
OC-CLIP : Object-centric Binding in Contrastive Language-Image Pretraining

Rim Assouel^{1,2,*}, Pietro Astolfi¹, Florian Bordes¹, Michal Drozdal¹, Adriana Romero-Soriano^{1,3,4}
¹FAIR at Meta, ²Mila, Université de Montréal, ³Canada CIFAR AI Chair, ⁴McGill University

Abstract

1 Recent advancements in vision-language models (VLMs) have been driven by
2 contrastive models like CLIP [39], which learn to associate visual information with
3 their corresponding text descriptions. However, these models have limitations in
4 understanding complex compositional scenes involving multiple objects and their
5 spatial relationships. To address these challenges, we propose a novel approach that
6 diverges from traditional data-centric methods of enhancing model performance
7 with hard negatives examples. Our work instead focuses on integrating sufficient
8 inductive biases into pre-trained CLIP-like models to improve their compositional
9 understanding without using additional data annotations. We introduce a binding
10 module that connects a scene graph of the text with an induced graph-like represen-
11 tation of the image, facilitating a structured similarity assessment. We also leverage
12 relationships as text-conditioned visual constraints, thereby capturing the intricate
13 interactions between objects and their contextual relationships more effectively.
14 Our resulting model (OC-CLIP) not only enhances the performance of CLIP in
15 multi-object compositional understanding but also paves the way for more accurate
16 and efficient image-text matching in complex scenes.

17 1 Introduction

18 Recent advancements in multi-modal representation learning have primarily been enabled by the
19 introduction of CLIP [39]. CLIP learns aligned image-text representations from Internet-scale data.
20 Despite its success, CLIP exhibits limitations in understanding complex scenes composed of multiple
21 objects [23, 47, 11, 36]. For instance, while capable of recognizing individual objects, CLIP struggles
22 with interpreting spatial relationships among objects in the scene [] (e.g., “the cat is to the left of the
23 mat” vs. “the cat is to the right of the mat”) and adequately associating objects with their corresponding
24 attributes (e.g., “a red square and a blue circle” vs. “a blue square and a red circle”). The process
25 of acquiring this compositional understanding of the world is known as the *binding problem* in the
26 literature, and may be decomposed into *segregation*, *representation*, and *composition* problems [17].

27 Efforts to improve the compositional understanding of CLIP-like models have largely relied on
28 leveraging *hard negative examples*, either in the text space [22, 48, 54, 11, 36] – to improve sensitivity
29 to the order of words and subtle textual differences – or the image space [3, 25, 53] – to improve
30 sensitivity to subtle visual differences. Although these methods have somewhat improved CLIP-like
31 models’ performance on scene compositionality benchmarks [37, 55, 48, 18], they do not explicitly
32 address the binding problem as they focus mainly on enhancing the model’s representation capabilities
33 with additional data, hindering their generalization to unseen scene compositions.

34 Yet, the object-centric representation learning literature [13, 16, 31, 46, 43] has long focused on
35 developing methods to address the segregation and representation problems as a way to facilitate the

*Correspondence to: assouelr@mila.quebec

36 subsequent compositional processing of images. This has led to the development of inductive biases
37 to segregate different objects in a scene into distinct representational *slots*, which have been shown to
38 naturally scale to an increasing number of visual objects and relations [31, 44, 34, 12].

39 In this paper, we focus on enhancing the compositional scene understanding of CLIP-like models
40 by leveraging the advances from object-centric representation learning. In particular, we propose
41 to endow CLIP-based vision-language architectures with segregation, representation and composition
42 capabilities. Our core idea is to adapt the slot-centric representation paradigm for CLIP architectures
43 and dynamically align each representational slot with the object entities mentioned in the text. To
44 do so, we design a binding module that connects a scene graph, derived from the textual description,
45 with a slot-structured image representation. We utilize the scene graph’s relationships as constraints
46 to effectively capture the complex interactions among the visual entities represented as slots. Our
47 enhanced model, which we refer to as Object-Centric CLIP (OC-CLIP), not only boosts CLIP’s
48 performance in understanding multi-object compositional scenes but also improves the accuracy
49 and efficiency of image-text matching in complex and highly compositional visual scenarios.

50 2 OC-CLIP

51 Our goal is to enhance CLIP-based architectures with segregation and composition capabilities. Our
52 method starts by extracting representations of distinct objects and relationships in a textual description,
53 as well as representations of patches in an image. Next, a binding module matches the text represen-
54 tation of objects to the relevant image patches, producing a slot-centric representation of the image.
55 Finally, a structured similarity score compares the slot-centric representation with the textual represen-
56 tations of different objects, and leverages the extracted relationships as constraints applied to the visual
57 slots. Our key contributions lie in the design of the binding module and the proposal of the structured
58 similarity score, which we detail below. Figure 1 presents an overview of the proposed approach.

59 **Notation.** We denote as \mathbf{x} an image of shape $\mathbb{R}^{h \times w \times 3}$ and as $\bar{\mathbf{x}} = [\bar{\mathbf{x}}^1, \dots, \bar{\mathbf{x}}^N] = E_\phi(\mathbf{x}) \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times d}$
60 its patch-level encoding, where E_ϕ is an image encoder – typically a pre-trained ViT [1] – N is
61 the number of patches and d the dimensionality of the patch embeddings. We denote as t the text
62 description, or caption, associated with \mathbf{x} . We extract a scene graph, \mathcal{G} from t by leveraging an
63 LLM-based parsing approach. \mathcal{G} is composed of a set of nodes $\mathcal{N} = \{N^1, \dots, N^M\}$ representing
64 the M objects in t and of a set of edges $\mathcal{E} = \{(\mathbf{r}^1, s^1, o^1), \dots, (\mathbf{r}^P, s^P, o^P)\}$ representing the P
65 relationships in t . Each relationship is represented by a tuple (\mathbf{r}, s, o) , where \mathbf{r} is the embedding
66 of the predicate, s the subject and o the object of the relationship. For example, the scene graph of “A
67 red apple to the left of a blue car” will be represented with the set of nodes {“red apple”, “blue car”}
68 and the set of edges { (“to the left of”, “red apple”, “blue car”)}. In practice, we represent \mathcal{N} as a
69 matrix of node features \mathbf{N} , where each row contains the embedding of a node in the graph. Moreover,
70 we represent each s^i and o^i in the relationship tuples as indices referencing the nodes (rows) in \mathbf{N} .

71 **Binding Module** Our first contribution resides in the binding module. The idea is that when
72 comparing the content of a caption and an image we do not want the features of different objects
73 to interfere with each other but rather keep them separate at a representational level. The role of
74 the binding module is thus to extract a slot-centric representation of an image where the content
75 of the slots are pushed to represent the nodes of the associated scene graph.

76 To do so, we implement the binding module using a *inverted* cross-attention layer [45], where the
77 queries are the nodes from our scene graph and the keys and values are the image patches. We normal-
78 ize the attention coefficients over the queries’ dimension in order to introduce a competition between
79 queries to explain different parts of the visual input. We follow common practice and set the attention’s
80 softmax temperature to \sqrt{D} , with D being the dimensionality of the dot-product operation. Applying
81 the softmax along the queries’ dimension pushes all the candidate keys to be softly matched to at least
82 one query. However, captions mostly describe specific parts of the image, and rarely capture all the vi-
83 sual information. Since we want only the relevant visual information to be captured by the queries, we
84 add a set of default query tokens, stored in a matrix $\mathbf{Q}_{\text{default}}$, which participate in the competitive atten-
85 tion mechanism – with the goal of absorbing the visual information not captured in the caption. These
86 default query tokens are dropped in the subsequent computation steps of our model (akin to registers
87 in ViT backbones [10]). We find the default query tokens crucial to stabilize the training our model.

88 The binding module computations are formalized as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{K}, \mathbf{V} &= \mathbf{W}_q \mathbf{N}, \mathbf{W}_k \mathbf{N}, \mathbf{W}_v \bar{\mathbf{x}} & (1) \\
\mathbf{Q}' &= [\mathbf{Q}; \mathbf{Q}_{\text{default}}], \\
\text{Attention}(\mathbf{Q}', \mathbf{K}, \mathbf{V}) &= \text{softmax} \left(\frac{\mathbf{Q}' \cdot \mathbf{K}^T}{\sqrt{D}}, \text{dim='queries'} \right) \cdot \mathbf{V}, \\
\mathbf{S}, \mathbf{S}_{\text{default}} &= \text{Attention}(\mathbf{Q}', \mathbf{K}, \mathbf{V}). & (2)
\end{aligned}$$

89 Here, \mathbf{W}_q , \mathbf{W}_k , and \mathbf{W}_v are the linear projection weight matrices for the queries, keys, and values,
90 respectively, \mathbf{S} are the visual slots, $\mathbf{S}_{\text{default}}$ are the visual slots from default query tokens, which are
91 discarded for subsequent steps, and $[\cdot]$ denotes the concatenation operation.

92 Thus, the output of this binding module are the visual slots \mathbf{S} . Intuitively, these slots are pushed
93 to represent the visual objects, or entities, that correspond to the nodes of the scene graph. Their
94 object-centric learning is driven by the structured similarity that we detail in the next section.

95 **Structured similarity score** Our second contribution resides in the introduction of a structured
96 similarity score, whose goal is to promote the constraints imposed by the scene graph on the learnable
97 visual slots. Our proposed structured similarity score is composed of an *object scoring* function
98 and a *relationship scoring* function. The object scoring function assesses the presence of each
99 node in the scene graph (objects present in the caption). We model this function as the sum of the
100 cosine similarity between each textual node representation \mathbf{N}^i and its assigned visual slot \mathbf{S}^i . The
101 relationship scoring function encourages the relational constraints imposed by each edge in the scene
102 graph and is defined as a learnable function f_ϕ of the relationship embedding \mathbf{r}^i , and the visual slot
103 representations \mathbf{S}^s and \mathbf{S}^o corresponding to the subject and object of the relationship, respectively.
104 We derive the overall structured similarity score over the visual slots \mathbf{S} from an image \mathbf{x} and a graph
105 $\mathcal{G} = (\{N^i\}_{i=1..M}, \{\mathbf{r}^i, s^i, o^i\}_{i=1..P})$ such that:

$$S(\mathbf{x}, \mathcal{G}) = \frac{\alpha \sum_{i=1..M} \text{cosine}(\mathbf{N}^i, \mathbf{S}^i) + \beta \sum_{i=1..P} f_\phi(\mathbf{r}^i, \mathbf{S}^s, \mathbf{S}^o)}{\alpha M + \beta P}, \quad (3)$$

106 where α and β are parameters controlling the strength of each score. M and P are the number of
107 nodes and relationships in the scene graph \mathcal{G} , respectively.

108 We define f_ϕ as follows:

$$f_\phi(\mathbf{r}, \mathbf{S}^s, \mathbf{S}^o) = \text{cosine}(\mathbf{r}, f_s([\mathbf{r}, \mathbf{S}^s]) + f_o([\mathbf{r}, \mathbf{S}^o])), \quad (4)$$

109 where $[\cdot]$ denotes the concatenation of two vectors and f_s and f_o are MLPs that reduce the dimen-
110 sionality of their inputs. Note that we model the relationship scoring function so that it keeps the
111 same scale as the object scoring function and can take the order of the relationship into account.

112 **Training** The model is trained using the following loss:

$$\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_{itc} + \mathcal{L}_{rel}. \quad (5)$$

113 \mathcal{L}_{itc} is the image-text contrastive loss defined to minimize the distance between image and scene
114 graph representations from paired text-image data while maximizing the distance between image and
115 scene graph representations from unpaired text-image data as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{itc} = - \sum_{i=1}^B \left(\log \frac{\exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathcal{G}_i)}}{\sum_{j=1}^B \exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_j, \mathcal{G}_i)}} + \log \frac{\exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathcal{G}_i)}}{\sum_{j=1}^B \exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathcal{G}_j)}} \right), \quad (6)$$

116 where B is the number of elements in the batch. Note that the S is the structured similarity score
117 defined in Eq. 3. \mathcal{L}_{rel} is the loss that pushes the model to learn a non-symmetric relationship scores:

$$\mathcal{L}_{rel} = - \sum_{i=1}^B \log \frac{\exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathcal{G}_i)}}{\exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathcal{G}_i)} + \exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_i, \bar{\mathcal{G}}_i)} + \exp^{S(\mathbf{x}_i, \tilde{\mathcal{G}}_i)}}, \quad (7)$$

118 where $\bar{\mathcal{G}}$ and $\tilde{\mathcal{G}}$ are altered scene graphs. In $\bar{\mathcal{G}}$, we swap the order of the subject and the object of
119 a relationship, whereas in $\tilde{\mathcal{G}}$, we randomly chose the relationship's subject and object from the nodes
120 in the scene graph.

121 **3 Results**

122 **Setting** We train OC-CLIP and finetune OpenCLIP in-domain on a set of datasets relevant for
 123 real-world compositional understanding. The training text descriptions representing positive samples
 124 are taken from COCO [27], Visual-Genome [24] and GQA [20]. The latter annotates images coming
 125 from Visual Genome [24] with objects and both spatial and non-spatial relationships, and thus
 126 contains a high representation of spatial prepositions. We evaluate the different models on the most
 127 challenging benchmarks representative of compositional understanding, ensuring that we validate
 128 both their *attribute binding* and *spatial relationship* understanding capabilities. In particular, we
 129 use SugarCrepe [18] and ARO-Attribution (ARO-A) [47] for attribute binding and ARO-Relation
 130 (ARO-R) [47], COCO-spatial and GQA-spatial [23] for spatial relationship understanding. The
 131 training of the OC-CLIP’s binding module is done from scratch along with the finetuning of the text
 132 and vision backbones. The text backbone is initialized from OpenCLIP weights [21]. We consider
 133 2 different image base ViT backbones, OpenCLIP (ViT-B-16) [21] and Dinov2 (ViT-B-14) [35], to
 134 show the flexibility of our binding module and learned structured similarity score.

135 **Attribute Binding** We evaluate the attribute binding capabilities of OC-CLIP and baselines on
 136 SugarCrepe [18] and ARO-A [48] benchmarks. We report the results in Table 1. When comparing
 137 OpenCLIP-FT to OC-CLIP (both models), we observe notable performance boosts on ARO-A and
 138 SugarCrepe’s swap-attribute, and swap-object. In particular, OC-CLIP_{B-14} shows a performance
 139 boost of +22.1% on ARO-A, whereas in SugarCrepe, our model reaches improvements of +16.1%
 140 on the swap-attribute split, +17.7% on the swap-object split. When comparing with additional
 141 contrastive-based models (BLIP and XVLM) finetuned with in-domain data, both OC-CLIP models
 142 show notable improvements on SugarCrepe’s swap splits – *e.g.*, OC-CLIP_{B-14} results in +14.6% in
 143 object-swap and +12.3% in attribute-swap – despite not relying on additional binding annotations,
 144 nor language modeling losses. The results of BLIP and XVLM on ARO-A may be explained by
 145 the use of their use of a language modeling prior; It is shown in [18] that language-only models are
 146 performing well on this benchmark because the negative caption are often not realistic.

147 **Spatial Relationship Understanding** We also evaluate the spatial relationship understanding
 148 capabilities of OC-CLIP and baselines on COCO-spatial, GQA-spatial, and ARO-Relation (ARO-R).
 149 Note that ARO-Relation contains both spatial and non-spatial relations but about half of the test
 150 examples consists of left/right relationships understanding. We report the results in Table 1 and show
 151 consistent improvements of both OC-CLIP models over the baseline models and across the 3 datasets.
 152 In particular, the best OC-CLIP model outperforms OpenCLIP-FT by +47.9% on COCO-spatial,
 153 +46.6% on GQA-spatial, and +34.7% on ARO-R. When compared to contrastive VLMs finetuned with
 154 in-domain data (XVLM, BLIP), OC-CLIP models exhibit superior performance, with improvements
 155 between +10% and +27% over the strongest contrastive finetuned VLM. Finally, when compared
 156 to baselines leveraging hard-negatives (NegCLIP), OC-CLIP remains the highest performer.

Model	WhatsUp		SugarCrepe		ARO	
	COCO-spatial	GQA-Spatial	swap-obj	swap-att	Att	Rel
OpenCLIP-FT	45.6	49.1	63.1	72.4	59.9	50.1
XVLM _[49]	73.6	67	64.9	73.9	86.8	73.4
BLIP ₂₆	56.4	52.6	66.2	76.2	88.0	59.0
NegCLIP _[47]	46.4	46.7	75.2	75.4	70.5	80.2
OC-CLIP _{B-16}	90.1	93.9	76.3	87.1	80.3	83.7
OC-CLIP _{B-14}	93.5	95.6	80.8	88.5	82.0	84.8

Table 1: **Compositional Understanding:** Performance on the hardest SugarCrepe, What’s Up and ARO Splits. Both OpenCLIP-FT and OC-CLIP are initialized with the same OpenCLIP checkpoints. OC-CLIP is trained with two ViT base backbones with different resolutions: OpenCLIP’s backbone (B-16) and Dinov2 (B-14).

157 4 Conclusion

158 We propose OC-CLIP, a method that enhances the compositional scene understanding of CLIP-
159 like models by leveraging object-centric representation learning. The results show that OC-CLIP
160 significantly improves performance on challenging real-world compositional image-text matching
161 benchmarks, such as SugarCrepe and Whatsup. Future work could explore ways to improve the
162 scalability of the approach when trained from scratch with noisy alt-text based datasets.

163 References

- 164 [1] Rameen Abdal, Peihao Zhu, John Femiani, Niloy J. Mitra, and Peter Wonka. Clip2stylegan:
165 Unsupervised extraction of stylegan edit directions, 2021.
- 166 [2] Rim Assouel, Lluís Castrejon, Aaron Courville, Nicolas Ballas, and Yoshua Bengio. VIM:
167 Variational independent modules for video prediction. In Bernhard Schölkopf, Caroline Uhler,
168 and Kun Zhang, editors, *Proceedings of the First Conference on Causal Learning and Reasoning*,
169 volume 177 of *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research*, pages 70–89. PMLR, 11–13 Apr
170 2022.
- 171 [3] Rabiul Awal, Saba Ahmadi, Le Zhang, and Aishwarya Agrawal. Vismin: Visual minimal-change
172 understanding, 2024.
- 173 [4] Lucas Beyer, Andreas Steiner, André Susano Pinto, Alexander Kolesnikov, Xiao Wang, Daniel
174 Salz, Maxim Neumann, Ibrahim Alabdulmohsin, Michael Tschannen, Emanuele Bugliarello,
175 Thomas Unterthiner, Daniel Keysers, Skanda Koppula, Fangyu Liu, Adam Grycner, Alexey
176 Gritsenko, Neil Houlsby, Manoj Kumar, Keran Rong, Julian Eisenschlos, Rishabh Kabra,
177 Matthias Bauer, Matko Bošnjak, Xi Chen, Matthias Minderer, Paul Voigtlaender, Ioana Bica,
178 Ivana Balazevic, Joan Puigcerver, Pinelopi Papalampidi, Olivier Henaff, Xi Xiong, Radu Soricut,
179 Jeremiah Harmsen, and Xiaohua Zhai. Paligemma: A versatile 3b vlm for transfer, 2024.
- 180 [5] Mu Cai, Haotian Liu, Siva Karthik Mustikovela, Gregory P. Meyer, Yuning Chai, Dennis Park,
181 and Yong Jae Lee. Making large multimodal models understand arbitrary visual prompts. In
182 *CVPR 2024*, 2024.
- 183 [6] Soravit Changpinyo, Piyush Sharma, Nan Ding, and Radu Soricut. Conceptual 12M: Pushing
184 web-scale image-text pre-training to recognize long-tail visual concepts. In *CVPR*, 2021.
- 185 [7] Xi Chen, Xiao Wang, Soravit Changpinyo, AJ Piergiovanni, Piotr Padlewski, Daniel Salz,
186 Sebastian Goodman, Adam Grycner, Basil Mustafa, Lucas Beyer, et al. Pali: A jointly-scaled
187 multilingual language-image model. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2209.06794*, 2022.
- 188 [8] Jaemin Cho, Seunghyun Yoon, Ajinkya Kale, Franck Dernoncourt, Trung Bui, and Mohit
189 Bansal. Fine-grained image captioning with clip reward, 2023.
- 190 [9] Wenliang Dai, Junnan Li, Dongxu Li, Anthony Meng Huat Tiong, Junqi Zhao, Weisheng
191 Wang, Boyang Li, Pascale Fung, and Steven Hoi. Instructblip: Towards general-purpose
192 vision-language models with instruction tuning, 2023.
- 193 [10] Timothée Darcet, Maxime Oquab, Julien Mairal, and Piotr Bojanowski. Vision transformers
194 need registers, 2024.
- 195 [11] Sivan Doherty, Assaf Arbelle, Sivan Harary, Rameswar Panda, Roei Herzig, Eli Schwartz,
196 Donghyun Kim, Raja Giryes, Rogerio Feris, Shimon Ullman, and Leonid Karlinsky. Teaching
197 structured visionlanguage concepts to visionlanguage models, 2023.
- 198 [12] Gamaleldin Elsayed, Aravindh Mahendran, Sjoerd van Steenkiste, Klaus Greff, Michael C
199 Mozer, and Thomas Kipf. Savi++: Towards end-to-end object-centric learning from real-world
200 videos. In S. Koyejo, S. Mohamed, A. Agarwal, D. Belgrave, K. Cho, and A. Oh, editors,
201 *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, volume 35, pages 28940–28954. Curran
202 Associates, Inc., 2022.

- 203 [13] S. M. Ali Eslami, Nicolas Heess, Theophane Weber, Yuval Tassa, David Szepesvari, Koray
204 Kavukcuoglu, and Geoffrey E. Hinton. Attend, infer, repeat: Fast scene understanding with
205 generative models, 2016.
- 206 [14] Peng Gao, Shijie Geng, Renrui Zhang, Teli Ma, Rongyao Fang, Yongfeng Zhang, Hongsheng
207 Li, and Yu Qiao. Clip-adapter: Better vision-language models with feature adapters, 2021.
- 208 [15] Yash Goyal, Tejas Khot, Douglas Summers-Stay, Dhruv Batra, and Devi Parikh. Making the
209 V in VQA matter: Elevating the role of image understanding in visual question answering.
210 In *Proceedings of the IEEE Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition*, pages
211 6904–6913, 2017.
- 212 [16] Klaus Greff, Raphaël Lopez Kaufman, Rishabh Kabra, Nick Watters, Chris Burgess, Daniel
213 Zoran, Loic Matthey, Matthew Botvinick, and Alexander Lerchner. Multi-object representation
214 learning with iterative variational inference, 2020.
- 215 [17] Klaus Greff, Sjoerd van Steenkiste, and Jürgen Schmidhuber. On the binding problem in
216 artificial neural networks, 2020.
- 217 [18] Cheng-Yu Hsieh, Jieyu Zhang, Zixian Ma, Aniruddha Kembhavi, and Ranjay Krishna. Sugar-
218 crepe: Fixing hackable benchmarks for vision-language compositionality, 2023.
- 219 [19] Cheng-Yu Hsieh, Jieyu Zhang, Zixian Ma, Aniruddha Kembhavi, and Ranjay Krishna. Sugar-
220 crepe: Fixing hackable benchmarks for vision-language compositionality. In *NeurIPS 2023*,
221 2023.
- 222 [20] Drew A Hudson and Christopher D Manning. Gqa: A new dataset for real-world visual
223 reasoning and compositional question answering. In *Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF conference*
224 *on computer vision and pattern recognition*, pages 6700–6709, 2019.
- 225 [21] Gabriel Ilharco, Mitchell Wortsman, Ross Wightman, Cade Gordon, Nicholas Carlini, Rohan
226 Taori, Achal Dave, Vaishaal Shankar, Hongseok Namkoong, John Miller, Hannaneh Hajishirzi,
227 Ali Farhadi, and Ludwig Schmidt. Openclip, 2021.
- 228 [22] Yannis Kalantidis, Mert Bulent Sariyildiz, Noe Pion, Philippe Weinzaepfel, and Diane Larlus.
229 Hard negative mixing for contrastive learning, 2020.
- 230 [23] Amita Kamath, Jack Hessel, and Kai-Wei Chang. What’s “up” with vision-language models?
231 investigating their struggle with spatial reasoning, 2023.
- 232 [24] Ranjay Krishna, Yuke Zhu, Oliver Groth, Justin Johnson, Kenji Hata, Joshua Kravitz, Stephanie
233 Chen, Yannis Kalantidis, Li-Jia Li, David A Shamma, et al. Visual genome: Connecting
234 language and vision using crowdsourced dense image annotations. *International journal of*
235 *computer vision*, 123(1):32–73, 2017.
- 236 [25] Tiep Le, Vasudev Lal, and Phillip Howard. Coco-counterfactuals: Automatically constructed
237 counterfactual examples for image-text pairs. In *NeurIPS 2023*, 2023.
- 238 [26] Junnan Li, Dongxu Li, Caiming Xiong, and Steven Hoi. Blip: Bootstrapping language-image
239 pre-training for unified vision-language understanding and generation. In *ICML*, 2022.
- 240 [27] Tsung-Yi Lin, Michael Maire, Serge J. Belongie, James Hays, Pietro Perona, Deva Ramanan,
241 Piotr Dollár, and C. Lawrence Zitnick. Microsoft COCO: common objects in context. In David J.
242 Fleet, Tomás Pajdla, Bernt Schiele, and Tinne Tuytelaars, editors, *Computer Vision - ECCV*
243 *2014 - 13th European Conference, Zurich, Switzerland, September 6-12, 2014, Proceedings,*
244 *Part V*, volume 8693 of *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, pages 740–755. Springer, 2014.
- 245 [28] Zhiqiu Lin, Xinyue Chen, Deepak Pathak, Pengchuan Zhang, and Deva Ramanan. Revisiting
246 the role of language priors in vision-language models. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2306.01879*, 2024.
- 247 [29] Haotian Liu, Chunyuan Li, Yuheng Li, Bo Li, Yuanhan Zhang, Sheng Shen, and Yong Jae Lee.
248 Llava-next: Improved reasoning, ocr, and world knowledge, January 2024.
- 249 [30] Haotian Liu, Chunyuan Li, Qingyang Wu, and Yong Jae Lee. Visual instruction tuning. *NeurIPS*
250 *2023*, 2023.

- 251 [31] Francesco Locatello, Dirk Weissenborn, Thomas Unterthiner, Aravindh Mahendran, Georg
252 Heigold, Jakob Uszkoreit, Alexey Dosovitskiy, and Thomas Kipf. Object-centric learning with
253 slot attention, 2020.
- 254 [32] Jan Hendrik Metzen, Piyapat Saranrittichai, and Chaithanya Kumar Mummadi. Autoclip:
255 Auto-tuning zero-shot classifiers for vision-language models, 2024.
- 256 [33] Marie-Francine Moens, Xuanjing Huang, Lucia Specia, and Scott Wen-tau Yih, editors. *CLIP-
257 Score: A Reference-free Evaluation Metric for Image Captioning*, Online and Punta Cana,
258 Dominican Republic, November 2021. Association for Computational Linguistics.
- 259 [34] Shanka Subhra Mondal, Jonathan D. Cohen, and Taylor W. Webb. Slot abstractors: Toward
260 scalable abstract visual reasoning, 2024.
- 261 [35] Maxime Oquab, Timothée Darcet, Théo Moutakanni, Huy Vo, Marc Szafraniec, Vasil Khalidov,
262 Pierre Fernandez, Daniel Haziza, Francisco Massa, Alaaeldin El-Nouby, Mahmoud Assran,
263 Nicolas Ballas, Wojciech Galuba, Russell Howes, Po-Yao Huang, Shang-Wen Li, Ishan Misra,
264 Michael Rabbat, Vasu Sharma, Gabriel Synnaeve, Hu Xu, Hervé Jegou, Julien Mairal, Patrick
265 Labatut, Armand Joulin, and Piotr Bojanowski. Dinov2: Learning robust visual features without
266 supervision, 2024.
- 267 [36] Roni Paiss, Ariel Ephrat, Omer Tov, Shiran Zada, Inbar Mosseri, Michal Irani, and Tali Dekel.
268 Teaching clip to count to ten. In *ICCV 2023*, 2023.
- 269 [37] Letitia Parcalabescu, Michele Cafagna, Lilitta Muradjan, Anette Frank, Iacer Calixto, and
270 Albert Gatt. Valse: A task-independent benchmark for vision and language models centered
271 on linguistic phenomena. In *Proceedings of the 60th Annual Meeting of the Association
272 for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers)*, page 8253–8280. Association for
273 Computational Linguistics, 2022.
- 274 [38] Dustin Podell, Zion English, Kyle Lacey, Andreas Blattmann, Tim Dockhorn, Jonas Müller, Joe
275 Penna, and Robin Rombach. Sdxl: Improving latent diffusion models for high-resolution image
276 synthesis, 2023.
- 277 [39] Alec Radford, Jong Wook Kim, Chris Hallacy, Aditya Ramesh, Gabriel Goh, Sandhini Agarwal,
278 Girish Sastry, Amanda Askell, Pamela Mishkin, Jack Clark, et al. Learning transferable visual
279 models from natural language supervision. In *International conference on machine learning*,
280 pages 8748–8763. PMLR, 2021.
- 281 [40] Aditya Ramesh, Prafulla Dhariwal, Alex Nichol, Casey Chu, and Mark Chen. Hierarchical
282 text-conditional image generation with clip latents. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2204.06125*, 2022.
- 283 [41] Chitwan Saharia, William Chan, Saurabh Saxena, Lala Li, Jay Whang, Emily Denton, Seyed
284 Kamyar Seyed Ghasemipour, Burcu Karagol Ayan, S Sara Mahdavi, Rapha Gontijo Lopes, et al.
285 Photorealistic text-to-image diffusion models with deep language understanding. *arXiv preprint
286 arXiv:2205.11487*, 2022.
- 287 [42] Christoph Schuhmann, Romain Beaumont, Richard Vencu, Cade Gordon, Ross Wightman,
288 Mehdi Cherti, Theo Coombes, Aarush Katta, Clayton Mullis, Mitchell Wortsman, Patrick
289 Schramowski, Srivatsa Kundurthy, Katherine Crowson, Ludwig Schmidt, Robert Kaczmarczyk,
290 and Jenia Jitsev. Laion-5b: An open large-scale dataset for training next generation image-text
291 models, 2022.
- 292 [43] Maximilian Seitzer, Max Horn, Andrii Zadaianchuk, Dominik Zietlow, Tianjun Xiao, Carl-
293 Johann Simon-Gabriel, Tong He, Zheng Zhang, Bernhard Schölkopf, Thomas Brox, and
294 Francesco Locatello. Bridging the gap to real-world object-centric learning, 2023.
- 295 [44] Taylor Webb, Shanka Subhra Mondal, and Jonathan D Cohen. Systematic visual reasoning
296 through object-centric relational abstraction. In A. Oh, T. Naumann, A. Globerson, K. Saenko,
297 M. Hardt, and S. Levine, editors, *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, vol-
298 ume 36, pages 72030–72043. Curran Associates, Inc., 2023.

- 299 [45] Yi-Fu Wu, Klaus Greff, Google Deepmind, Gamaleldin F. Elsayed, Michael C. Mozer, Thomas
300 Kipf, and Sjoerd van Steenkiste. Inverted-attention transformers can learn object representations:
301 Insights from slot attention.
- 302 [46] Ziyi Wu, Jingyu Hu, Wuyue Lu, Igor Gilitschenski, and Animesh Garg. Slotdiffusion: Object-
303 centric generative modeling with diffusion models, 2023.
- 304 [47] Mert Yuksekgonul, Federico Bianchi, Pratyusha Kalluri, Dan Jurafsky, and James Zou. When
305 and why vision-language models behave like bags-of-words, and what to do about it?, 2023.
- 306 [48] Mert Yuksekgonul, Federico Bianchi, Pratyusha Kalluri, Dan Jurafsky, and James Zou. When
307 and why vision-language models behave like bags-of-words, and what to do about it? In
308 *International Conference on Learning Representations*, 2023.
- 309 [49] Yan Zeng, Xinsong Zhang, and Hang Li. Multi-grained vision language pre-training: Aligning
310 texts with visual concepts. In Kamalika Chaudhuri, Stefanie Jegelka, Le Song, Csaba Szepesvari,
311 Gang Niu, and Sivan Sabato, editors, *Proceedings of the 39th International Conference on*
312 *Machine Learning*, volume 162 of *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research*, pages 2594–
313 26009. PMLR, 2022.
- 314 [50] Yan Zeng, Xinsong Zhang, and Hang Li. Multi-grained vision language pre-training: Aligning
315 texts with visual concepts, 2022.
- 316 [51] Xiaohua Zhai, Xiao Wang, Basil Mustafa, Andreas Steiner, Daniel Keysers, Alexander
317 Kolesnikov, and Lucas Beyer. Lit: Zero-shot transfer with locked-image text tuning, 2022.
- 318 [52] Xiaohua Zhai, Xiao Wang, Basil Mustafa, Andreas Steiner, Daniel Keysers, Alexander
319 Kolesnikov, and Lucas Beyer. Lit: Zero-shot transfer with locked-image text tuning. In
320 *Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition*, pages
321 18123–18133, 2022.
- 322 [53] Jianrui Zhang, Mu Cai, Tengyang Xie, and Yong Jae Lee. Countercurate: Enhancing physical
323 and semantic visio-linguistic compositional reasoning via counterfactual examples, 2024.
- 324 [54] Le Zhang, Rabiul Awal, and Aishwarya Agrawal. Contrasting intra-modal and ranking cross-
325 modal hard negatives to enhance visio-linguistic compositional understanding, 2024.
- 326 [55] Tiancheng Zhao, Tianqi Zhang, Mingwei Zhu, Haozhan Shen, Kyusong Lee, Xiaopeng Lu,
327 and Jianwei Yin. VI-checklist: Evaluating pre-trained vision-language models with objects,
328 attributes and relations. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2207.00221*, 2022.

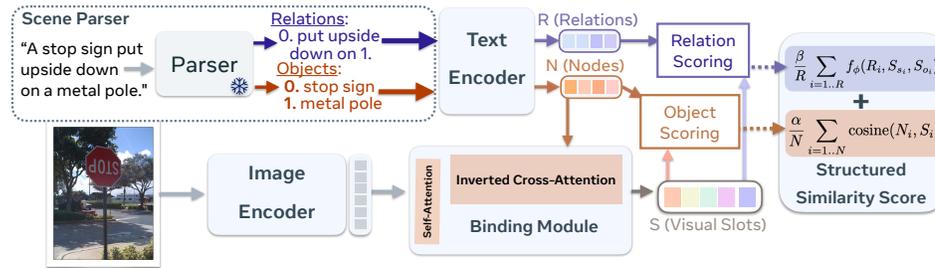


Figure 1: Object-Centric CLIP (OC-CLIP) overview.

330 A.1 Related Work

331 **Contrastive Pretraining of VLMs.** Vision-language models (VLMs) have made substantial
 332 strides in both the vision and multi-modal domains. Modern VLMs are pretrained on vast, diverse
 333 and oftentimes noisy multi-modal datasets [6, 42, 21, 50] and applied to various zero-shot tasks.
 334 CLIP [39] presented a contrastive learning approach used for pretraining, which involves training
 335 the model to differentiate between similar and dissimilar image-text pairs. This approach encourages
 336 the model to learn a shared representation space for images and text, where semantically similar pairs
 337 are close together and dissimilar pairs are far apart. Following CLIP’s lead, image-text contrastive
 338 learning has become a prevalent strategy for VLM pretraining [30, 5, 29, 9, 51, 7, 4]. Contrastive
 339 vision-language pretraining spans numerous downstream applications, including zero-shot image
 340 classification [52, 39, 32, 14], text-to-image generation [38, 1, 40, 41], as well as assessing text-image
 341 alignment [33, 8]. In this work we are particularly interested the ability of CLIP-based VLMs to
 342 evaluate compositional text-image alignment.

343 **Compositional Understanding Benchmarks.** Several benchmarks have been developed to assess
 344 the compositional understanding of VLMs. In this work, we focus on benchmarks structured as
 345 cross-modal retrieval tasks where the model needs to distinguish between correct and incorrect text
 346 descriptions given an image, and evaluations are based on accuracy metrics. The majority of these
 347 benchmarks [55, 47, 37] rely on the rule-based construction of negative captions and the generation
 348 of their associated image counter-factuals [53, 3]. Yet, many of these benchmarks may be solved
 349 by leveraging the language prior exclusively [15, 28], hence disregarding the information from the
 350 visual input. To address this, benchmarks such as SugarCrepe [19] leverage large language models
 351 to generate plausible and linguistically correct hard negatives, and show that previously introduced
 352 text-based hard negative strategies are not always effective [48] – *e.g.*, when considering attribute and
 353 object swaps between textual descriptions. Other benchmarks focus on assessing the VLMs’ spatial
 354 understanding [23, 48, 53], and propose to finetune CLIP-based models on data containing a high pro-
 355 portion of spatial relationships since these relationships tend to underrepresented in commonly used
 356 pretraining datasets. Interestingly, (author?) [23] show that even when finetuning with in-domain
 357 data with an overrepresentation of spatial relationships, state-of-the-art models still exhibit a close
 358 to random chance performance. In this work, we test the hypothesis that spatial relationship failures
 359 are due to the lack composition in the similarity score computation used to train CLIP-like models.

360 **Object-centric Binding Inductive Biases.** CLIP has been shown [47] to be pushed to learn dis-
 361 entangled, bag-of-words-style representations from the contrastive loss and the easily distinguishable
 362 negatives typically used for pretraining. Although the learned representations might be effective for
 363 objects presented in isolation, they struggle with scenes containing multiple objects []. For example,
 364 consider a simple scene with a green apple and a yellow banana. In this case, the model must maintain
 365 and correctly link the attributes (“green”, “yellow”) to the objects (“apple”, “banana”), without mixing
 366 the concepts – *e.g.*, “yellow apple” or ‘green banana’. This exemplifies the importance of devising
 367 robust mechanisms within the CLIP architecture and/or training to accurately handle multiple objects,
 368 while preventing feature interferences. In this work, we focus on equipping CLIP with object-centric
 369 binding inductive biases and take inspiration from the architectures proposed in the unsupervised

object-centric visual representation learning literature [31, 46, 43, 2]. Many recent image-only approaches follow a simple inductive bias introduced by slot Attention [31], where an image – encoded as a set of input tokens – is soft partitioned into K slots. In particular, attention maps are computed via a **inverted cross attention** mechanism [45], where the softmax is applied along the query dimension in order to induce a competition between the slots to explain different groups of input tokens. In this work, we extend these inductive biases to define text-conditioned visual slots from the input image.

A.2 More Compositional Results

We evaluate the attribute binding capabilities of OC-CLIP and baselines on SugarCreme [18] and ARO-A [47] benchmarks. We report the results in Table 2. When comparing OpenCLIP-FT to OC-CLIP (both models), we observe notable performance boosts on ARO-A and SugarCreme’s swap-attribute, and swap-object. In particular, OC-CLIP_{B-14} shows a performance boost of +22.1% on ARO-A, whereas in SugarCreme, our model reaches improvements of +16.1% on the swap-attribute split, +17.7% on the swap-object split, and a smaller +4.7% on the replace-relationship split. Moreover, both OC-CLIP models perform similarly to OpenCLIP-FT on the remaining SugarCreme splits. This is to be expected since the remaining splits do not require precise binding to distinguish between positive and negative captions and may therefore be solved with a bag-of-words-like representation. When comparing with additional contrastive-based models (BLIP and XVLM) finetuned with in-domain data, both OC-CLIP models show notable improvements on SugarCreme’s swap splits – e.g., OC-CLIP_{B-14} results in +14.6% in object-swap and +12.3% in attribute-swap – despite not relying on additional binding annotations, nor language modeling losses. The results of BLIP and XVLM on ARO-A may be explained by the use of their use of a language modeling prior; (author?) [19] emphasizes that language-only models are performing well on this benchmark because the negative caption are often not realistic. Both OC-CLIP models also improve the results of hard-negative-based methods on SugarCreme’s swap splits as well as ARO-A. In all the remaining splits of SugarCreme, except add-attribute, OC-CLIP models perform similarly to previous works leveraging hard-negatives. The results achieved by CE-CLIP and CC-CLIP on the add-attribute split could be attributed to an increase of attribute coverage induced by the language model generations.

Model	SugarCreme – Swap		SugarCreme – Add		SugarCreme – Replace			ARO-A
	Object	Attribute	Object	Attribute	Object	Attribute	Relation	
<i>Zero-shot</i>								
OpenCLIP	68.2	66.2	82.7	80.3	93.8	82.8	67.3	58.8
<i>In-domain ft baselines</i>								
BLIP ^{26†}	66.2	76.2	-	-	96.5	81.9	68.35	88.0
XVLM (author?) ^{49†}	64.9	73.9	-	-	95.2	87.7	77.4	86.8
OpenCLIP-FT	63.1 ±0.6	72.4 ±1.1	93.4 ±0.2	83.1 ±0.5	95.4	87.0 ±0.6	75.5 ±0.6	59.9 ±0.2
<i>Hard-Negative based baselines</i>								
NegCLIP ^{[47]†}	75.2	75.4	88.8	82.8	92.7	85.9	76.5	70.5
CE-CLIP ^{[54]†}	72.8	77	92.4	93.4	93.1	88.8	79	76.4
CC-CLIP ^{[53]†}	68.6	73.6	86.7	90.3	95.9	87.9	76.2	-
<i>Ours</i>								
OC-CLIP _{B-16}	76.3 ±0.7	87.1 ±0.2	91.3	83.8 ±1.0	93.9 ±0.4	88.3 ±0.1	77.0 ±0.2	80.3 ±0.1
OC-CLIP _{B-14}	80.8 ±0.7	88.5 ±0.4	93.0 ±0.3	83.8 ±1.1	95.7 ±0.4	88.8 ±0.6	80.2 ±0.2	82.0

Table 2: **Attribute binding: Performance on SugarCreme and ARO-Attribution (ARO-A).** Both OpenCLIP-FT and OC-CLIP are initialized with the same OpenCLIP checkpoints. OC-CLIP is trained with two ViT base backbones with different resolutions: OpenCLIP’s backbone (B-16) and Dinov2 (B-14).

396

397 For the parsing of the training and testing data we used a llama-3-70b Instruct model with the
398 following prompt :

Parsing Prompt

Given a caption, your task is to parse it into its constituent noun phrases and relationships. The noun phrases should represent independent visual objects mentioned in the caption without semantic oversimplification. For each caption, output the parsed noun phrases (e.g., entities) and relationships in JSON format, placing the dictionary between [ANS] and [/ANS] brackets. In the relationships, use indices to specify the subject and object of the relationship mentioned in the caption. The indices of the subject and object should be integers. Here are a few examples:

Caption: A large brown box with a green toy in it

Output:

```
[ANS]
{
  "entities": [
    "large brown box",
    "green toy"
  ],
  "relationships": [
    {
      "relationship": "in",
      "subject": 1,
      "object": 0
    }
  ]
}
[/ANS]
```

[...] More examples

PAY ATTENTION to the following:

- Relationships **MUST** relate two different entities in the caption and **NOT** be unary. For example, in the caption 'red suitcases stacked upon each other', 'stacked upon each other' is not considered a relationship.
- Do not forget any relationships.
- Relationships **MUST** be directed. 'and' is not a relationship.
- Pay attention to spatial relationships like 'behind', 'left of', 'with', 'below', 'next to', etc. 'and' is not a relationship.
- Check the right dependencies when the relationships are not direct. In the caption template a X with a Y in it, it refers to X.
- Pay attention to co-references.

Now, parse the following caption into its constituting entities and relationships. You **MUST** place the answer between [ANS] and [/ANS] delimiters.

Caption: