

‘Hello, World!’: Making GNNs Talk with LLMs

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Abstract

While graph neural networks (GNNs) have shown remarkable performance across diverse graph-related tasks, their high-dimensional hidden representations render them black boxes. In this work, we propose Graph Lingual Network (GLN), a GNN built on large language models (LLMs), with hidden representations in the form of human-readable text. Through careful prompt design, GLN incorporates not only the message passing module of GNNs but also advanced GNN techniques, including graph attention and initial residual connection. The comprehensibility of GLN’s hidden representations enables an intuitive analysis of how node representations change (1) across layers and (2) under advanced GNN techniques, shedding light on the inner workings of GNNs. Furthermore, we demonstrate that GLN achieves strong zero-shot performance on node classification and link prediction, outperforming existing LLM-based baseline methods.

1 Introduction

Graph neural networks (GNNs) are designed to process graph-structured data, and they have demonstrated strong performance in various downstream tasks such as node classification and link prediction (Corso et al., 2024). A key to their success lies in their message passing module, which updates the representation of a node by aggregating information from its neighbors (Hamilton, 2020). However, the high-dimensional embeddings (i.e., vectorized representations) obtained via existing GNNs are generally not comprehensible.

In this work, we propose **GLN** (**G**raph **L**ingual **N**etwork), where an LLM is prompted to aggregate neighbor information to update a node’s representation. Therefore, all hidden node representations of GLN are human-readable texts. Moreover, we propose a tailored LLM prompting framework incorporating advanced GNN techniques, specifically

graph attention (Veličković et al., 2018) and initial residual connection (Chen et al., 2020).

Compared to existing GNNs, our GLN offers several advantages. First, its hidden representations are *comprehensible and human-readable*, since they are text descriptions of nodes generated by the LLM. Second, using an LLM as the message passing module enables GLN to solve graph-related tasks in a zero-shot manner, without any training or task labels. Third, GLN can be further prompted to *explain its decisions* on graph-related tasks, facilitating human understanding of its reasoning.

Thanks to the comprehensibility of GLN’s hidden representations, we provide an intuitive analysis regarding how the node representations change (1) across GLN layers and (2) under advanced GNN techniques. Drawing from this analysis, we offer several key insights into the mechanisms underlying GNN message passing and its advanced techniques. Moreover, we demonstrate the zero-shot capability of GLN on popular downstream tasks (node classification and link prediction), demonstrating its superiority over existing LLM-based baseline methods. Code, datasets, and example node representations generated by GLN are in <https://github.com/kswoo97/GLN-Code>.

2 Related work and preliminaries

In this section, we cover related work and preliminaries of our research.

2.1 Related work

Graph neural networks. In various graph-related tasks, such as node classification and link prediction, graph neural networks (GNNs) have achieved strong performance (Luo et al., 2024). The core module of a GNN involves message-passing, which updates node representation by aggregating information from its neighboring nodes (Hamilton, 2020) (refer to Figure 1 (b) for an example). This

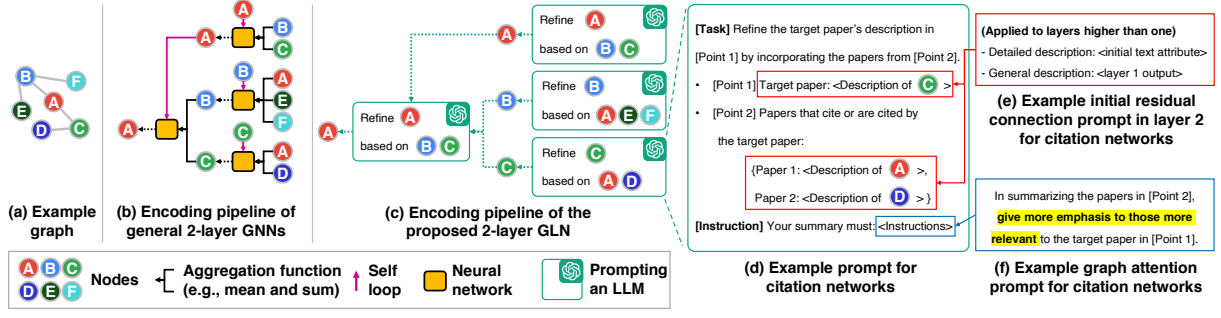


Figure 1: **Overview of general GNNs and our GLN.** To obtain node $\textcircled{A}$'s representation in example graph (a), a general 2-layer GNN first refines the representations of $\textcircled{A}$ and its one-hop neighbors, and then updates that of $\textcircled{A}$ again using these refined representations, as shown in (b). A similar mechanism is applied in GLN, as shown in (c), but the aggregation functions and neural networks are replaced by an LLM with our prompt, illustrated in (d) - (f).

process is typically repeated across layers, enabling a node's representation at k -th layer to summarize its k -hop neighbor information.

Several advanced techniques have been proposed to enhance GNN message passing, notably *graph attention* (Veličković et al., 2018) and *initial residual connection* (Chen et al., 2020). Graph attention allows a GNN to learn the relative importance of each neighbor during aggregation. Initial residual connections help preserve original representations (i.e., initial feature vectors) by injecting them into each layer, mitigating their degradation by the repeated message passing.

Combining GNNs with LLMs. With the remarkable performance of LLMs in a wide range of domains (Chang et al., 2024), many studies have combined them with GNNs to tackle various graph-related tasks (Ren et al., 2024). Early works either fine-tuned LLMs (Chen et al., 2024a) or fed LLM outputs into GNNs during their training for graph-related tasks (He et al., 2024), both incurring high training costs. In contrast, several recent works prompted LLMs to model GNNs' operations without further training (Chen et al., 2024b; Zhu et al., 2025). Among them, Zhu et al. (2025) obtained graph vocabulary for graph foundation models by prompting LLMs to mimic the message-passing modules of GNNs. Since their method does not aim for user comprehension, the refined representations offer limited utility from a comprehension perspective. Specifically, instead of enriching textual representations of nodes across layers, it tends to merely enumerate neighbor information (see Appendix B.3 for further details).

2.2 Preliminaries

A graph $\mathcal{G} = \{\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E}\}$ is defined by a node set $\mathcal{V} = \{v_1, \dots, v_{|\mathcal{V}|}\}$ and an edge set $\mathcal{E} = \{e_1, \dots, e_{|\mathcal{E}|}\}$.

Each edge $e_i \in \mathcal{E}$ is defined by a pair of nodes (i.e., $e_i \in \binom{\mathcal{V}}{2}$), and node v_i 's neighbor set $\mathcal{N}_i$ is defined by a set of nodes linked to v_i (i.e., $\mathcal{N}_i = \{v_j \in \mathcal{V} : \{v_i, v_j\} \in \mathcal{E}\}$). In this work, we consider a *text-attributed graph*, where each node $v_i \in \mathcal{V}$ is associated with a text attribute $D_i^{(0)}$ that describes v_i , which we call initial text attribute.

3 Proposed method: GLN

In this section, we introduce **GLN** (**G**raph **L**ingual **N**etwork), a graph neural network where an LLM serves as its message passing module. We first give an overview of GLN (Sec. 3.1) and describe our specialized prompt that incorporates GNNs' advanced techniques (Sec. 3.2). Refer to Figure 1 for an overview of GLN.

3.1 Overview

At each layer, GLN refines the textual representation of each node by prompting an LLM to aggregate information from the node's neighbors. Specifically, at layer ℓ , an LLM receives an input prompt consisting of (1) the target node v_i 's representation from the previous layer $D_i^{(\ell-1)}$ and (2) the neighbor representations from the previous layer $\{D_j^{(\ell-1)} : v_j \in \mathcal{N}_i\}$ (the prompt design is detailed in Sec. 3.2).¹ The LLM then outputs the refined textual representation of v_i , denoted as $D_i^{(\ell)}$, effectively integrating the prior representations of both the target node and its neighbors.

After L iterations, corresponding to the number of GLN layers, we define the final representation of node v_i as the set of its intermediate embeddings (i.e., $\{D_i^{(t)} : t \in \{0, 1, \dots, L\}\}$)² to capture diverse information about the node. Here, each layer

¹Recall that $D_i^{(0)}$ is the v_i 's initial text attribute (Sec. 2.2).

²Detailed representation format is in Appendix D.2.

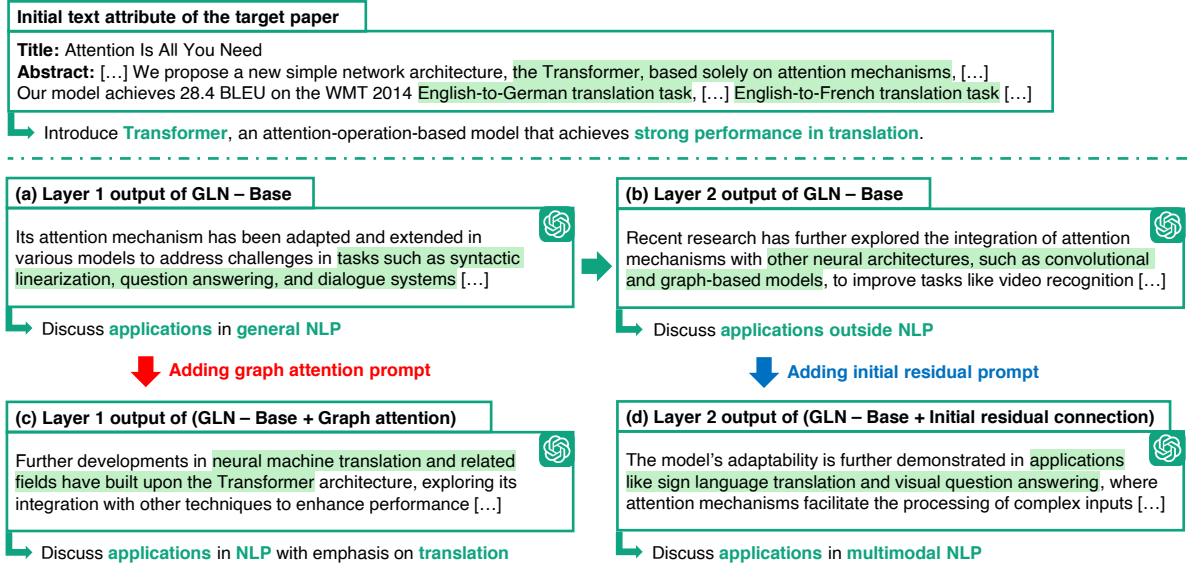


Figure 2: **Representations become more general across layers, are specialized to the target node through graph attention, and retain target-specific information in higher layers through initial residual connections.** We present a case study on (Vaswani et al., 2017), showing GLN-Base’s representations of the paper at: (a) layer 1, (b) layer 2, (c) layer 1 with a graph attention prompt, and (d) layer 2 with an initial residual connection prompt.

of a GNN captures a different level of information: the earlier layers encode fine-grained, local features from immediate neighbors, while the later layers aggregate broader and more abstract information from multi-hop neighbors (Xu et al., 2018).

3.2 Advanced techniques

GNN-style prompting. The key innovation of GLN involves its prompt design, which determines how the LLM aggregates neighbor information to update the target node representation. For this, we adopt two advanced GNN techniques: (1) graph attention (Veličković et al., 2018) and (2) initial residual connection (Chen et al., 2020) (refer to Sec. 2.1 for their details). To implement graph attention with an LLM, we design a prompt that encourages the LLM to place greater emphasis on neighbors that are more relevant to the target node during aggregation; we refer to this as the *graph attention prompt* (refer to Figure 1 (f)).³ Similarly, to implement initial residual connections, we include both the previous-layer output and the raw attributes of each node in their descriptions; we refer to this as the *initial residual connection prompt* (refer to Figure 1 (e)). Details on our prompt design and its alternatives are provided in Appendix D.1.

Token-efficient prompting. We can further improve the efficiency of GLN by incorporating a token-efficient prompting strategy that reduces input and/or output tokens. Input tokens can be re-

duced by updating node representations with randomly sampled neighbors rather than the full neighborhood. Moreover, output tokens can be reduced by instructing the LLM to follow a specific format, such as limiting the number of generated paragraphs. In our experiments, we fix the number of neighbor samples at 10 and limit the output to 2 paragraphs. Nevertheless, we validate that GLN remains competitive even when fewer neighbor samples are used and when it is prompted to produce shorter outputs, as detailed in Appendix B.6.

4 Analysis and experiments

In this section, we analyze representations obtained by GLN and demonstrate its zero-shot capability in several graph-related tasks.

4.1 Representation analysis

Setup. We conduct a case study of GLN representation of an academic paper, (Vaswani et al., 2017) (Figure 2), on the OGBN-arXiv citation network dataset (Hu et al., 2020), where nodes and edges represent papers and citations, respectively. Additional examples from diverse domains (e.g., computer vision and graph learning) are in Appendix B.1. We extract layer-1 and layer-2 outputs of **GLN-Base**, a GLN variant that omits graph attention and initial residual connection prompts, using GPT-4o to analyze the effect of the message passing. To analyze the impact of the two GNN techniques, we also extract the paper’s GLN repre-

³We provide further analysis on the effect of the graph attention prompt in Appendix B.5.

LLMs	Methods	Task: Node classification			Task: Link prediction			A.R.
		OGBN-Arxiv	Book-History	Wiki-CS	OGBN-Arxiv	Book-History	Wiki-CS	
GPT	Direct	62.3	44.7	78.3	92.8	85.0	83.2	3.8
	All-in-One	61.5	45.4	64.9	91.6	84.8	85.6	3.6
	PromptGFM	62.0	44.1	79.0	92.2	81.2	81.0	4.2
	GLN-Base	63.0	45.8	79.4	92.4	86.4	83.6	2.2
	GLN	64.0	47.3	79.5	93.0	87.0	84.0	1.2
Claude	Direct	65.8	48.4	76.6	78.0	65.2	41.2	3.2
	All-in-One	67.1	50.4	76.4	72.8	53.6	38.6	3.7
	PromptGFM	65.3	50.6	74.5	64.4	50.0	38.2	4.7
	GLN-Base	67.1	53.8	77.0	78.2	61.2	42.4	2.2
	GLN	67.4	55.2	77.7	78.4	64.0	43.2	1.2

Table 1: **GLN outperforms the zero-shot LLM-based baselines on popular graph-related tasks.** For node classification and link prediction, we report accuracy and Hit-ratio@1, respectively, of each method in each dataset. A.R. denotes average ranking. The best performance in each setting is highlighted in **green**.

sensation with the graph attention prompt and one with the initial residual connection prompt.

Observation 1. The node representations become more general across layers. As shown in Figure 2 (a) and (b), the layer-1 representation focuses on how the attention operation is used in the NLP domain. In the layer-2, the scope expands to applications of attention in computer vision and graph learning. This shift across GLN layers suggests that adding message-passing layers (i.e., incorporating information of the farther neighbors) makes each node’s representation more general.

Observation 2. Graph attention tailors the neighbor summary for the target node. As shown in Figure 2 (a) and (c), the paper representation obtained from GLN-Base involves non-specific enumeration of various NLP tasks. However, after applying the graph attention prompt, the representation involves the specific task addressed in the target paper. This result suggests that graph attention encourages aggregation toward neighbors that are more relevant to the target paper.

Observation 3. Initial residual connection preserves the target node information after message passing. As shown in Figure 2 (c) and (d), the representation obtained from GLN-Base describes application of the attention operation outside NLP, whereas the one obtained after applying the initial residual prompt maintains its focus on the NLP domain. This result suggests that the initial residual connection prompt preserves the target node’s initial text attribute, encouraging its updated representation to stay aligned with that context.

Observation 4. Observations 1-3 are validated via LLM-as-a-judge protocol. We provide a quantitative assessment of our observations. To this end, we randomly sample 10^2 papers and extract the

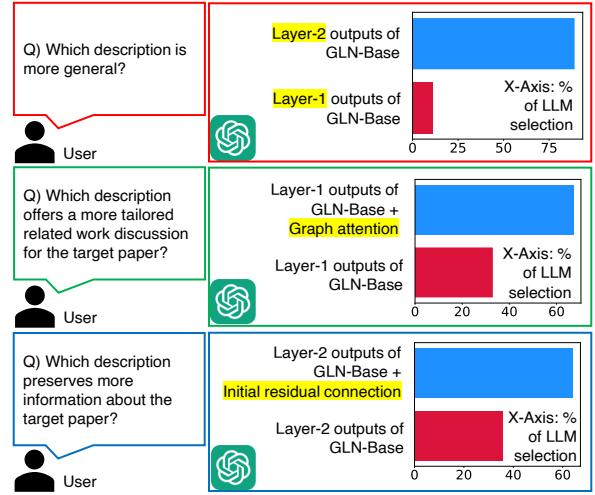


Figure 3: **Observations 1-3 hold valid under the LLM-as-a-judge protocol.** We report the ratio of LLM responses per category for each question.

four aforementioned representations for each. We then prompt GPT-4o to validate our observation on the representations, resulting in an evaluation consistent with our observations, as shown in Figure 3.

4.2 Zero-shot capability analysis

Setup. We use two backbone LLMs (GPT-4o-mini and Claude-3.0-Haiku)⁴ and three real-world graphs: a citation network (OGBN-arXiv), a co-purchase network (Book-History), and a hyperlink network (Wiki-CS), whose further details are in Appendix A. After obtaining the target node’s textual representation using the proposed method and baselines, we input it into an LLM to perform node classification and edge prediction. Detailed prompts for each task and further experimental details in Appendices D.3 and C.1, respectively.

⁴In Appendix B.6, we present an analysis with a small language model, showing competitive performance while offering faster inference compared to larger LLMs.

Baseline methods and GLN. We use four baseline methods: (1) using only the initial text attribute of the target node (Direct), (2) providing one-hop and two-hop neighbors to the LLM to update the target node’s representation (All-in-One), (3) an existing text-attributed graph foundation model (PromptGFM) (Zhu et al., 2025), and (4) a baseline version of GLN (GLN-Base). For fair comparison, all methods—including the baselines and GLN—are equipped with the same backbone LLMs. Further details regarding baselines and GLN are provided in Appendix C.2.

Results. GLN outperforms baseline methods in 10 out of 12 settings (Table 1), demonstrating its effectiveness in zero-shot capability in node classification and link prediction. Two points stand out: (1) GLN’s superior performance over Direct highlights the effectiveness of utilizing graph topology, and (2) its gain over GLN-Base shows the effectiveness of our advanced GNN-style prompts. Further ablation study results are in Appendix B.4.

LLM Reasoning. We further analyze the LLM’s reasoning behind its downstream task decisions in Appendix B.2, highlighting which parts of the textual representation contribute to performance.

5 Conclusion

In this work, we propose GLN, a GNN that uses an LLM as its message passing module (Sec. 3). Leveraging the comprehensibility of its hidden representations, we provide intuitive insights into message passing and advanced GNN techniques (Sec. 4.1). Moreover, GLN outperforms baselines on zero-shot graph-related tasks (Sec. 4.2).

Limitations

Theoretical property. Various theoretical properties of GNNs, such as expressivity (Xu et al., 2019) and permutation invariance (Keriven and Peyré, 2019), have been widely studied. Such analyses rely on certain theoretical properties of the neighbor aggregation functions used in GNNs. However, since GLN employs an LLM as its aggregation function, deriving the analogous properties is challenging. Thus, the theoretical properties of GLN remain underexplored in this work and can be a promising direction for future work.

Computational efficiency compared to GNNs. Due to the usage of a large language model, GLN has significantly more parameters than general GNNs, which return vectorized node representa-

tions. Therefore, exploring scaled-up versions of GLN can be a promising direction for future work.

LLM API cost. We used LLM APIs (specifically, GPT-4o, GPT-4o-mini, and Claude-3.0-Haiku), incurring a total cost of approximately \$600 for this research. This may hinder broader accessibility and practical use in budget-constrained environments. While GLN incorporates token-efficient prompting (Sec. 3.2), enhancing token-efficiency further may extend the applicability of our approach.

Extensions to various graph types. In this work, we focus on text-attributed graphs (TAGs), where (1) each node is associated with a text attribute and (2) each edge represents a relation between two nodes. However, many real-world graphs go beyond text attributes or pairwise relations. Specifically, these include (1) non-text-attributed graphs, such as sensor networks with numerical node features (Jabłoński, 2017), and (2) higher-order relations among multiple nodes, typically modeled as hypergraphs (Kim et al., 2024c,a). Thus, extending GLN to support such graph types can improve its application to a broader set of real-world scenarios.

Noisy node text attributes. In this work, we use the TAG benchmark datasets in which node attributes have been carefully preprocessed by their original curators. However, real-world node text attributes often contain noise (e.g., low-quality reviews in co-purchase networks), which can harm GNN performance (Yan et al., 2023). Our preliminary analysis also shows that GLN suffers performance degradation when noise is introduced into the input node attributes (see Appendix B.7). Thus, incorporating text denoising into GLN can improve its practicality in cases with noisy node attributes.

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Dataset	#Nodes	#Edges	#Classes
OGBN-Arxiv	169,343	1,166,243	40
Book-History	41,551	358,574	12
Wiki-CS	11,701	216,123	10

Table 2: Graph statistics of the datasets.

Keyulu Xu, Chengtao Li, Yonglong Tian, Tomohiro Sonobe, Ken-ichi Kawarabayashi, and Stefanie Jegelka. 2018. Representation learning on graphs with jumping knowledge networks. In *ICML*.

Hao Yan, Chaozhuo Li, Ruosong Long, Chao Yan, Jianan Zhao, Wenwen Zhuang, Jun Yin, Peiyan Zhang, Weihao Han, Hao Sun, and 1 others. 2023. A comprehensive study on text-attributed graphs: Benchmarking and rethinking. In *NeurIPS*.

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A Dataset details

In this appendix section, we provide details regarding the datasets used in this work. The detailed statistics of each dataset is provided in Table 2.

OGBN-Arxiv (Hu et al., 2020) is a citation network that represents the citation relations between papers. In this dataset, each node corresponds to a particular paper, and edges join the papers that cite or are cited by the corresponding paper. The attributes of a node correspond to the title and abstract of the corresponding node (paper). The class of a node corresponds to the arXiv category to which the corresponding node (paper) belongs.

Book-History (Yan et al., 2023) is a co-purchase network that represents the co-purchase relations among books. In this dataset, each node corresponds to a particular book, and edges join the books that are frequently co-purchased together with the corresponding book. The attributes of a node correspond to the description of the corresponding node (book). The class of a node corresponds to the Amazon third-level category to which the corresponding node (book) belongs.

Wiki-CS (Mernyei and Cangea, 2020) is a hyperlink network that represents the hyperlink relations among Wikipedia web pages. In this dataset, each node corresponds to a particular Wikipedia web page, and edges join the pages that are either hyperlinked to or from the corresponding page. The at-

tributes of a node correspond to the content within the corresponding node (web page). The class of a node corresponds to the Wikipedia category to which the corresponding node (web page) belongs.

B Additional analysis

In this appendix section, we provide additional experimental results that are omitted from the main section due to space constraints. Specifically, we present two types of case studies: Case studies analyzing representations of GLN in various domains (Appendix B.1) and case studies analyzing the reasoning of GLN on downstream graph-related tasks (Appendix B.2).

B.1 Representation analysis

We analyze the three popular papers from the three different domains:

- Natural language processing (NLP): ELMo, a pre-trained language model (Peters et al., 2018)
- Computer vision (CV): Pix2Pix, an image translation generative model (Isola et al., 2017)
- Graph representation learning (GRL): GraphSAGE, an inductive graph neural network model (Hamilton et al., 2017)

NLP Paper: ELMo. The case study result for ELMo (Peters et al., 2018) is presented in Figure 4. Below, we analyze whether the observations in Section 4.1 are valid in (Peters et al., 2018).

- **Observation 1.** As shown in Figure 4 (a) and (b), the layer-1 output focuses on the applications of context learning in NLP, while the layer-2 output extends to applications beyond NLP, such as scene graph generation and object detection. This result suggests that the representation gets more general across layers.
- **Observation 2.** As shown in Figure 4 (a) and (c), the output without the graph attention prompt lists applications of context learning in NLP, whereas the output with the prompt focuses on the integration of contextualized embeddings with additional features—a technique emphasized in the target paper. This result suggests that the representation gets specialized with the graph attention prompt.
- **Observation 3.** As shown in Figure 4 (b) and (d), the output without the initial residual connection prompt discusses the applications of context

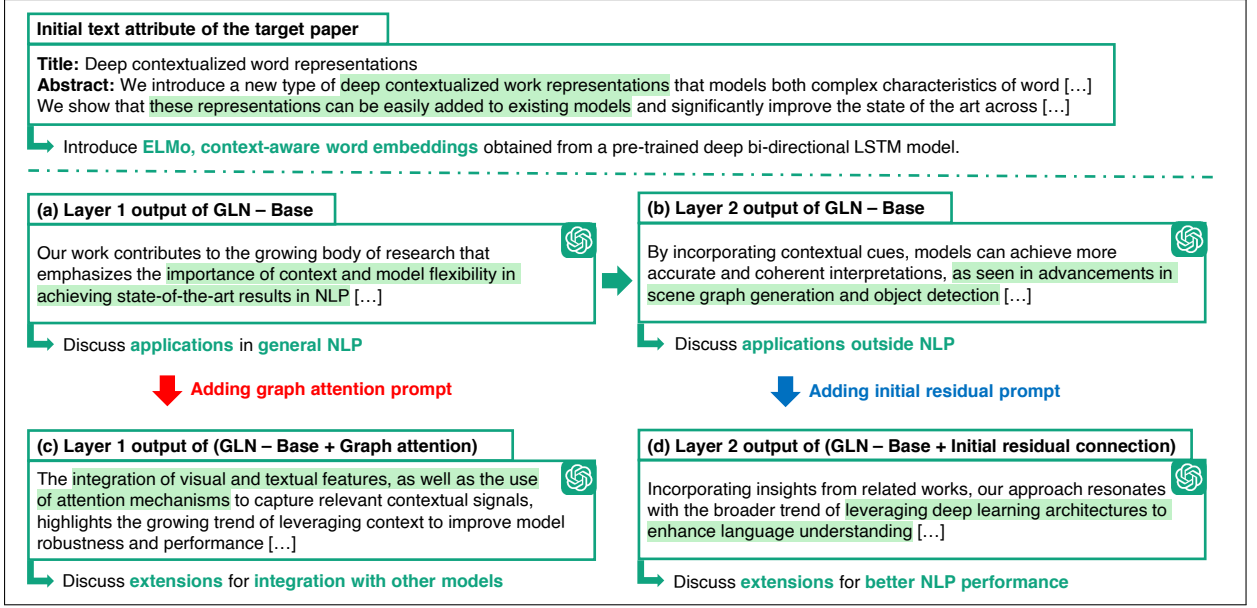


Figure 4: A case study on (Peters et al., 2018), showing GLN-Base’s representations of the paper at: (a) layer 1, (b) layer 2, (c) layer 1 with a graph attention prompt, and (d) layer 2 with an initial residual connection prompt.

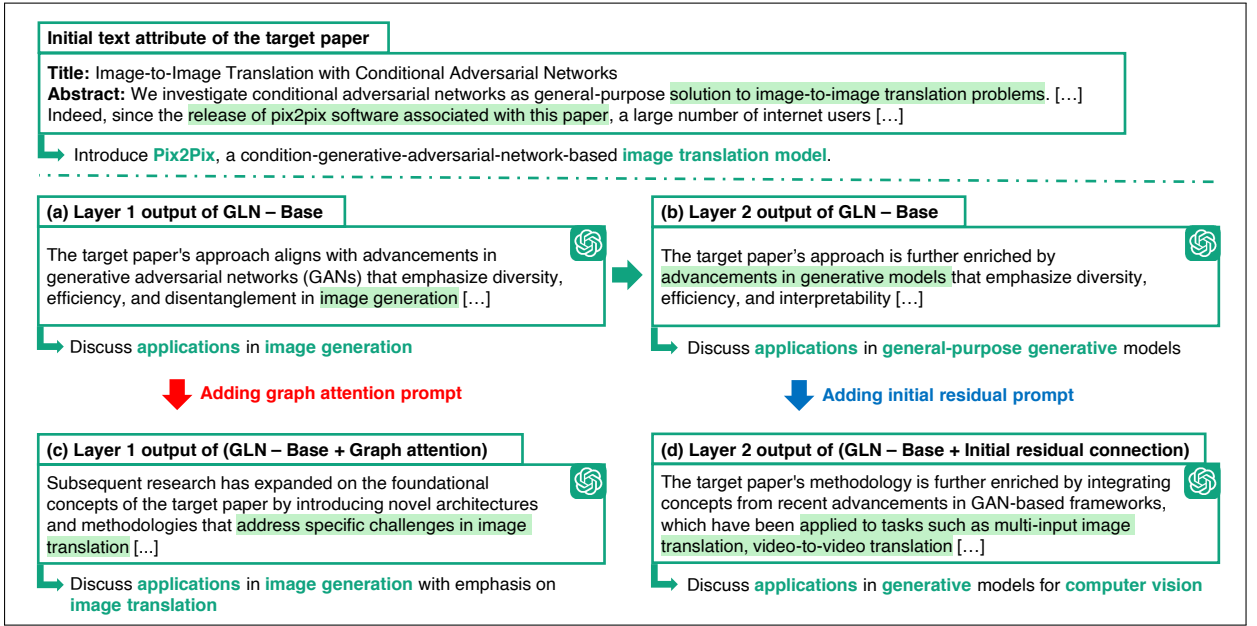


Figure 5: A case study on (Isola et al., 2017), showing GLN-Base’s representations of the paper at: (a) layer 1, (b) layer 2, (c) layer 1 with a graph attention prompt, and (d) layer 2 with an initial residual connection prompt.

learning in various domains, while that with the initial residual connection prompt focuses on the architectural progress in NLP, domain where the target paper belongs to. This result suggests that the initial residual connection prompt helps maintain the information provided from the initial text attribute.

In summary, our analysis result suggests that the observations in Section 4.1 are still valid in (Peters et al., 2018).

CV Paper: Pix2Pix. The case study result for Pix2Pix (Isola et al., 2017) is presented in Figure 5. Below, we analyze whether the observations in Section 4.1 are valid in (Isola et al., 2017).

- **Observation 1.** As shown in Figure 5 (a) and (b), the layer-1 output focuses on the extensions of pix2pix in image generation, while the layer-2 output discusses its extensions for general generative models, without targeting specific domain. This result suggests that the representation gets

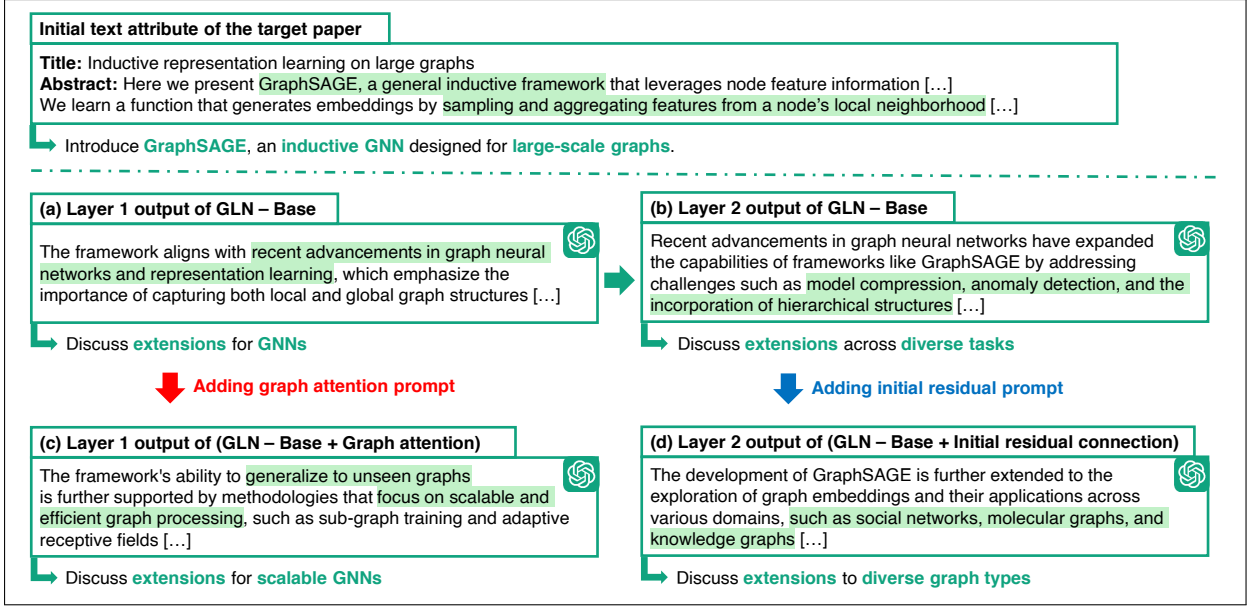


Figure 6: A case study on (Hamilton et al., 2017), showing GLN-Base’s representations of the paper at: (a) layer 1, (b) layer 2, (c) layer 1 with a graph attention prompt, and (d) layer 2 with an initial residual connection prompt.

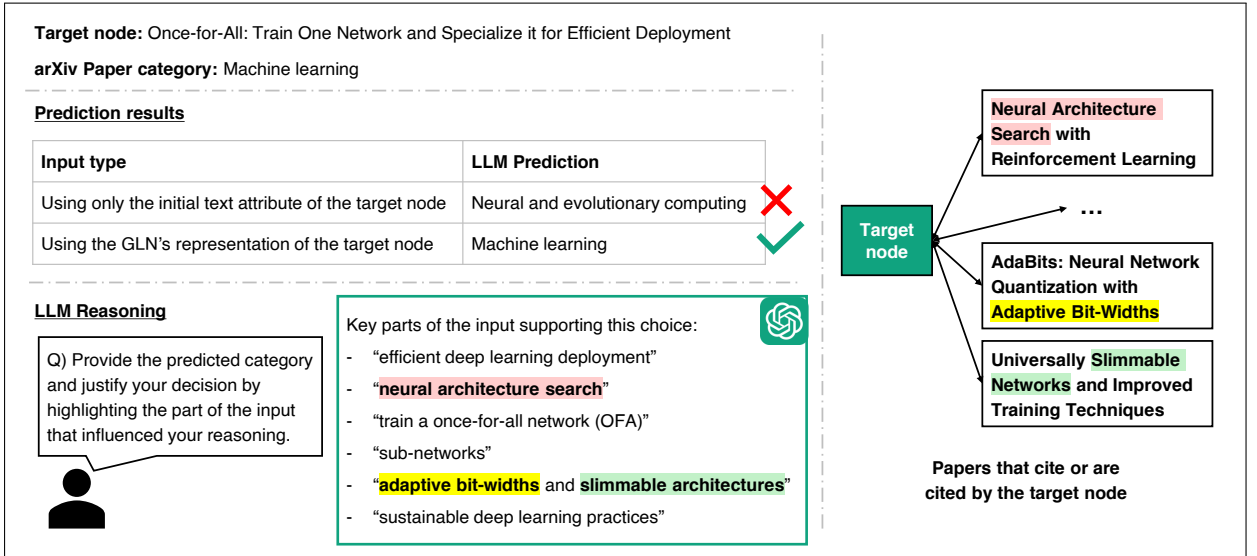


Figure 7: A case study on (Cai et al., 2020), showing LLM’s reasoning for its downstream task decision. While an LLM misclassified the target node when only using the node attributes, it correctly classifies the target node by using information obtained from the target node’s neighbors.

more general across layers.

- **Observation 2.** As shown in Figure 5 (a) and (c), the output without the graph attention prompt covers image generation, whereas the output with the prompt focuses on the image translation within image generation, a task the target paper focuses on. This result suggests that the representation gets specialized with the graph attention prompt.
- **Observation 3.** As shown in Figure 5 (b) and

(d), the output without the initial residual connection prompt discusses the general generative models, while that with the initial residual connection prompt focuses on the generative models for computer vision, which is the key domain the target paper belongs to. This result suggests that the initial residual connection prompt helps maintain the information provided from the initial text attribute.

In summary, our analysis result suggests that the observations in Section 4.1 are still valid in (Isola

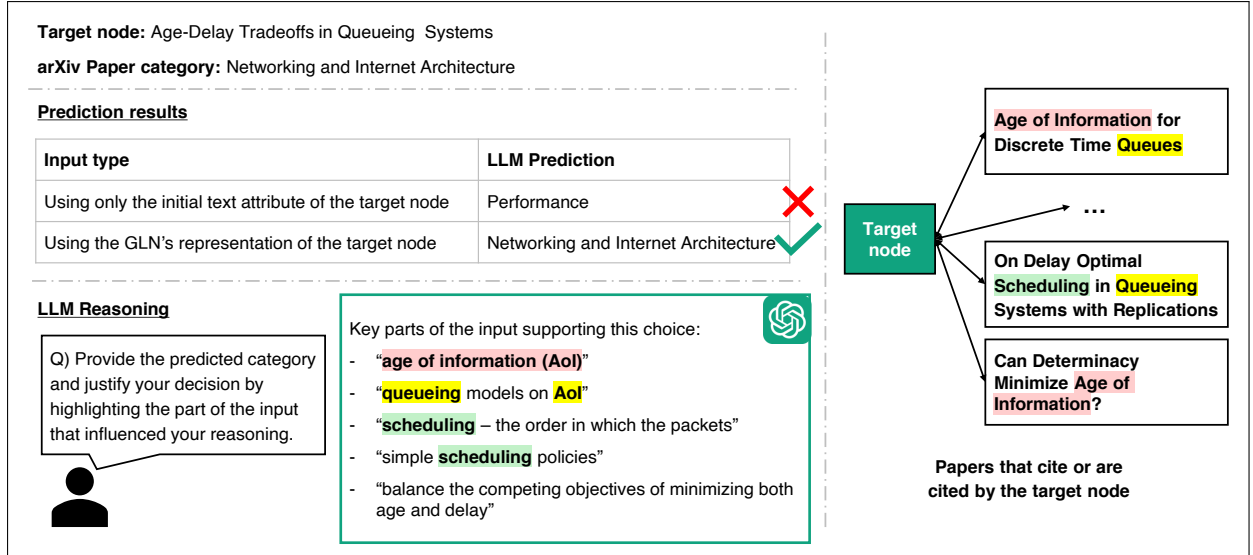


Figure 8: A case study on (Talak and Modiano, 2020), showing LLM’s reasoning for its downstream task decision. While an LLM misclassified the target node when only using the node attributes, it correctly classifies the target node by using information obtained from the target node’s neighbors.

et al., 2017).

GRL Paper: GraphSAGE. The case study result for GraphSAGE (Hamilton et al., 2017) is presented in Figure 6. Below, we analyze whether the observations in Section 4.1 are valid in (Hamilton et al., 2017).

- **Observation 1.** As shown in Figure 6 (a) and (b), the layer-1 output focuses on the extensions of GraphSAGE for graph neural networks, while the layer-2 output covers the diverse applications of GraphSAGE, such as model compression and anomaly detection. This result suggests that the representation gets more general across layers.
- **Observation 2.** As shown in Figure 6 (a) and (c), the output without the graph attention prompt covers the extensions of GraphSAGE for general-purpose GNNs, while that with the prompt focuses on the inductive and/or scalable GNNs, which are key characteristics of GraphSAGE. This result suggests that the representation gets specialized with the graph attention prompt.
- **Observation 3.** As shown in Figure 6 (b) and (d), the output without the initial residual connection prompt discusses GraphSAGE applications across various tasks, whereas the output with the prompt emphasizes its use with different graph types, aligning with the target paper’s broader focus on graph representation learning. This result suggests that the initial residual connection

prompt helps maintain the information provided from the initial text attribute.

In summary, our analysis result suggests that the observations in Section 4.1 are still valid in (Hamilton et al., 2017).

B.2 Reasoning analysis

As noted in Section 1, textual representations allow an LLM to reason about its downstream task decisions. In this section, we present case studies on two papers in the arXiv dataset where using only the initial text attribute results in misclassification, while using the representation from GLN yields correct classification.

Case study 1. The first case is about (Cai et al., 2020). As shown in Figure 7, the LLM misclassifies the target node when relying solely on its initial textual attributes (title and abstract) but correctly classifies it when using the representation from GLN, where the correct label is ‘machine learning’. Notably, the LLM explicitly references terms from neighboring nodes (e.g., neural architecture search, slimmable networks) that are closely associated with the machine learning’ category. This reasoning result suggests that integrating neighbor information can improve node classification performance, and GLN effectively represents it.

Case study 2. The second case is about (Talak and Modiano, 2020). As shown in Figure 7, the LLM misclassifies the target node when relying solely on its initial text attributes (title and abstract) but



Figure 9: A case study on (Isola et al., 2017). While PromptGFM outputs a straightforward list of citing and cited papers, GLN offers a comprehensible and succinct summary of those closely related to the target paper.

correctly classifies it when using the representation from GLN, where the correct label is '*networking and internet architecture*'. Notably, the LLM explicitly references terms from neighboring nodes (e.g., age of information, scheduling, and queueing) that are closely associated with the networking and internet architecture category. This reasoning result suggests that integrating neighbor information can improve node classification performance, and GLN effectively represents it.

B.3 Comparison with PromptGFM

Recall that we briefly discussed the comparison between the outputs of GLN and that of PromptGFM (Zhu et al., 2025), which is a baseline method (Section 2.1). In this section, we provide a detailed case study that compares (1) the representations obtained via PromptGFM and (2) those obtained via GLN.

Setup. To this end, we present the first-layer outputs of PromptGFM and GLN for three papers from different domains within the arXiv citation network: (Isola et al., 2017) (CV), (Vaswani et al., 2017) (NLP), and (Hamilton et al., 2017) (GRL). We use

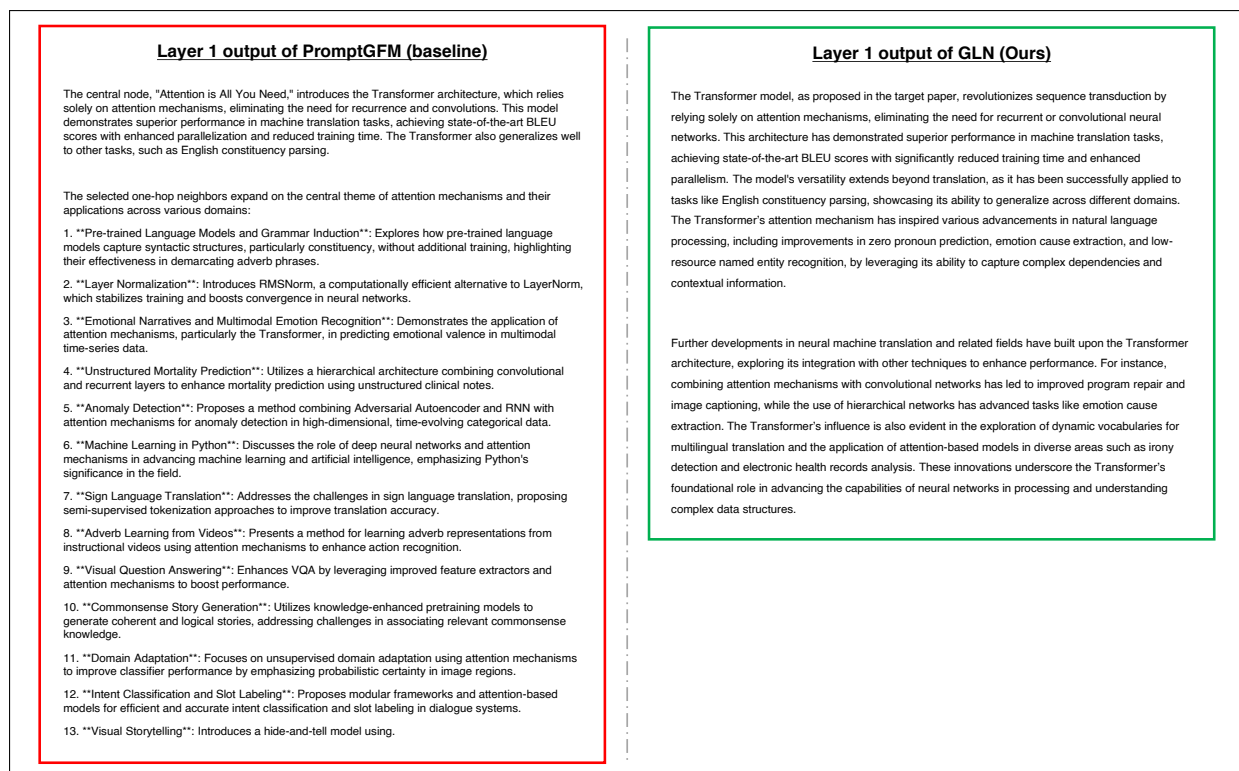


Figure 10: A case study on (Vaswani et al., 2017). While PromptGFM outputs a straightforward list of citing and cited papers, GLN offers a comprehensible and succinct summary of those closely related to the target paper.

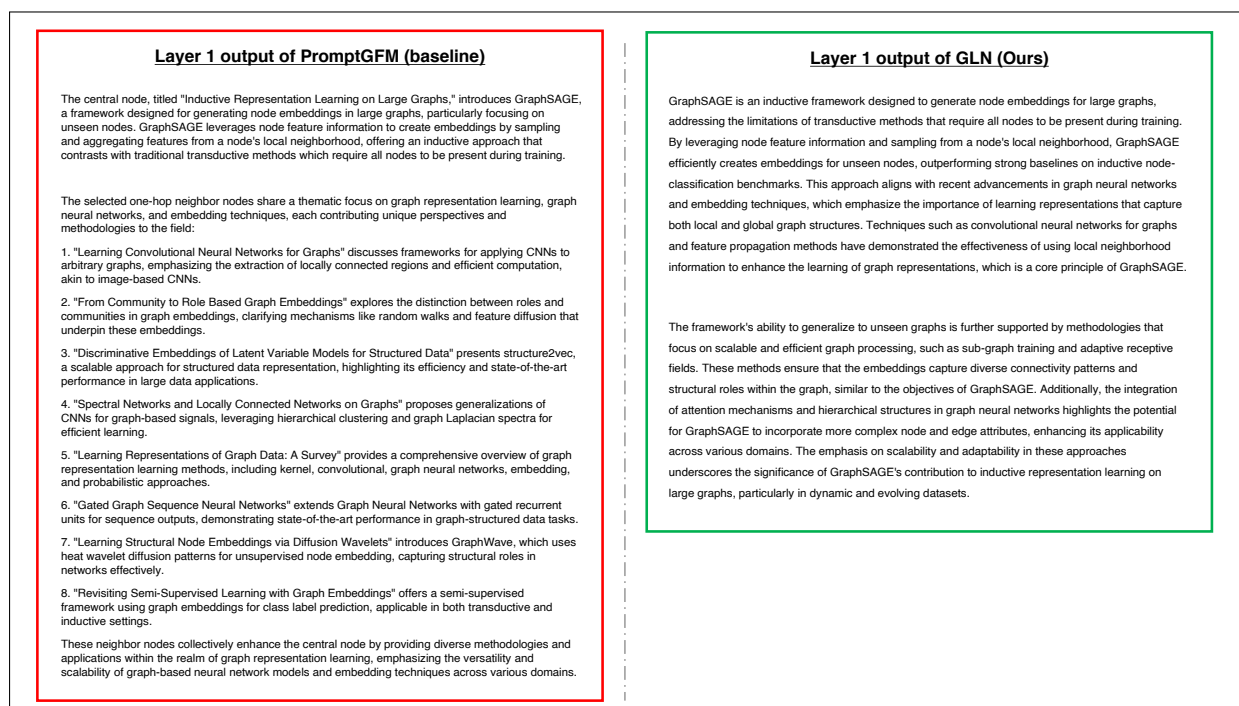


Figure 11: A case study on (Hamilton et al., 2017). While PromptGFM outputs a straightforward list of citing and cited papers, GLN offers a comprehensible and succinct summary of those closely related to the target paper.

GPT-4o as the backbone LLM for both methods.

Results. In short, the output of GLN is more comprehensible and well-structured, whereas that of

PromptGFM is limited in its utility from a user comprehension perspective. Specifically, as shown in Figure 9, representations from PromptGFM list brief

summaries of papers that cite or are cited by the target paper (Isola et al., 2017). In contrast, GLN returns a concise and focused summary of the target node’s neighbors, highlighting how generative adversarial networks (GANs) are applied to image translation tasks and further developed.

Similar results are shown in the outputs for (Vaswani et al., 2017) and (Hamilton et al., 2017), as shown in Figure 10 and Figure 11, respectively. These results suggest that GLN yields clearer, better-structured outputs, whereas PromptGFM’s are far less useful for user comprehension.

Potential reasons. We hypothesize that the differences in user comprehensibility primarily arise from the specific *task* assigned to the LLM. Specifically, PromptGFM prompts an LLM to ‘*aggregate neighbor nodes and update a concise yet meaningful representation for the central node*’. This prompt likely leads the LLM to focus heavily on aggregating neighbor information, resulting in a mere enumeration of the target node’s neighbors.

In contrast, in GLN, we prompt an LLM to *refine* the target node’s description *by incorporating* its neighbor information. This guides the LLM to center its attention on the target node and produce a target-node-centric summary of its neighbors, improving the user comprehensibility of the output.

B.4 Ablation study

In this section, we provide further ablation studies of GLN: demonstrating whether each (1) graph attention prompt and (2) initial residual connection prompt is effective for the downstream task.

As shown in Table 3, GLN—which incorporates both graph attention and initial residual connection prompts—outperforms all three variants that omit either or both prompts. This result suggests that the two advanced GNN-style prompts are essential for good downstream task performance.

B.5 Analysis of the graph attention prompt

In this section, we provide an in-depth analysis regarding the effect of the graph attention prompt, which is used in GLN. Recall that our key intuition behind the graph attention prompt is to instruct the LLM to focus on the relevant neighbors of the target node. To validate this, we corrupt each node’s neighborhood by injecting random neighbors and examine whether the graph attention prompt helps GLN maintain performance under such neighbor corruption. Specifically, for each node, we sample 7 of its ground-truth neighbors and add 3

G.A.	I.R.C.	OGBN-arXiv		Book-History	
		Node.	Link.	Node.	Link.
✗	✗	63.0	92.4	45.8	86.4
✓	✗	62.8	92.4	47.0	86.6
✗	✓	63.5	92.2	46.7	86.4
✓	✓	64.0	93.0	47.3	87.0

Table 3: **Graph attention prompt and initial residual connection prompt are essential for strong performance.** Ablation study result of GLN. G.A. and I.R.C. denote the graph attention prompt and the initial residual prompt connection prompt, respectively. In addition, Node. and Link. denote node classification and link prediction, respectively. The best performance in each setting is highlighted in **bold**.

Models	OGBN-arXiv	Wiki-CS
GLN orig.	77.5	82.5
GLN w/o GA	75.5	79.0
GLN w/ GA	76.5	81.5

Table 4: **Graph attention prompt helps GLN to maintain its performance under edge corruption.** The node classification performance comparison under input noise. GLN w/o GA and w/ GA indicate the GLN performance under edge corruption without and with the graph attention prompt, respectively. GLN orig. indicates the performance of GLN on the original datasets.

nodes sampled from the entire graph, yielding a 10-neighbor set fed to GLN. For experiments, we sample 200 target nodes from the OGBN-ArXiv and Wiki-CS datasets and use a 1-layer GLN with GPT-4.1-nano as the backbone encoder and GPT-4.1 as the downstream-task-performing LLM.

As shown in Table 4, GLN without the graph attention prompt suffers a significant performance drop, whereas GLN with the prompt maintains performance to some extent. This suggests that the graph attention prompt helps filter the relevant neighbors of the target node.

B.6 Improving scalability of GLN

In this section, we analyze several strategies that can improve the scalability of GLN. Specifically, we explore three approaches: (1) use of a small language model (SLM), (2) use of an input-token efficient strategy, and (3) use of an output-token efficient strategy. To this end, we sample 200 nodes from the OGBN-ArXiv and Wiki-CS datasets and use a 1-layer GLN with GPT-4.1-nano as the backbone encoder and GPT-4.1 as the downstream-task-performing LLM.

Effectiveness under SLM. In GLN, replacing the

Models	OGBN-arXiv	Wiki-CS
PromptGFM with LLM	75.0 (6.4)	79.5 (7.6)
GLN with LLM	78.0 (8.2)	82.5 (7.1)
GLN with SLM	77.5 (2.4)	82.5 (2.2)

Table 5: **GLN achieves high speed and effectiveness with an SLM.** The node classification performance comparison under diverse-sized LLMs. Numbers in parentheses indicate the average encoding time per node.

Models (# of neighbors)	OGBN-arXiv	Wiki-CS
PromptGFM ($N = 10$)	73.5 (2772)	78.5 (9298)
GLN ($N = 3$)	76.0 (1067)	81.5 (3419)
GLN ($N = 5$)	76.5 (1423)	81.5 (4649)
GLN ($N = 10$)	77.5 (2690)	82.5 (8975)

Table 6: **GLN remains strong under fewer neighbor samples.** The node classification performance comparison under diverse-sized neighbor samples. Numbers in parentheses indicate the average number of input tokens of each case.

LLM with an SLM can improve scalability, since SLMs require significantly less generation time. To evaluate model performance, we compare GLN equipped with SLM (GPT-4.1-nano) against (1) GLN equipped with an LLM (GPT-4.1) and (2) PromptGFM equipped with an LLM (GPT-4.1).

As shown in Table 5, GLN with SLM requires less than one-third the encoding time of GLN with LLM, while maintaining comparable performance. In addition, GLN outperforms PromptGFM even with a smaller backbone language model. This result demonstrates that the scalability of GLN can be improved by using SLM, while being effective. **Input-prompt efficient strategy** In GLN, we sample a fixed number of neighbors instead of utilizing all available ones, as detailed in Appendix C.1. We investigate how varying the number of neighbor samples influences GLN encoding.

As shown in Table 6, GLN outperforms PromptGFM even when using significantly fewer neighbor samples—and thus, far fewer input tokens. This result demonstrates that strong performance can be achieved with substantially fewer input tokens than required by the baseline method.

Output-prompt efficient strategy We limit the output representation of GLN by 2 paragraphs, as detailed in Appendix D.1. To further reduce the output length, we prompt the LLM to generate a shorter response, constrained to 3 sentences.

As shown in Table 7, GLN outperforms the baseline method even when the output length is con-

Models (output constraint)	OGBN-arXiv	Wiki-CS
PromptGFM (N/A)	73.5 (393)	78.5 (491)
GLN (2-paragraphs)	77.5 (256)	82.5 (257)
GLN (3-sentences)	77.0 (110)	81.5 (109)

Table 7: **GLN remains strong under stricter output-length constraint.** The node classification performance comparison under several output constraints. Numbers in parentheses indicate the average number of output tokens of each case.

Models	OGBN-arXiv	Wiki-CS
GLN orig.	77.5	82.5
GLN w/o denoising	75.5	81.0
GLN w/ denoising	77.0	82.5

Table 8: **Performance of GLN decreases under input noises, while a simple text denoising technique can mitigate this.** The node classification performance comparison under input noise. GLN w/o denoising and w/ denoising indicate the performance of GLN on noisy datasets without and with the application of denoising techniques, respectively. GLN orig. indicates the performance of GLN on the original datasets.

strained at the prompt level. This result demonstrates that strong performance can be achieved with substantially fewer output tokens than those used by the baseline methods.

B.7 Analysis under noisy node attributes

In this section, we investigate the effectiveness of GLN when the input node text attributes contain noise. To this end, we randomly remove 30% of the words from each node text attribute. In addition, to examine whether denoising improves performance under noise, we apply a simple denoising technique: (1) an LLM is prompted to denoise the input node attribute by extracting the key concept of the given text, and (2) the resulting denoised text is then used as the node attribute. For experiments, we sample 200 target nodes from the OGBN-ArXiv and Wiki-CS datasets and use a 1-layer GLN with GPT-4.1-nano as the backbone encoder and GPT-4.1 as the downstream-task-performing LLM.

As shown in Table 8, (1) the performance of GLN decreases when input node attributes are noisy, while (2) applying a denoising technique alleviates this performance degradation. These results suggest that although GLN is sensitive to noise in node text attributes, adequate denoising can effectively mitigate such a negative impact.

C Experiment details

In this appendix section, we provide experimental details omitted from the main paper (Section 4).

C.1 Experimental setting details

We describe the detailed experimental setting of the two downstream tasks: (1) node classification and (2) link prediction.

Node classification. For node classification, we sample 1,000 nodes with degrees greater than or equal to 10 from each dataset (i.e., $\{v_i \in \mathcal{V} : |\mathcal{N}_i| \geq 10\}$). We then obtain the textual representations of the corresponding nodes and prompt an LLM to predict their classes. Lastly, measure accuracy by comparing the predicted classes with the ground-truth classes.

Link prediction. For link prediction, we sample 500 edges whose endpoint nodes each have a degree greater than 10 (i.e., $\{e_i = \{v_s, v_t\} \in \mathcal{E} : |\mathcal{N}_s|, |\mathcal{N}_t| \geq 10\}$). We then remove these edges from $\mathcal{E}$ and obtain the textual representations of their endpoint nodes. Next, for each edge, we: (1) randomly sample four nodes not connected by the edge using rule-based sampling, (2) provide one endpoint of the edge as input to the LLM, (3) construct a candidate set consisting of the true other endpoint and the four sampled nodes, and (4) prompt the LLM to select the node most likely to be linked with the given node. Lastly, we measure the Hit-ratio@1 for edges, which is defined as $\frac{1}{|\mathcal{E}'|} \sum_{e_i \in \mathcal{E}'} \mathbf{1}[\text{LLM}(e_i)]$, where $\mathcal{E}'$ is a set of sampled edges and $\mathbf{1}[\text{LLM}(e_i)]$ is an indicator function that returns 1 if the LLM correctly predicts the another endpoint of e_i , otherwise 0.

C.2 Baseline and GLN details

We describe the detailed setting of each method, including baseline methods and GLN.

LLMs for downstream tasks. We found that in downstream tasks, GPT-4o-mini and Claude-3.0-Haiku—used as our backbone LLMs—often fail to return outputs in the assigned format, making automatic evaluation challenging. Therefore, only for downstream tasks, we used more up-to-date models. Specifically, we used GPT-4.1-mini and Claude-3.5-Haiku instead of GPT-4o-mini and Claude-3.0-Haiku, respectively.

Direct. This method performs the downstream task using only the target node’s initial text attribute, without modifying its textual representation through certain LLM operations.

Models	OGBN-arXiv	Wiki-CS
GLN orig.	78.0	83.0
GLN w/ new GA	78.0	82.5
GLN w/ new IRC	76.0	80.5

Table 9: **Graph attention prompt is less sensitive to the choice of the attention-related phrase, while itemization for initial residual connection is necessary for the performance.** The node classification performance comparison under input noise. GLN w/ new GA and w/ new IRC indicate GLN equipped with a new graph attention prompt and a new initial residual connection prompt, respectively. GLN orig. indicates the performance of GLN with its original prompt design.

All-in-One. This is our newly introduced baseline that directly prompts an LLM to refine the target node’s representation using its (1) one-hop and (2) two-hop neighbors. Due to input length constraints of LLMs, we sample 10 one-hop neighbors and 20 two-hop neighbors, uniformly at random, and provide them as input to the LLM.

PromptGFM, GLN-Base, and GLN. For these methods, which leverage message passing, we stack 2 layers, which is a conventional setting in GNN research (Kipf and Welling, 2017; Veličković et al., 2018; Hamilton et al., 2017). Due to input length constraints of LLMs, we sample 10 neighbors for each node, uniformly at random, and use them for message passing.

D Prompt details

In this appendix section, we provide detailed prompts used for (1) the encoding process of GLN and (2) zero-shot downstream tasks (i.e., node classification and link prediction).

D.1 Prompt for GLN’s encoding

Prompt design. We provide a detailed prompt design of GLN. Specifically, we present the following types of prompts:

- **Prompt for citation networks:** A prompt for citation networks is in Figure 12.
- **Prompt for co-purchase networks:** A prompt for book co-purchase networks is in Figure 13.
- **Prompt hyperlink networks:** A prompt for hyperlink networks is in Figure 14.

Investigating alternatives. We further analyze the prompt-robustness of GLN. Specifically, we analyze our prompt designs for (1) the graph attention prompt and (2) the initial residual connection

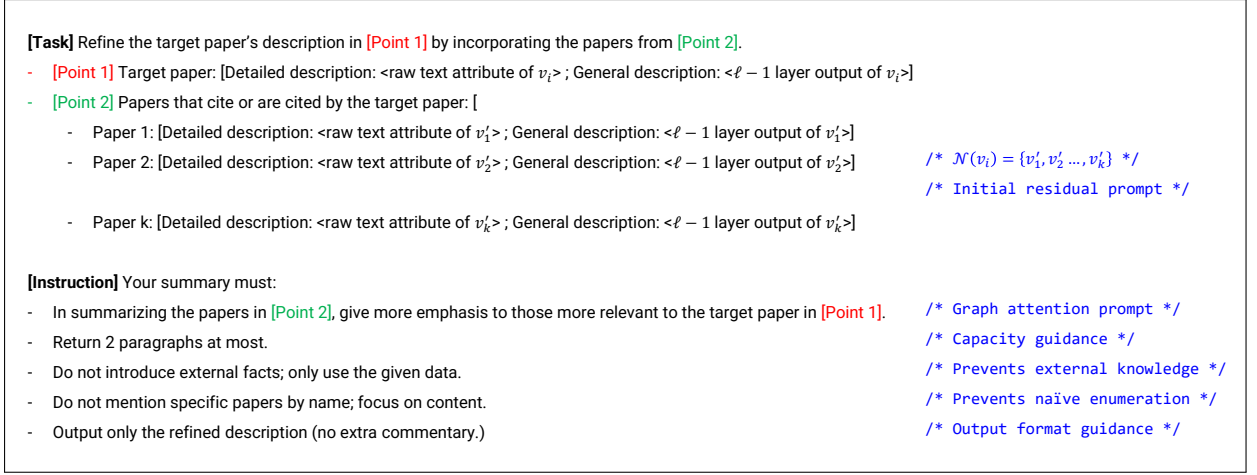


Figure 12: Example prompt of GLN for citation networks (oGBN-arXiv dataset).

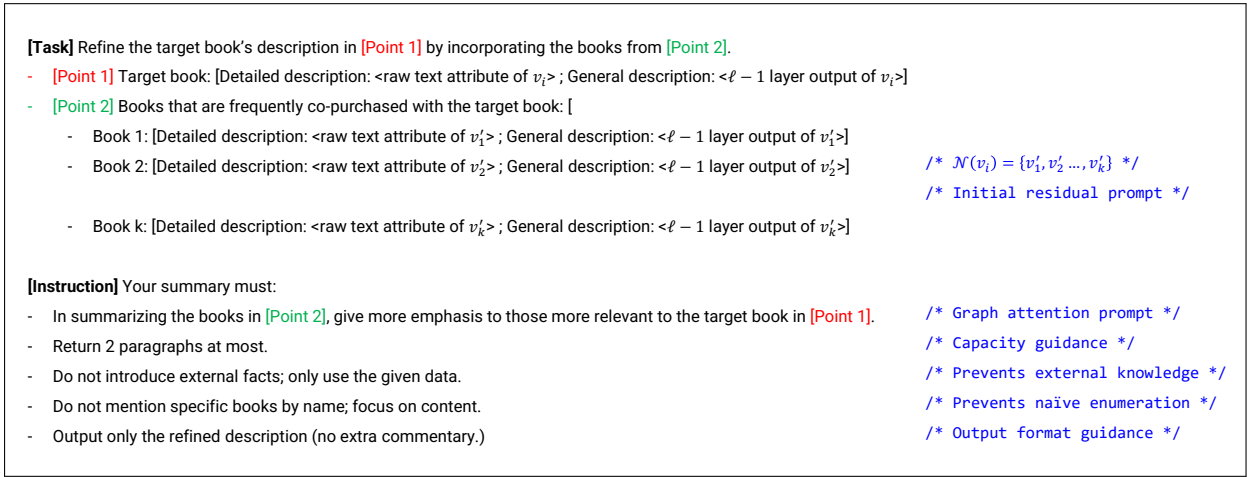


Figure 13: Example prompt of GLN for co-purchase networks (Book-History dataset).

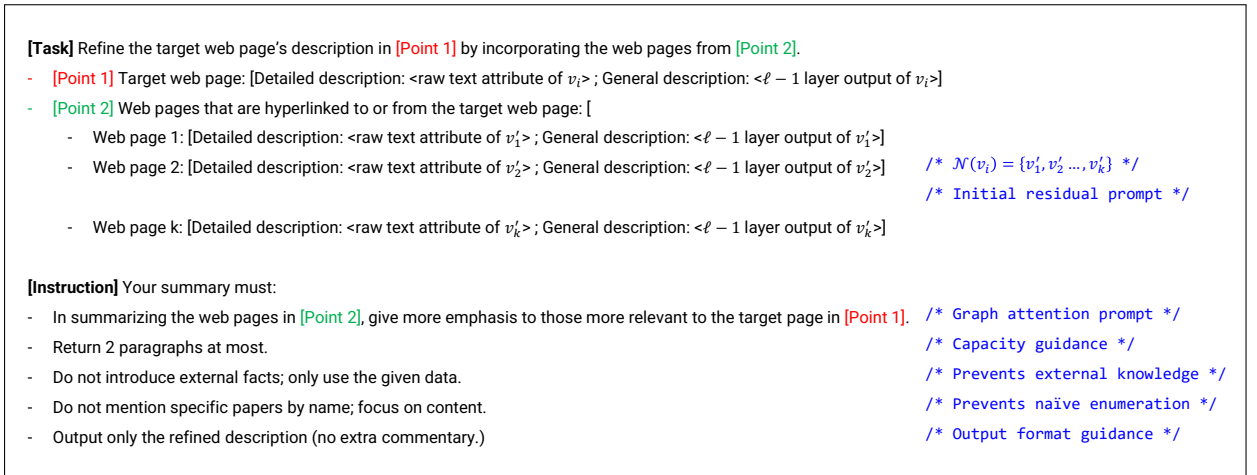


Figure 14: Example prompt of GLN for hyperlink networks (Wiki-CS dataset).

prompt. The core of the graph attention prompt lies in the *phrase*: ‘give more emphasis to those more relevant to the target’. Analogously, the core of the initial residual connection prompt lies in its

itemized structure, which explicitly distinguishes between the input node attributes and the outputs of the preceding layers.

To validate the effectiveness of such designs, we

use a new graph attention prompt that uses ‘*weigh highly the works most closely related to the target*’ instead of the phrase mentioned above. In addition, we also use an alternative initial residual connection prompt that uses the plain-text prompt instead of an itemization-based prompt. Specifically, instead of using the itemized structure described in Figure 12, we use: ‘*The detailed description is [...]. The version updated by papers that cite or are cited by it is [...]*’ for the initial residual connection.

As shown in Table 9, performance under an alternative graph attention prompt remains largely unchanged, but declines markedly when the itemized initial residual connection prompt is substituted with a plain-text description. This indicates that the graph attention prompt is relatively insensitive to the exact phrasing as long as the attention objective is preserved, whereas explicitly itemized structure is indispensable for the initial residual connection prompt for high performance.

D.2 Representation format of GLN

In this section, we further elaborate on the detailed format of the target node’s representation produced by GLN. Specifically, we present a format for a citation network.

```
Paper: {
- Detailed description: <initial text attribute>,
- General description: <layer-1 output of GLN >,
- Highly general description: <layer-2 output of GLN >}
```

This format is provided as a representation for the target node (paper). In the co-purchase dataset (Book-History) and hyperlink dataset (Wiki-CS), we use the terms ‘Book’ and ‘Web page’, instead of Paper, respectively.

D.3 Prompt for downstream tasks

In this section, we provide details regarding our prompt for downstream tasks, which are node classification and link prediction.

Node classification Example node classification prompts for the OGBN-arXiv dataset (citation network), Book-History (co-purchase), and Wiki-CS (hyperlink network), are provided in Figure 15, 16, and 17, respectively. Specifically, we provide a set of possible categories and ask the LLM to select the one the target node is most likely to belong to.

Link prediction Example link prediction prompts for the OGBN-arXiv dataset (citation network), Book-History (co-purchase), and Wiki-CS (hyperlink network), are provided in Figure 18, 19, and 20, respectively. Specifically, we present the LLM

with four randomly sampled nodes and one ground-truth node, prompting it to select the node most likely to be linked to the target node. The prompt is tailored to reflect the semantics of the edge type. For example, in a co-purchase network, we ask: ‘*Which book is most likely to be co-purchased with the target book?*’.

E Future work

In this section, we outline potential directions for future work. Several points raised in the Limitation section suggest promising avenues. Furthermore, GLN holds promise for applications beyond the current scope, particularly in graph neural network domains such as anomaly detection (Kim et al., 2024b; Lee et al., 2024) and recommendation (Acharya et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2022).

F License and AI assistant usage

In this appendix section, we discuss (1) the licenses of the artifacts used in this work and (2) our use of an AI assistant, ChatGPT.

F.1 Licenses

The licenses of all artifacts used in this work are listed below:

- OGBN-arXiv dataset: ODC-BY (<https://ogb.stanford.edu/docs/nodeprop/>)
- Book-History dataset: MIT License (<https://github.com/sktsherlock/TAG-Benchmark>)
- Wiki-CS dataset: MIT License (<https://github.com/pmernyei/wiki-cs-dataset>)
- PromptGFM: CC-BY-4.0 (<https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.03313>)
- GPT API: OpenAI permits academic use of the outputs generated by their models (<https://openai.com/policies/>).
- Claude API: Anthropic permits academic use of the outputs generated by their models (<https://www.anthropic.com/legal/commercial-terms>).

Note that all permits use for academic purposes.

F.2 AI Assistant usage

For this work, we used ChatGPT (Achiam et al., 2023) to assist with writing refinement and grammar checking.

[Data description] You have data describing a single **paper**: [<description of the target node>].

[Task] Choose the most suitable field this **paper** belongs to from the followings: [<artificial intelligence>, <hardware architecture>, <computational complexity>, <computational engineering, finance, and science>, <computational geometry>, <computation and language>, <cryptography and security>, <computer vision and pattern recognition>, <computers and society>, <databases>, <distributed, parallel, and cluster computing>, <digital libraries>, <discrete mathematics>, <data structures and algorithms>, <emerging technologies>, <formal languages and automata theory>, <general literature>, <graphics>, <computer science and game theory>, <human-computer interaction>, <information retrieval>, <information theory>, <machine learning>, <logic in computer science>, <multiagent systems>, <multimedia>, <mathematical software>, <numerical analysis>, <neural and evolutionary computing>, <networking and internet architecture>, <other computer science>, <operating systems>, <performance>, <programming language>, <robotics>, <symbolic computation>, <sound>, <software engineering>, <social and information networks>, <systems and control>].

[Instruction] Only return a single predicted field in the format of <field name>. DO NOT include any other words.

Figure 15: Example node classification prompt of GLN for citation networks (OGBN-arXiv dataset).

[Data description] You have data describing a single **book**: [<description of the target node>].

[Task] Choose the most suitable category this **book** belongs to from the followings: [<Africa>, <Americas>, <Ancient Civilizations>, <Arctic & Antarctica>, <Asia>, <Australia & Oceania>, <Europe>, <Historical Study & Educational Resources>, <Middle East>, <Military>, <Russia>, <World>].

[Instruction] Only return a single predicted category in the format of <category name>. DO NOT include any other words.

Figure 16: Example node classification prompt of GLN for co-purchase networks (Book-History dataset).

[Data description] You have data describing a single **web page**: [<description of the target node>].

[Task] Choose the most suitable category this **web page** belongs to from the followings: [<computational linguistics>, <databases>, <operating systems>, <computer architecture>, <computer security>, <internet protocols>, <computer file systems>, <distributed computing architecture>, <web technology>, <programming language topics>].

[Instruction] Only return a single predicted category in the format of <category name>. DO NOT include any other words.

Figure 17: Example node classification prompt of GLN for hyperlink networks (Wiki-CS dataset).

[Task] Among the 5 **candidate papers**, choose the paper that is most likely to cite or be cited by the **target paper**.

- **Target paper**: <target paper description>.
- **Candidate papers**:
 - {**Paper 1**: <candidate paper 1 description>,
...
 - Paper 5**: <candidate paper 5 description>}

[Instruction] Only return the predicted paper number in the format of [k]. DO NOT include other words.

Figure 18: Example edge prediction prompt of GLN for citation networks (OGBN-arXiv dataset).

[Task] Among the 5 **candidate books**, choose the book that is most likely to be co-purchased with the **target book**.

- **Target book**: <target book description>.
- **Candidate books**:
 - {**Book 1**: <candidate book 1 description>,
...
 - Book 5**: <candidate book 5 description>}

[Instruction] Only return the predicted book number in the format of [k]. DO NOT include other words.

Figure 19: Example edge prediction prompt of GLN for co-purchase networks (Book-History dataset).

[Task] Among the 5 candidate web pages, choose the page that is most likely to be co-purchased with the target web page.

- Target web page: <target web page description>.

- Candidate web pages:

- {Web page 1: <candidate web page 1 description>,

...

- Web page 5: <candidate web page 5 description>

[Instruction] Only return the predicted web page number in the format of [k]. DO NOT include other words.

Figure 20: Example edge prediction prompt of GLN for hyperlink networks (Wiki-CS dataset).