

# Multi-Space Alignments Towards Universal LiDAR Segmentation

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<https://github.com/youquanl/M3Net>

## Abstract

A unified and versatile LiDAR segmentation model with strong robustness and generalizability is desirable for safe autonomous driving perception. This work presents **M3Net**, a one-of-a-kind framework for fulfilling *multi-task, multi-dataset, multi-modality* LiDAR segmentation in a **universal** manner using just a **single** set of parameters. To better exploit data volume and diversity, we first combine large-scale driving datasets acquired by different types of sensors from diverse scenes and then conduct alignments in three spaces, namely data, feature, and label spaces, during the training. As a result, M3Net is capable of taming heterogeneous data for training state-of-the-art LiDAR segmentation models. Extensive experiments on twelve LiDAR segmentation datasets verify our effectiveness. Notably, using a **shared** set of parameters, M3Net achieves 75.1%, 83.1%, and 72.4% mIoU scores, respectively, on the official benchmarks of SemanticKITTI, nuScenes, and Waymo Open.

## 1. Introduction

Dense and structural 3D surrounding scene understanding provides crucial information for autonomous vehicles to make proper decisions [70]. With the recent advancements in sensing technologies, especially the Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) sensor, a holistic scene perception can be achieved by segmenting the acquired sensor data [28, 83].

Most existing LiDAR segmentation models [1, 36, 111, 121, 128] are trained and tested in a *single-task, single-dataset, single-modality* manner. Despite achieving commendable results in the single domain, there is a significant performance drop when transitioning to new domains [40, 48]. The limited generalization capability hinders their facilitation of real-world applications [47, 50, 87]. In reality, LiDAR datasets are marred by significant variances, encompassing variations in data patterns due to different

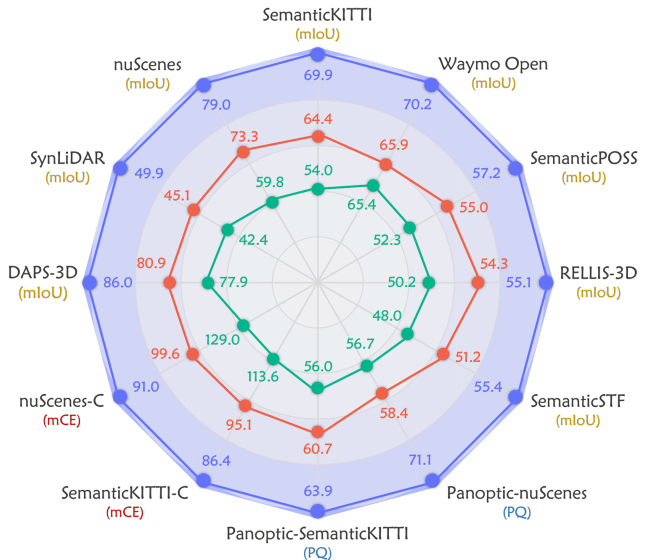


Figure 1. Performance comparisons among **M3Net** [•], *Single-Dataset Training* [•], and *Naïve Joint Training* [•] across **twelve** LiDAR segmentation datasets. For better comparisons, the radius is normalized based on M3Net’s scores. The larger the area coverage, the higher the overall performance. Best viewed in colors.

sensor types and weather conditions, diverse class distributions arising from varying capture scenarios, and distinct label spaces shaped by specific annotation protocols. These factors collectively pose a formidable challenge in harmonizing disparate LiDAR point clouds and jointly optimizing model parameters to effectively address multiple tasks across a range of sensor modalities [89, 118]. Empirical evidence in Fig. 3 further reveals that naively combining heterogeneous data to train a LiDAR segmentation model – without strategic alignments – often leads to sub-opt results.

Recent works [6, 39, 48, 79, 87, 94, 106] resort to unsupervised domain adaptation (UDA) for utilizing training data from both source and target domains to optimize one parameter set. Nevertheless, they either focus on only the sharing mapping between two domains (by ignoring dis-

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joint classes) or directly merge source domain labels to align with the target domain [40, 113]. The overlook of the performance degradation on the source dataset and the destruction of original label mappings inevitably constrains such a learning paradigm. Furthermore, there have been efforts [85, 96, 104, 118] to employ multi-dataset learning strategies to bolster the generalization prowess of 3D perception models. However, they either necessitate dataset-specific fine-tuning, deviating from a truly universal learning approach, or converge label spaces to a coarser set, resulting in the dilution of fine-grained segmentation capabilities across diverse semantic categories.

In this work, we define a novel paradigm towards leveraging LiDAR point clouds from different datasets to tame a *single set of parameters* for multi-task LiDAR segmentation. Sibling to image segmentation communities [43, 53, 124], we call this paradigm **universal LiDAR segmentation**. The ultimate goal of such a synergistic way of learning is to build a powerful segmentation model that can absorb rich cross-domain knowledge and, in return, achieve strong resilience and generalizability for practical usage. Given the substantial differences among datasets in terms of data characteristics, feature distributions, and labeling conventions, we introduce a comprehensive *multi-space alignment* approach that encompasses data-, feature-, and label-level alignments, to effectively pave the path for efficient and universally applicable LiDAR segmentation. In particular, the multi-modal data, including images and texts, is fully exploited to assist the alignment process with the guidance of more general knowledge. Through aforementioned processes, we propose **M3Net** to learn common knowledge across datasets, modalities, and tasks, thereby significantly enhancing its applicability in practical scenarios.

To substantiate the efficacy of M3Net and the utility of each module developed, we have carried out a series of thorough comparative and ablation studies across an extensive array of driving datasets, as shown in Fig. 1. Notably, our best model achieves state-of-the-art LiDAR segmentation performance with 75.1%, 83.1%, 72.4% mIoU scores on *SemanticKITTI* [3], *nuScenes* [27], *Waymo Open* [90], respectively, using a *shared* set of parameters. Moreover, our approach also performs well for direct knowledge transfer and out-of-distribution adaptations, further underscoring its robust capability for effective knowledge transfer.

## 2. Related Work

**LiDAR Segmentation.** A holistic perception of 3D scenes is crucial for safe autonomous driving [4, 7, 33, 51, 61]. Various LiDAR segmentation models have been proposed, with distinct focuses on aspects include LiDAR representations [20, 74, 91–93, 103, 121, 128], model architectures [1, 17, 24, 35, 46, 52, 80, 112], sensor fusion [18, 62, 64, 113, 129], post-processing [111, 123], data aug-

mentations [75, 84, 105], *etc.* Most recently, researchers started to explore data efficiency [49, 56], annotation efficiency [57, 63, 65, 86, 97], annotation-free learning [10, 11, 122], zero-shot learning [12, 69], domain adaptation [6, 39, 48, 54, 73, 79, 106], and robustness [47] in LiDAR segmentation, shedding lights for practitioners. Existing pursues, however, learn *separate* parameter sets for each dataset, impeding the scalability. This motivates us to explore LiDAR segmentation in a multi-task, multi-dataset, multi-modality manner with just a *single* set of parameters.

**Multi-Task Learning.** A proper pipeline design could enable the model to generate suitable predictions to fulfill multiple tasks simultaneously [16, 31]. The current research endeavors mainly focus on building image or video segmentation models to handle semantic, instance, and panoptic segmentation tasks [38, 59, 98, 100, 119, 120, 130]. Recently, several attempts have been made to enable multi-task segmentation on LiDAR point clouds. MaskRange [30] and MaskPLS [71] extend the mask classification paradigm [15] for joint semantic and panoptic LiDAR segmentation. LidarMultiNet [117] uses global context pooling and task-specific heads to handle LiDAR-based detection and segmentation. P3Former [108] proposed a specialized positional embedding to handle the geometry ambiguity in panoptic LiDAR segmentation. Our framework also supports multi-task learning. Different from existing approaches, the proposed M3Net stands out by combining knowledge from different sensor data across multiple data sources, which achieves superior performance on each task.

**Multi-Dataset Learning.** Leveraging data samples from different sources for training has been proven effective in enhancing robustness and generalizability [72]. Various approaches have been proposed to merge image datasets for object detection [14, 58, 60, 99, 125, 126], image segmentation [29, 42, 43, 53, 124], depth estimation [13, 82], *etc.* Due to large domain gaps, the image-based methods are often hard to be transferred to 3D. To combine multiple LiDAR datasets for 3D object detection, MDT3D [89] defines a coarse label set to handle the label space conflicts in different point cloud datasets. MS3D++ [95, 96] ensembles pre-trained detectors from different source datasets for multi-domain adaptation. Uni3D [118] resorts to dataset-specific detection heads and feature re-coupling for training a unified 3D object detector. Recently, PPT [104] proposed to pre-train a point cloud segmentation network using data from multiple datasets. However, the pre-trained weights are then fine-tuned on each specific dataset, which breaks the universal learning manner. The closest work to us is COLA [85], which trains a single model across multiple sources by converting dataset-specific labels to a common coarse set. Such a conversion, however, leads to the loss of fine-grained segmentation across the various semantic categories. Differently, our M3Net is tailored to tame a *single*

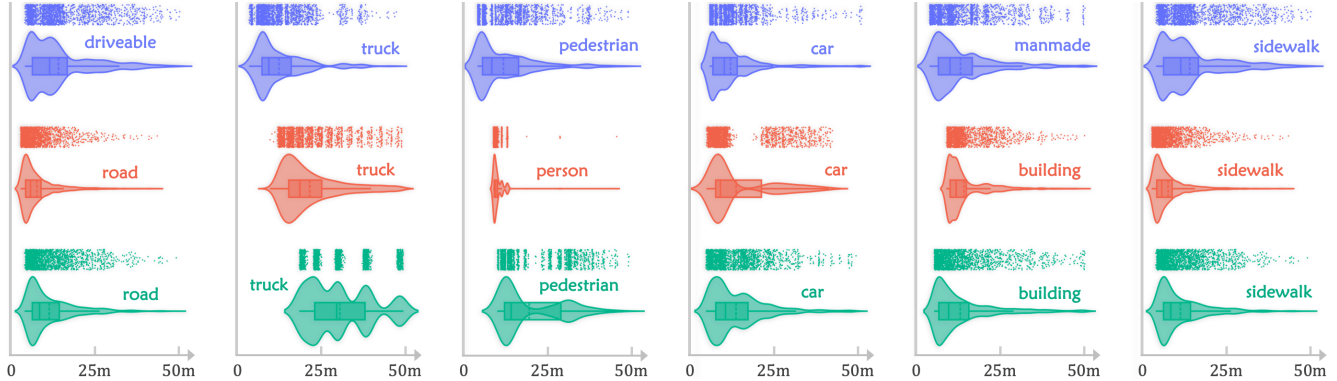


Figure 2. **Statistical analysis** of six sharing semantic classes in the *nuScenes* [•], *SemanticKITTI* [•], and *Waymo Open* [•] datasets. Each violin plot shows the class distribution across LiDAR scenes spanning 50 meters, centered around the ego-vehicle. Best viewed in colors.

parameter set to fulfill multi-task prediction across multiple datasets while still maintaining the original label mappings. **Multi-Modality Learning.** Recent trend favors synergistic learning from data of different modalities, such as vision, language, and speech [2, 8, 19, 26, 76, 81, 101]. For LiDAR segmentation, several works [9, 39, 40, 67, 115] explored the distillation of image features to point clouds. Recently, OpenScene [78] and CLIP2Scene [11] proposed to leverage point clouds along with multi-view images and language for open-vocabulary learning. PPKT [66], SLiDR [86], and Seal [65] form cross-sensor contrastive learning objectives to pre-train the LiDAR segmentation models. The advantages of sensor fusion have been consistently proven. In this work, to pursue universal LiDAR segmentation, we propose to align multi-space point clouds via images and texts.

### 3. Approach

Our study serves as an early attempt at combining *multi-task*, *multi-dataset*, *multi-modality* knowledge into a *single* set of parameters to fulfill **universal LiDAR segmentation**. We start with a pilot study to unveil the difficulties in merging heterogeneous LiDAR point clouds (*cf.* Sec. 3.1). We then present M3Net, a versatile LiDAR segmentation network tailored to pursue *i*) statistical consistency in the data space (*cf.* Sec. 3.2), *ii*) cross-modality-assisted alignment in the feature space (*cf.* Sec. 3.3), and *iii*) language-guided unification in the label space (*cf.* Sec. 3.4).

#### 3.1. Pilot Study

The current de facto of training a LiDAR segmentation network adopts a *task-by-task* and *dataset-by-dataset* pipeline. Despite the superior performance achieved under such standalone settings, the trained parameter sets cannot be shared to satisfy out-of-domain requirements and, therefore, limits their use cases for practical applications.

**Naïve Joint Training.** A natural alternative to breaking the above constraint is to jointly train a network across multiple

datasets for better generalizability. However, as depicted in Fig. 2, it is often non-trivial to naively combine heterogeneous data with large data distribution gaps to train a universal LiDAR segmentation model without proper alignments. To testify this, we conducted a pilot study using the prior art MinkUNet [20] for both standalone and joint training on three large-scale datasets [3, 27, 90]. As shown in Fig. 3 (a) and (d), a brutal combination undermines the segmentation performance. Due to large discrepancies in aspects like sensor configurations, data acquisitions, label mappings, and domain shifts, the jointly trained representations tend to be disruptive instead of being more general.

**LiDAR Sensor Discrepancy.** To understand the root cause of performance degradation, we conducted another study that controls point cloud density discrepancies when merging datasets. As shown in Fig. 3 (b) and (c), joint training on data collected by sensors with different beam numbers tends to suffer more severely than merging less density variant data. We hypothesize that this is mainly caused by the data statistical variations. In light of these observations, we propose a bag of suitable operations in the following sections to alleviate the large domain gaps among different LiDAR segmentation datasets [3, 4, 7, 27, 90].

#### 3.2. Data-Space Alignment

Given a total of  $S$  datasets  $D^s = \{(x^s, y^s) | 1 \leq s \leq S\}$ , where  $(x^s, y^s)$  denotes the data-label pairs constituting a dataset. For the LiDAR segmentation task,  $x^s$  often encompasses the LiDAR point cloud  $P^s = \{p_x, p_y, p_z\}^s \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times 3}$  and synchronized multi-view camera images  $V^s = \{\mathcal{I}_1, \dots, \mathcal{I}_l\} | l = 1, \dots, L\}$ , where  $\mathcal{I}_l \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times 3}$ ,  $N$  is the number of points,  $L$  denotes the number of camera sensors,  $H$  and  $W$  are the height and width of the image, respectively.  $y^s \in \mathbb{R}^N$  denotes point cloud labels in the label space  $\mathbb{Y}^s$ , we unify the label space as  $\mathbb{Y}^u = \mathbb{Y}^1 \cup \mathbb{Y}^2 \dots \cup \mathbb{Y}^S$ .

**Cross-Modality Data Alignment.** As a multi-sensing system, the information encoded in  $P_i^s$  and  $V_i^s$  are intuitively

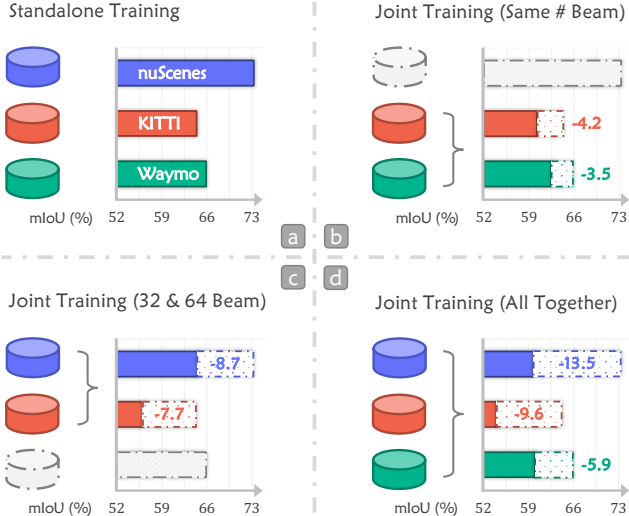


Figure 3. **A pilot study** of naively merging different datasets for training the MinkUNet [20] model. Compared to the standalone training in (a), either jointly training with (b) the same, (c) different, or (d) all sensor-acquired data will cause severe degradation.

complementary to each other [3, 7, 90]. To leverage such an advantage, we resort to the correspondences embedded in camera calibration matrices to bridge the LiDAR points and camera image pixels. Specifically, for each point  $\mathbf{p} = (p^x, p^y, p^z)$  in  $P^s$ , the corresponding pixel  $(u, v)$  can be found by the following transformations:

$$[u, v, 1]^T = \frac{1}{p^z} \cdot T_s \cdot T \cdot [p^x, p^y, 1]^T, \quad (1)$$

where  $T \in \mathbb{R}^{4 \times 4}$  is the camera extrinsic matrix that consists of a rotation matrix and a translation matrix, and  $T_s \in \mathbb{R}^{3 \times 4}$  is the camera intrinsic matrix. As we will show in the following sections, such a cross-sensor data alignment serves as the foundation for alignments in other spaces.

**Cross-Sensor Statistical Alignment.** To mitigate the discrepancies in sensor installations across different datasets, we incorporate a point coordinate alignment operation. Specifically, drawing upon insights from prior domain adaptation approaches [102, 116], we adjust the coordinate origins of point clouds from different datasets by introducing an offset  $\sigma \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times 3}$  to the ground plane. We find empirically that such an alignment can largely reduce the degradation caused by the variations in different sensor setups.

**Dataset-Specific Rasterization.** It is conventional to rasterize LiDAR point clouds  $P^s$  using unified rasterization parameters, *e.g.*, voxel size [91, 128] or horizontal range view resolution [74, 111]. However, the point clouds acquired in different LiDAR datasets naturally differ in density, range, intensity, *etc.*, which tends to favor different rasterization parameters. To meet such a requirement, we select dataset-specific parameters for rasterization on each dataset through empirical experiments and analyses.

**Decoupled BN.** Another challenge in training across multiple datasets is the presence of domain gaps, which can result in significant statistical shifts of feature learning among datasets. Such shifts can hinder the convergence and affect the model’s ability to generalize well across diverse datasets. We adopt a decoupled batch norm (BN) for point cloud features in each dataset. Instead of using the traditional BN, which calculates mean and variance across all samples in a mini-batch, the decoupled BN tends to adapt each dataset’s specific characteristics independently.

### 3.3. Feature-Space Alignment

We aim to acquire a generalized feature representation for downstream tasks. Compared to point clouds, images contribute stronger visual, textural, and semantic information. Thus, the collaboration between pixels and points could enrich the overall representation. Previous research [11, 60, 64] has consistently demonstrated that such a combination results often leads to improved performance.

**Cross-Modality Assisted Alignment.** In the context of multi-dataset joint training, our objective is to establish a unified feature space by leveraging image features to assist point cloud features. Acknowledging that images used in training lack ground truth labels [3, 27], we utilize image features from a pre-trained model as an alternative, facilitating a more universally applicable representation. We feed camera images  $V^s$  into a pre-trained DeepLab [98] and a vision-language model (VLM) and visualize the output image features by t-SNE [25]. As shown in Fig. 4, we observe that image features from DeepLab appear disorderly and lack semantics. In contrast, features from VLM share a more unified feature space. Motivated by this, we propose a cross-modality assisted alignment that uses VLM to help align the feature space. Specifically, the camera images  $V^s$  are fed to the frozen image encoder from VLM to obtain image features  $F_v = \{\mathcal{F}_v^1, \mathcal{F}_v^2, \dots, \mathcal{F}_v^s\}$ , where  $\mathcal{F}_v^s \in \mathbb{R}^{c \times h \times w}$ . The LiDAR point clouds  $P^s$ , on the other hand, are fed to the point encoder followed by a projection layer to generate the point features  $F_p = \{\mathcal{F}_p^1, \mathcal{F}_p^2, \dots, \mathcal{F}_p^s\}$ , where  $\mathcal{F}_p^s \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times c}$ ;  $m$  denotes the number of non-empty grids. We then leverage the paired image features  $\hat{F}_v \in \mathbb{R}^{m_p \times c}$  and point feature  $\hat{F}_p \in \mathbb{R}^{m_p \times c}$  for alignment, where  $m_p$  is the number of point-pixel pairs. After obtaining  $\hat{F}_p$  and  $\hat{F}_v$ , the cross-modality alignment is expressed as follows:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{cma}}(\hat{F}_v, \hat{F}_p) = 1 - \frac{\hat{F}_v \cdot \hat{F}_p}{\|\hat{F}_v\| \cdot \|\hat{F}_p\|}. \quad (2)$$

**Domain-Aware Cross-Modality Alignment.** With cross-modality alignment, we transfer the knowledge of VLM to the point encoder, enabling the point features to gain a more comprehensive representation. However, during the execution of the above alignment, we have narrowed

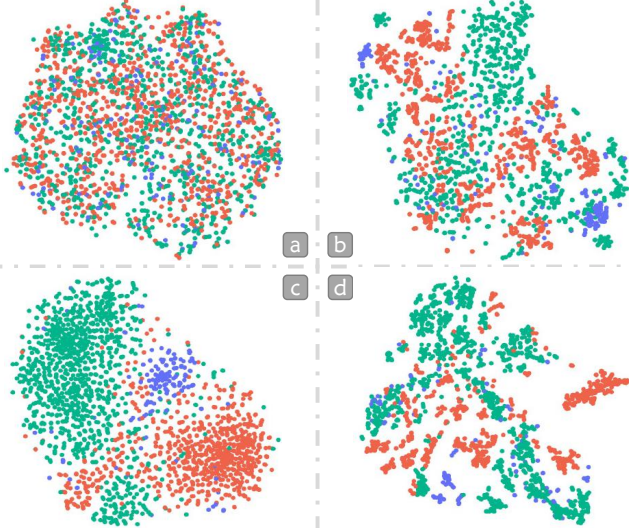


Figure 4. **The t-SNE plots of learned features** before and after the feature-space alignment in merging the *nuScenes* [•], *SemanticKITTI* [•], and *Waymo Open* [•] datasets. We show image features from (a) standalone networks; (b) SAM [44], and point cloud features (c) before and (d) after the feature-space alignment.

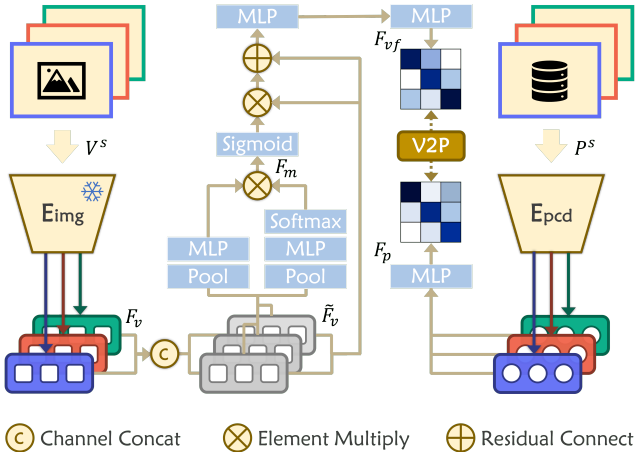


Figure 5. **Feature-space alignment** in M3Net. We leverage both image features  $F_v$  and LiDAR point cloud features  $F_p$  extracted from image encoder  $E_{img}$  and point encoder  $E_{pcd}$  to employ the regularization via V2P loss and achieve feature-space alignment.

it exclusively to image and point features from the same dataset. In this mode, point features solely learn from matching image features, restricting their knowledge acquisition. Ideally, we aim to ensure that image features encompass not only scenes identical to those represented in point clouds but also scenes from other datasets. To address this, we propose a domain-aware cross-modality guided alignment, as illustrated in Fig. 5. Specifically, we first extract, for each dataset,  $F_v$  and  $F_p$  from the same image encoder  $E_{img}$  and point encoder  $E_{pcd}$  during the cross-

modality assisted alignment. The sets of features from all datasets are concatenated along the channel dimension to form  $\tilde{F}_v \in \mathbb{R}^{c_v \times h \times w}$ . Subsequently, we sequentially feed  $\tilde{F}_v$  through a branch that consists of a global average pooling and an MLP. Simultaneously,  $\tilde{F}_v$  is fed to an auxiliary branch that undergoes the same processing flow and generates an output after the softmax function  $\mathcal{G}(\cdot)$ . The outputs from both branches are multiplied to obtain  $F_m \in \mathbb{R}^{c_v \times 1 \times 1}$ . The overall process can be described as follows:

$$F_m = MLP(Pool(\tilde{F}_v)) \cdot \mathcal{G}(MLP(Pool(\tilde{F}_v))). \quad (3)$$

Next, we forward  $F_m$  to a sigmoid activation function  $\mathcal{H}(\cdot)$  and multiply it with input image features  $\tilde{F}_v$ . The resulting output is added to  $\tilde{F}_v$  and passed through the MLP layers to obtain the final image features  $F_{vf} \in \mathbb{R}^{c \times h \times w}$ . The forward process of this operation is depicted as follows:

$$F_{vf} = MLP((\mathcal{H}(F_m) \cdot \tilde{F}_v) + \tilde{F}_v). \quad (4)$$

Finally, we leverage the cross-modality data alignment to acquire paired image features  $\hat{F}_{vf} \in \mathbb{R}^{m_p \times c}$  and paired point feature  $\hat{F}_p$ . The overall objective function is:

$$\mathcal{L}_{v2p}(\hat{F}_{vf}, \hat{F}_p) = 1 - \frac{\hat{F}_{vf} \cdot \hat{F}_p}{\|\hat{F}_{vf}\| \cdot \|\hat{F}_p\|}. \quad (5)$$

### 3.4. Label-Space Alignment

**Label Conflict.** In multi-dataset joint training settings, label conflicts emerge as a significant challenge. This often refers to the inconsistencies in class labels across different datasets involved in the training process. The discrepancy can arise due to variations in annotation conventions, labeling errors, or even differences in the underlying semantics of classes between datasets. In our baseline, we unionize the different label spaces across datasets into  $\mathbb{Y}^u$ , where all datasets share a single LiDAR segmentation head. However, this may introduce several potential drawbacks:

- *Loss of granularity:* Unified label spaces could lose semantic granularity, particularly when dealing with subtle category differences in between different datasets.
- *Information loss:* During label space consolidation, details unique to each dataset may be obscured or lost, especially for those related to domain-specific categories.
- *Increased complexity:* Handling a unified label space may necessitate more complex model architectures or training strategies, thereby increasing overall complexity.

To address these issues, we introduce a language-guided label-space alignment to facilitate a more holistic semantic correlation across datasets. Given the natural correspondence between images and texts and the strong correlation between images and point clouds, we aim to strategically utilize the image modality as a bridge to establish language-guided alignments. Such a process consists of a text-driven

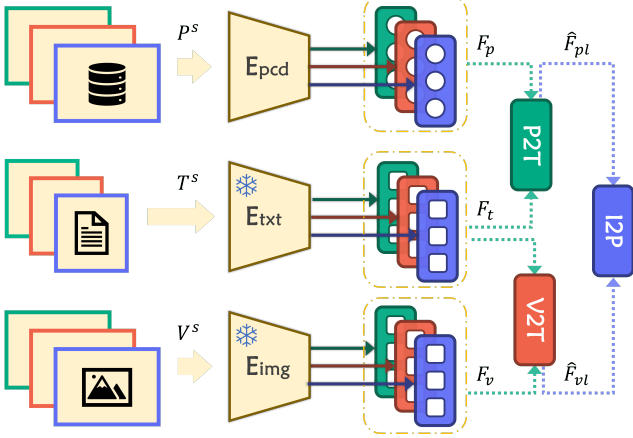


Figure 6. **Label-space alignment** in M3Net. We leverage image features  $F_v$ , point cloud features  $F_p$ , and text embedding  $F_t$  extracted from  $E_{img}$ ,  $E_{pcd}$ , and  $E_{txt}$ , respectively, for regularization via the I2P, P2T, and V2T losses in the label-space alignment.

point alignment, a text-driven image alignment, and a cross-modality-assisted label alignment.

**Text-Driven Alignments.** As depicted in Fig. 6, images  $V^s$  are fed into the frozen image encoder  $E_{img}$  to extract the image features  $F_v$ . Concurrently, the LiDAR point clouds  $P^s$  are processed by the point encoder  $E_{pcd}$  to generate the point features  $F_p$ . Additionally, given the text input  $T^s$ , text embedding features  $F_t \in \mathbb{R}^{Q \times c}$  are obtained from a frozen text encoder  $E_{txt}$ , where  $Q$  represents the number of categories across datasets. The text is composed of class names from unified label space  $\mathbb{Y}_u$  placed into pre-defined templates, and the text embedding captures semantic information of the corresponding classes. Subsequently, pixel-text pairs  $\{v_k, t_k\}_{k=1}^M$  and point-text pairs  $\{p_k, t_k\}_{k=1}^M$  are generated, where  $M$  represents the number of pairs. Leveraging the semantic information contained in the text, we selectively choose positive and negative samples for both images and points for contrastive learning. It is noteworthy that negative samples are confined to the specific dataset category space. The overall objective of the text-driven point alignment function is shown as follows:

$$\mathcal{L}_{p2t} = - \sum_{q=1}^Q \log \left( \frac{\sum_{t_k \in q, p_k} \exp(\langle t_k, p_k \rangle / \tau)}{\sum_{t_k \in q, t_k \notin q, p_j} \exp(\langle t_k, p_k \rangle / \tau)} \right), \quad (6)$$

where  $t_k \in q$  indicates that  $t_k$  is generated by the  $q$ -th classes name, and  $Q$  is the number of classes. Symbol  $\langle, \rangle$  denotes the scalar product operation and  $\tau$  is a temperature term ( $\tau > 0$ ). Similarly, the objective of the text-driven image alignment function is illustrated as follows:

$$\mathcal{L}_{v2t} = - \sum_{q=1}^Q \log \left( \frac{\sum_{t_k \in q, v_k} \exp(\langle t_k, v_k \rangle / \tau)}{\sum_{t_k \in q, t_k \notin q, v_j} \exp(\langle t_k, v_k \rangle / \tau)} \right). \quad (7)$$

**Cross-Modality-Assisted Label Alignment.** After text-driven alignments, the subsequent crucial step entails aligning the point and image modalities within the label space. We first obtain image logits  $F_{vl} = \{\mathcal{F}_{vl}^1, \mathcal{F}_{vl}^2, \dots, \mathcal{F}_{vl}^s\}$  and point logits  $F_{pl} = \{\mathcal{F}_{pl}^1, \mathcal{F}_{pl}^2, \dots, \mathcal{F}_{pl}^s\}$  from text-driven alignments, where  $\mathcal{F}_{vl}^s \in \mathbb{R}^{Q \times H \times W}$ ,  $\mathcal{F}_{pl}^s \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times Q}$ . Subsequently, we conduct cross-modality alignment to obtain paired image logits  $\hat{F}_{vl} \in \mathbb{R}^{m_p \times Q}$  and paired point logits  $\hat{F}_{pl} \in \mathbb{R}^{m_p \times Q}$ . Formally, the cross-modality-assisted alignment in the label space is formulated as follows:

$$\mathcal{L}_{i2p}(\hat{F}_{vl}, \hat{F}_{pl}) = 1 - \frac{\hat{F}_{vl} \cdot \hat{F}_{pl}}{\|\hat{F}_{vl}\| \cdot \|\hat{F}_{pl}\|}. \quad (8)$$

Finally, the complete objective function for the language-guided label-space alignment is expressed as follows:

$$\mathcal{L}_{label} = \mathcal{L}_{p2t} + \mathcal{L}_{i2p} + \mathcal{L}_{v2t}. \quad (9)$$

### 3.5. Universal LiDAR Segmentation

We enhance the versatility of M3Net via multi-tasking learning. This integration involves an instance extractor to enable joint semantic and panoptic LiDAR segmentation.

**Panoptic LiDAR Segmentation.** Motivated by DSNet [32, 33], our instance extractor comprises an instance head and a clustering step. The instance head encompasses several MLPs designed to predict the offsets between instance centers. The clustering step uses semantic predictions to filter out *stuff* points, thereby retaining only those associated with *thing* points. The remaining points undergo a mean-shift clustering [21], utilizing features from the instance head to discern distinct instances. Lastly, we employ the L1 loss  $\mathcal{L}_{l1}$  to optimize the *thing* point regression process.

**Overall Objectives.** Putting everything together, the overall objective of M3Net is to minimize the following losses:

$$\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_{v2p} + \mathcal{L}_{label} + \mathcal{L}_{ce} + \mathcal{L}_{lovasz} + \mathcal{L}_{l1}, \quad (10)$$

where  $\mathcal{L}_{ce}$  and  $\mathcal{L}_{lovasz}$  denote the cross-entropy loss and the Lovasz-softmax [5] loss, respectively.

## 4. Experiments

### 4.1. Experimental Setups

**Datasets.** Our M3Net framework and baselines are trained on a combination of *nuScenes* [27], *SemanticKITTI* [3], and *Waymo Open* [90]. Meanwhile, we resort to another five LiDAR-based perception datasets [41, 45, 77, 106, 107] and two 3D robustness evaluation datasets [47] to verify the strong generalizability of M3Net. Due to space limits, additional details regarding the datasets are in the Appendix.

**Implementation Details.** M3Net is implemented based on Pointcept [23] and MMDetection3D [22]. We use two backbones in our experiments, *i.e.*, MinkUNet [20] and

Table 1. **Ablation study** on the M3Net alignments happen in the **Data**, **Feature**, and **Label** spaces, respectively, when combining the *SemanticKITTI* [3], *nuScenes* [27], and *Waymo Open* [90] datasets. The mAcc and mIoU scores are in percentage. Best scores are in **bold**.

-	Configurations			MinkUNet [20]				PTv2+ [103]							
				SemKITTI		nuScenes		Waymo		SemKITTI		nuScenes		Waymo	
				mAcc	mIoU	mAcc	mIoU	mAcc	mIoU	mAcc	mIoU	mAcc	mIoU		
Baseline	Naïve Joint Training			62.43	54.03	65.05	59.84	73.76	65.39	67.96	61.59	76.53	69.65	75.68	67.00
<b>M3Net (Ours)</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Label</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	✓			73.82	69.01	83.66	76.89	77.88	69.37	78.55	69.95	86.22	79.13	80.96	72.15
	✓	✓		74.36	69.64	85.17	78.88	78.31	69.70	79.43	70.87	87.10	80.26	80.74	72.33
	✓		✓	73.85	69.34	85.20	78.90	78.04	69.55	80.30	71.13	87.44	80.45	80.69	72.30
	✓	✓	✓	<b>74.40</b>	<b>69.85</b>	<b>85.30</b>	<b>79.00</b>	<b>78.66</b>	<b>70.15</b>	<b>80.00</b>	<b>72.00</b>	<b>87.91</b>	<b>80.90</b>	<b>81.11</b>	<b>72.40</b>

Table 2. **Panoptic LiDAR segmentation** results on the *val* sets of the *Panoptic-SemanticKITTI* [3] and *Panoptic-nuScenes* [27] datasets. All scores are given in percentage. The best and second-best scores are highlighted in **bold** and underline, respectively.

Method	Configurations			Panoptic-SemanticKITTI				Panoptic-nuScenes					
				PQ	PQ <sup>†</sup>	RQ	SQ	mIoU	PQ	PQ <sup>†</sup>	RQ	SQ	mIoU
Panoptic-TrackNet [37]	Single-Dataset Training			40.0	-	48.3	73.0	53.8	51.4	56.2	63.3	80.2	58.0
Panoptic-PolarNet [127]				59.1	64.1	70.2	78.3	64.5	63.4	67.2	75.3	83.9	66.9
EfficientLPS [88]				59.2	65.1	69.8	75.0	64.9	59.2	62.8	82.9	70.7	69.4
DSNet [32]				61.4	65.2	72.7	79.0	69.6	64.7	67.6	76.1	83.5	76.3
Panoptic-PHNet [55]				61.7	-	-	-	65.7	<b>74.7</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>84.2</b>	<b>88.2</b>	79.7
Baseline	Naïve Joint Training			56.03	59.64	65.78	73.72	61.59	56.67	60.61	66.75	83.49	69.65
<b>M3Net (Ours)</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Label</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	✓			62.34	65.17	72.60	74.67	69.95	68.49	71.11	79.13	85.49	79.13
	✓	✓		62.91	65.73	<u>73.32</u>	75.47	70.87	71.47	73.86	81.53	86.71	80.26
	✓		✓	63.23	<u>67.89</u>	<b>73.61</b>	<u>81.66</u>	<u>71.13</u>	71.53	73.91	81.80	<u>86.92</u>	<u>80.45</u>
	✓	✓	✓	<b>63.87</b>	<b>68.66</b>	73.10	<b>82.35</b>	<b>72.00</b>	<u>71.70</u>	<u>74.01</u>	<u>82.20</u>	86.47	<b>80.90</b>

PTv2+ [103]. We trained M3Net on four A100 GPUs for 50 epochs with a batch size of 6 for each GPU. The initial learning rate is set to 0.002. We adopt the AdamW optimizer [68] with a weight decay of 0.005 and cosine decay learning rate scheduler. For the dataset-specific rasterization, we set voxel sizes to 0.05m, 0.1m, and 0.05m for *SemanticKITTI* [3], *nuScenes* [27], and *Waymo Open* [90], respectively. For the data augmentation, we employ random flipping, jittering, scaling, rotation, and Mix3D [75]. Due to space limits, kindly refer to Appendix for additional details. **Evaluation Metrics.** We adopt conventional reportings of *mAcc* and *mIoU* for LiDAR semantic segmentation, *PQ*, *PQ<sup>†</sup>*, *SQ*, and *RQ* for panoptic segmentation, and *mCE* and *mRR* for 3D robustness evaluation. Due to the space limit, kindly refer to our Appendix for more detailed definitions.

## 4.2. Ablation Study

**Multi-Space Alignments.** The effectiveness of three proposed alignments over the joint training baselines is shown in Tab. 1. We observe that the data-space alignment plays the most crucial role in improving the universal LiDAR segmentation performance. Without proper data alignments, joint training with either MinkUNet [20] or the stronger PTv2+ [103] will suffer severe degradation, especially on sparser point clouds [27]. On top of the data-space align-

ment, the combinations of multi-view images at the feature space and the language-guided knowledge at the label space further enhance the learned feature representations. The results show that they work synergistically in merging knowledge from heterogeneous domains during joint training.

**Panoptic LiDAR Segmentation.** In Tab. 2, we present another ablation study focusing on panoptic LiDAR segmentation. All three alignments incorporated in M3Net demonstrate significant improvements over the baselines. This highlights the pronounced efficacy of our multi-space alignments. Moreover, our approach outperforms the single-dataset state-of-the-art method Panaptic-PHNet [55] by a notable 2.17% PQ on *Panoptic-SemanticKITTI* [3] and achieves compelling results on *Panoptic-nuScenes* [27].

**Visual Feature Alignments.** We conduct a qualitative analysis of the learned visual feature distributions in the form of t-SNE [25]. Fig. 4 (a) and (b) represent the distributions of learned visual features among three datasets from DeepLab and VLM backbones, respectively. The features obtained by the latter exhibit more distinct semantics in feature space. The concentrated distribution space is advantageous for achieving feature alignments across multiple datasets. Additionally, Fig. 4 (c) and (d) illustrate the distribution of point cloud features before and after feature-space alignment. As can be seen, the feature distribution distances

Table 3. **Knowledge transfer and generalization** analyses across five LiDAR segmentation datasets and two 3D robustness evaluation datasets. All scores are given in percentage. The best and second-best scores are highlighted in **bold** and underline, respectively.

Method	RELLIS-3D		SemanticPOSS		SemanticSTF		SynLiDAR		DAPS-3D		SemKITTI-C		nuScenes-C	
	1%	10%	Half	Full	Half	Full	1%	10%	Half	Full	mCE	mRR	mCE	mRR
PPKT [66]	49.71	54.33	50.18	56.00	50.92	54.69	37.57	46.48	78.90	84.00	-	-	105.64	76.06
SLiDR [86]	49.75	54.57	51.56	55.36	52.01	54.35	42.05	47.84	81.00	85.40	-	-	106.08	75.99
Seal [65]	<u>51.09</u>	<u>55.03</u>	<u>53.26</u>	<u>56.89</u>	<u>53.46</u>	<u>55.36</u>	<u>43.58</u>	<u>49.26</u>	<u>81.88</u>	<u>85.90</u>	-	-	<u>92.63</u>	<b>83.08</b>
Naïve Joint	37.77	50.23	42.19	52.31	46.70	48.00	18.56	42.37	73.91	77.89	113.65	84.73	128.97	<u>81.45</u>
Single-Dataset	40.17	54.25	47.69	55.00	50.33	51.19	23.17	45.08	75.10	80.87	<u>95.11</u>	<u>84.95</u>	99.63	79.06
<b>M3Net (Ours)</b>	<b>51.27</b>	<b>55.05</b>	<b>53.60</b>	<b>57.17</b>	<b>53.78</b>	<b>55.42</b>	<b>44.10</b>	<b>49.93</b>	<b>82.08</b>	<b>86.00</b>	<b>86.43</b>	<b>85.77</b>	<b>91.03</b>	79.15

Table 4. **LiDAR semantic segmentation** results on the *val* and *test* sets of *SemanticKITTI* [3] and *nuScenes* [27], and the *val* set of *Waymo Open* [90]. All scores are in percentage. The best and second-best scores are highlighted in **bold** and underline.

Method	SemKITTI		nuScenes		Waymo	
	Val	Test	Val	Test	mIoU	mAcc
RangeNet++ [74]	-	52.2	-	65.5	-	-
PolarNet [121]	57.2	54.3	71.0	69.8	-	-
SalsaNext [24]	-	59.5	-	72.2	-	-
RangeViT [1]	60.7	64.0	75.2	-	-	-
MinkUNet [20]	63.8	63.7	73.3	-	65.9	76.6
SPVNAS [91]	64.7	66.4	-	77.4	67.4	-
AMVNet [62]	65.2	65.3	77.2	77.3	-	-
RPVNet [112]	65.5	70.3	77.6	-	-	-
(AF) <sup>2</sup> -S3Net [18]	-	69.7	-	78.3	-	-
Cylinder3D [128]	65.9	67.8	76.1	77.9	66.0	-
PVKD [34]	66.4	71.2	76.0	-	-	-
WaffleIron [80]	66.8	70.8	79.1	-	-	-
RangeFormer [46]	67.6	73.3	78.1	80.1	-	-
SphereFormer [52]	67.8	<u>74.8</u>	78.4	81.9	69.9	-
FRNet [114]	68.7	73.3	79.0	82.5	-	-
PTv2+ [103]	<u>70.3</u>	70.6	<u>80.2</u>	<u>82.6</u>	70.6	<u>80.2</u>
LidarMultiNet [117]	-	-	-	81.4	<b>73.8</b>	-
<b>M3Net (Ours)</b>	<b>72.0</b>	<b>75.1</b>	<b>80.9</b>	<b>83.1</b>	<u>72.4</u>	81.1

between the three datasets have been largely reduced, providing evidence of the alignment effectiveness.

### 4.3. Comparative Study

**Comparisons to State of the Arts.** In Tab. 4, we compare M3Net with current best-performing models on the benchmarks of *SemanticKITTI* [3], *nuScenes* [27], and *Waymo Open* [90]. Remarkably, M3Net consistently outperforms existing approaches across all three datasets. Specifically, on *SemanticKITTI* [3], M3Net achieves a 72.0% mIoU on the validation set, surpassing the closest method by a notable margin of 1.7% mIoU. Similarly, on *nuScenes* [27], M3Net achieves 80.9% mIoU and 83.1% mIoU on the validation and test sets, demonstrating its robustness and generalization capabilities. Additionally, the performance of M3Net on *Waymo Open* [90] is competitive with prior arts. We achieve a mIoU of 72.4% and a mAcc of 81.1%. These results highlight again the superiority of M3Net in handling complex diverse LiDAR segmentation tasks.

**Direct Knowledge Transfer.** To further validate the strong

knowledge transfer capability of M3Net, we conduct extensive experiments on five different LiDAR-based perception datasets [41, 45, 77, 106, 107]. These datasets have unique data collection protocols and data distributions. As shown in Fig. 1 and the first ten columns in Tab. 3, our framework constantly outperforms the prior arts, the naïve joint training, and the single-dataset baselines across all five datasets. This concretely supports the strong knowledge transfer efficacy brought by multi-space alignments in M3Net.

**Out-of-Distribution Generalization.** Evaluating the generalization ability of models on out-of-training-distribution data is crucial, particularly in safety-critical fields like autonomous driving [50, 109, 110]. In this context, we resort to the two corruption datasets from the Robo3D [47] benchmark, *i.e.*, *SemanticKITTI-C* and *nuScenes-C*, to conduct our assessment. From the last four columns of Tab. 3, we observe that M3Net achieves better results than the naïve joint training and other single-dataset approaches, proving the strong generalizability of the learned representations.

## 5. Conclusion

In this work, we presented M3Net, a universal framework capable of fulfilling multi-task, multi-dataset, multi-modality LiDAR segmentation using a single set of parameters. Through extensive analyses, we validated the effectiveness of applying data-, feature-, and label-space alignments to handle such a challenging task. In addition, our comprehensive analysis and discourse have delved into the fundamental challenges of acquiring the general knowledge for scalable 3D perception, which holds substantial potential to propel further research in this domain. Our future strides focus on combining more data resources to further enhance the alignments and adaptations in our framework.

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