.69	-	20.41	50.92	-	45.52	60.31	57.66
DialogueGCN♦	51.57	80.48	57.69	53.95	72.81	57.33	63.22	62.89	75.97	46.05	-	19.60	51.20	-	40.83	58.62	56.36
CTNet♠	51.30	79.90	65.80	67.20	78.70	58.80	67.60	67.50	77.40	52.70	10.00	32.50	56.00	11.20	44.60	-	60.50
MMGCN♦	45.14	77.16	64.36	68.82	74.71	61.40	66.36	66.26	76.33	48.15	-	26.74	53.02	-	46.09	60.42	58.31
MMDFN [♦]	42.22	78.98	66.42	69.77	75.56	66.33	68.21	68.18	77.76	50.69	-	22.93	54.78	-	47.82	62.49	59.46
SCMM [♠]	45.37	78.76	63.54	66.05	76.70	66.18	-	67.53	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59.44
CMCF-SRNet [♠]	52.20	80.90	68.80	70.30	76.70	61.60	-	69.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62.30
M^3Net^{∂}	52.74	79.39	67.55	69.30	74.39	66.58	-	69.24	79.31	58.76	20.51	40.46	63.21	26.17	52.53	-	65.47
CORECT 	59.30	80.53	66.94	69.59	72.69	68.50	69.93	70.02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SACCMA [♠]	38.60	86.53	64.90	64.56	74.52	62.99	-	67.10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59.30
IGN (Baseline)	51.03	79.58	66.92	63.08	75.29	63.06	67.78	67.66	78.53	57.73	14.93	35.83	62.43	24.24	51.95	65.40	64.26
MKE-IGN (Ours)	53.87	82.86	72.07	71.30	75.78	68.84	72.03	71.93	80.00	59.82	17.39	40.12	64.01	31.30	56.08	67.78	66.56

Table 2: Comparison of results (%) under the multimodal setting (acoustic, visual, and textual modalities). \diamond , ∂, \bullet results come from (Hu et al., 2022), (Shi et al., 2023), and original papers, respectively. IGN refers to a variant of MKE-IGN that does not utilize any if-then CSK, replacing it with a zero-filled vector.

Methods	IEMO	DCAP	MELD		
wiethous	Acc	w-F1	Acc	w-F1	
MKE-IGN (Ours)	72.03	71.93	67.78	66.56	
w/o Visual CSK	70.86	70.64	66.13	64.91	
w/o Textual CSK	69.62	69.81	66.70	64.69	
w/o Acoustic CSK	70.98	70.98	66.28	65.34	
w/o Knowledge Selection	70.30	70.09	66.28	64.78	
w/o Knowledge Refinement	70.43	70.23	65.17	64.94	

Table 3: Ablation results of MKE-IGN.

ships between modalities. **MMGCN** (Hu et al., 2021b) employs a graph-based fusion module for capturing both intra- and inter-modal contextual features. **CMCF-SRNet** (Zhang and Li, 2023) integrates cross-modal interaction through a locality-constrained transformer and improves semantic relationships between utterances using a graph-based semantic refinement transformer. M^3Net (Chen et al., 2023) utilizes a GNN to capture emotion relationships and assesses their importance with multi-frequency signals. **CORECT** (Nguyen et al., 2023) is a relational temporal graph neural network designed to capture cross-modality interactions and temporal dependencies.

4.3 Overall Results

Following (Nguyen et al., 2023), we utilize the Accuracy (Acc) and weighted F1 score (w-F1) as evaluation metrics. Table 2 reports a comparison of MKE-IGN against other models, including advanced graph-based ones such as CORECT, CMCF-SRNet, and M³Net. The results demonstrate MKE-IGN's superior performance, establishing a new state-of-the-art benchmark. This further underscores the effectiveness of integrating multiple if-then CSK, along with knowledge selection and refinement policies, for the MERC task.



Figure 3: Visualization of intermediate utterance representations of MKE-IGN (left) and MKE-IGN w/o all CSK (right) on the IEMOCAP dataset.

Neu.	1062	33	3	25	64	7	62	Neu.	1040	51	6	43	72	1	43
Sur.	40	166	1	6	29	4	35	Sur.	36	177	0	5	23	0	40
Fea.	23	6	6	2	4	1	8	Fea.	20	3	7	4	2	0	14
Sad.	81	13	5	65	12	4	28	Sad.	79	14	7	67	9	0	32
Joy.	98	20	1	5	249	3	26	Joy.	97	36	2	8	236	2	21
Dis.	23	4	1	4	1	18	17	Dis.	22	6	0	9	1	9	21
Ang.	72	32	2	9	17	10	203	Ang.	77	37	3	15	21	2	190
	Neu.	Sur.	Fea.	Sad.	Joy.	Dis.	Ang.		Neu.	Sur.	Fea.	Sad.	Joy.	Dis.	Ang.

Figure 4: Confusion matrices of MKE-IGN (left) and MKE-IGN w/o visual CSK (right) on the MELD dataset.

4.4 Ablation Study

To investigate the impact of each component within MKE-IGN, we conduct an ablation study, revealing significant performance improvements as shown in Table 3. Further statistical analysis supports this, with a p-value $\ll 0.05$ for the paired t-test.

Analysis of Multiple CSK: Table 3 demonstrates that the removal of any type of CSK results in reduced overall model performance. Fig. 3 illustrates how integrating external if-then CSK enhances the distinction between utterance representations from different categories. This supplementary CSK fills contextual gaps in the dataset that the model might miss, facilitating a deeper understanding of specific contexts and implicit information within them.

After removing textual CSK, Acc drops by 1.08% and 2.41%, while w-F1 decreases by 1.87% and 2.12% on MEDL and IEMOCAP datasets, re-



Figure 5: Visualization of intermediate embeddings of textual if-then CSK (X, O) and visual if-then CSK (first row), and these CSKs after knowledge selection (second row) on the IEMOCAP dataset.



Figure 6: Lifting performance of MKE-IGN w/ Knowledge Refinement on different positions in conversations on the IEMOCAP dataset.

spectively. Visual CSK performed worse than textual CSK on the IEMOCAP dataset due to the lack of visual scene information in the controlled recording studio setup. The significant performance boost on the MELD dataset, including rich visual scenes, further confirms this observation. In Fig. 4, Visual CSK demonstrates effectiveness across nearly all category samples, whereas 'Surprise', 'Fear', and 'Sadness' show a slight performance decrease, possibly influenced by the impact of class imbalance, leading to misclassification into 'Neutral' categories. Removing acoustic CSK could slightly decrease performance as it disrupts the graph's balance, potentially biasing the model's handling of graph data.

Analysis of Knowledge Selection: Table 3 highlights the improved performance achieved through knowledge selection. Specifically, Acc and w-F1 exhibit improvements of 1.73% and 1.84%, respectively, on the IEMOCAP dataset, and gains of 1.5% and 1.78%, respectively, on the MELD dataset. To explore how CSK changes after selection, we visualized the representations of textual and visual if-



Figure 7: Lifting performance of MKE-IGN compared to the Baseline across different context window sizes.

then CSK from the IEMOCAP dataset, as shown in Fig. 5. We observed that the if-then CSK processed through the knowledge selection effectively captures semantic distinctions among different emotion categories. This mitigates the noise introduced by these if-then CSK and enhances the model's emotional understanding in the MERC task.

Analysis of Knowledge Refinement: In addition to knowledge selection, knowledge refinement has also led to significant performance improvements, on IEMOCAP, Acc, and w-F1 improved by 1.6% and 1.7% respectively. On MELD, gains are 2.61% and 1.62%. Fig. 6 shows that performance improvements become significant after the 60th utterance. These enhancements mainly occur toward the end of conversations, likely because MERC models prioritize nearby context due to similar semantics (Ghosal et al., 2021). This makes it challenging to detect utterances requiring longer contexts. By enhancing its ability to adjust to various contexts while minimizing the influence of irrelevant CSK as background noise, the model can consider semantic elements from greater distances, which is crucial for handling long conversation data.



Figure 8: Lifting performance of each component of MKE-IGN across different emotional categories and conversation positions (Short: first 1/3, Medium: middle 1/3, and Long: last 1/3) on the IEMOCAP dataset.

4.5 Analysis of Variants of MKE-IGN

In Fig. 7, we demonstrate improved performance on the different datasets through the adjustment of context window sizes N_{ω} . Increasing N_{ω} improves the model performance in lengthy dialogues like IEMOCAP, up to a point. Conversely, shorter conversations like MELD peak with a smaller window (N_{ω} =3), followed by fluctuations.

4.6 Complementarity Analysis

In this section, we explore the complementarity among three CSKs or knowledge selection and refinement to elucidate the rationality of MKE-IGN. **Complementarity of Multiple CSK:** Fig. 8 shows textual CSK performs well overall but less effectively in 'happy' and 'angry' minority categories compared to visual CSK, which contrasts with findings from the MELD dataset in Fig. 4. Surprisingly, acoustic CSK notably improves in 'sad', contrasting with the weaker performances of the other CSK in this category. Complementarity of Knowledge Selection and Refinement: Furthermore, in Fig. 8, we observe that knowledge selection primarily impacts the early stages of conversations. Performance declines in later stages, possibly due to fixed cognitive skills that struggle to adapt to more complex contexts. Knowledge refinement enhances adaptability to contexts, minimizing irrelevant background noise and enabling consideration of distant semantic elements crucial for handling long conversations, as illustrated in Fig. 6.

4.7 Comparing Results Against Large Language Models (LLMs)

Table 4 compares our method with various LLMs in the MERC task, outperforming zero-shot meth-

Methods	IEMOCAP	MELD		
Ours	71.93	66.56		
	Zero-shot			
ChatGPT 🌲	40.07	54.37		
GPT-40	44.15	62.21		
ChatGLM ♦	38.60	38.80		
ChatGLM2 ♦	21.10	21.80		
Llama 🔶	0.75	9.12		
Llama2 ♦	2.77	16.28		
	Few-shot			
ChatGPT 1-shot	47.46	58.63		
ChatGPT 3-shot	48.58	58.35		
LOR	A + Backbone			
ChatGLM ♦	18.94	40.54		
ChatGLM2 ♦	52.88	64.85		
Llama 🔶	55.81	66.15		
Llama2 🔶	55.96	65.84		

Table 4: Comparison of results against various LLMs. ♣, ♦ and ■ results are from (Tu et al., 2023d), (Lei et al., 2023) and (Zhao et al., 2023), respectively.

ods like ChatGPT³, ChatGLM2 (Du et al., 2022), and Llama2 (Touvron et al., 2023). Even with a 3-shot performance, ChatGPT remains behind our method. Unlike these text-only approaches, we developed a prompt template for GPT-40 (as shown in Fig. 9) that supports text and video inputs, achieving scores of 44.15 on IEMOCAP and 62.21 on MELD. Fine-tuned models like LORA (Hu et al., 2021a) + Backbone also fall short. The lower performance of LLMs may be due to a mismatch between their interpretations and the specific labeling protocols of datasets (Zhao et al., 2023). This misalignment could explain why LLMs perform worse on scripted datasets like IEMOCAP compared to more naturalistic ones like MELD.

4.8 Error Analysis

Many errors in our method stem from class imbalance, as evidenced by the low F1 scores of 17.39% and 31.30% for the 'Fear' and 'Disgust' emotions, respectively, in the MELD dataset. This phenomenon also constitutes a primary constraint on the performance of the MERC task, a fact supported by the results in Table 2. Furthermore, we are also investigating cases where MKE-IGN misclassifies samples that IGN predicted correctly, totaling 93 samples in the IEMOCAP dataset. It notably struggles more with Short (50 samples) and Medium (34 samples) conversation positions, showing relatively better performance with Long positions (only 9 samples). This is likely due to the benefits of knowledge refinement.

³https://chat.openai.com/

```
Below are N utterances of a conversation. Each
utterance contains text content and three temporally
uniformly sampled frames.
utt idx: utt 1
<UTT 1 SPEAKER>: <UTT 1 TEXT>
<UTT_1_IMG_1>
<UTT_1_IMG_2>
<UTT_1_IMG_3>
utt idx: utt 2
<UTT 2 SPEAKER>: <UTT 2 TEXT>
<UTT 2 IMG 1>
\langle UTT_2_IMG_2 \rangle
<UTT 2 IMG 3>
utt idx: utt N
<UTT N SPEAKER>: <UTT N TEXT>
<UTT_N_IMG_1>
<UTT N IMG 2>
\langle UTT N IMG 3 \rangle
Please predict the emotion of each utterance based on
the text and video content of historical conversations.
Emotion must be selected from happy, sad, neutral,
angry, excited, and frustrated. Return your answer in
the form of a JSON dict. The key of the dict is utt idx
and the value is the predicted emotion.
```

Figure 9: The GPT-40 prompt template is tailored for the IEMOCAP dataset, with the flexibility to adapt to the MELD dataset by modifying the emotion categories.

5 Conclusion

This paper introduces a novel MKE-IGN for the MERC task, employing a directed graph structure to prevent future utterances from influencing the current one. More importantly, MKE-IGN integrates multiple CSK as edge representations for the modeling of relations between utterances and different types of CSK, improving the understanding of utterances in multimodal scenarios. Furthermore, considering that irrelevant CSK might be retained as noise, MKE-IGN adaptively selects this CSK guided by the mood-congruent effect and refines it based on contexts. Extensive evaluations and an ablation study prove the superiority of MKE-IGN and the significant impact of its components.

Limitations

While our proposed approach, MKE-IGN, demonstrates significant advancements in MERC, some limitations remain worth acknowledging. Firstly, despite incorporating multiple forms of CSK, including visual and textual if-then CSK, our model may not fully capture the intricacies of human emotional understanding. Emotions are complex and nuanced, often influenced by various contextual factors beyond the scope of available CSK. Secondly, the dynamic selection and refinement of CSK based on contextual cues aim to reduce noise from irrelevant knowledge. However, the effectiveness of this approach may vary depending on the quality and relevance of the contextual information. In certain cases, contextual cues may not adequately guide the selection process, leading to suboptimal performance. Lastly, while MKE-IGN outperforms existing methods on popular datasets, its generalizability to diverse conversational contexts and cultural nuances remains to be thoroughly explored. Emotions and their expressions can vary significantly across different cultures and social contexts, posing challenges for emotion recognition models trained on limited datasets. In summary, while MKE-IGN represents a promising step forward in multimodal emotion recognition, further research is needed to address the aforementioned limitations and enhance the model's robustness and applicability across various real-world scenarios.

Acknowledgements

We thank all anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. This work was supported in part by the National Natural Science Foundation of China under Grants 62176076, the Natural Science Foundation of Guangdong under Grant 2023A1515012922, Shenzhen Foundational Research Funding under Grant JCYJ20220818102415032, The Major Key Project of PCL under Project PCL2023A09, and Guangdong Provincial Key Laboratory of Novel Security Intelligence Technologies under Grant 2022B1212010005k.

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A Feature Extraction

Textual Features: To obtain context-independent utterance-level feature vectors, we follow (Ghosal et al., 2020a) to fine-tune the Roberta Large model to predict emotion labels of utterances. Let an utterance \mathbf{u}_i be a sequence of tokens after applying Byte Pair Encoding (BPE), denoted as $w_1, w_2, ..., w_N$. The emotion label associated with \mathbf{u}_i is represented by e_i , where e_i belongs to the set of emotion labels E. To prepare the input sequence for the RoBERTa model, we add a special token [CLS] at the beginning of the original utterance. The sequence now becomes $[CLS], \mathbf{w}_1, \mathbf{w}_2, ..., \mathbf{w}_N$. This modified sequence is then fed into the Roberta model. The output of the last layer corresponding to the [CLS]token is used as input to a small feed-forward network, which performs the classification into the appropriate emotion class. After fine-tuning the model for emotion classification, we utilize the model for generating feature vectors. We pass the BPE tokenized utterance appended with [CLS]through the model and extract the outputs from the last four layers corresponding to the [CLS] tokens. The four vectors are combined through averaging, resulting in a context-independent utterance-level feature vector with a dimensionality of 1024.

Acoustic Features: Regarding the extraction of acoustic features, we adopt the methodology outlined in the study by (Majumder et al., 2019), utilizing the openSMILE toolkit (Eyben et al., 2010) for this purpose. The chosen acoustic features undergo a subsequent normalization process, after which a fully connected layer is utilized to achieve dimensionality reduction. Notably, the dimensions of the resulting acoustic features differ between datasets: 1582 for IEMOCAP and reduced to 300 for MELD. Visual Features: For visual facial expression features, we employ a DenseNet architecture (Huang et al., 2017), which is pre-trained on the Facial Expression Recognition Plus (FER+) corpus (Barsoum et al., 2016), similar to the approach used in (Hu et al., 2021b). The dimension of the visual facial expression feature is 342 for each dataset.

Event		Description				
	oEffect	The effect the event has on others besides Person X				
	oReact	The reaction of others besides Person X to the event				
	oWant	What others besides Person X may want to do after the event				
	xAttr	How Person X might be described given their part in the event				
Textual if-then CSK	xEffect	The effect that the event would have on Person X				
	xIntent	The reason why X would cause the event				
	xNeed	What Person X might need to do before the event				
	xReact	The reaction that Person X would have to the event				
	xWant	What Person X may want to do after the event				
	Before	A set of commonsense inferences on events before				
Visual if-then CSK	After	A set of commonsense inferences on events after				
	Intent	A set of commonsense inferences on people's intents at present.				

Table 5: Definitions of the relations of multiple if-then CSK.