

Hybrid Deep Learning Architectures for Improving Short-Term Energy Demand Forecasting

Dr. Mariana Silva

Associate Professor, Lisbon Institute of Advanced Computing, Portugal

Abstract

Accurate short-term energy demand forecasting is important for electricity generation scheduling, grid stability, demand management, reserve planning, and efficient allocation of power-system resources. Energy demand is influenced by historical consumption patterns, weather conditions, calendar effects, occupancy behavior, economic activities, and unexpected variations in consumer requirements. These interacting influences create nonlinear and time-dependent relationships that may limit the forecasting performance of individual statistical or machine learning models. Hybrid deep learning provides a methodological approach for combining complementary forms of temporal and nonlinear representation within a unified forecasting system. This hypothetical methodological study examines a hybrid deep learning architecture for improving short-term electricity-demand forecasting. The proposed framework integrates temporal feature extraction, recurrent sequence modeling, exogenous weather variables, calendar information, and a final nonlinear prediction layer. An illustrative dataset representing hourly energy-demand observations is divided into hypothetical training, validation, and testing periods. Three conceptual forecasting configurations are compared: a feedforward neural network, a recurrent deep learning model, and a hybrid deep learning architecture.

The illustrative analysis evaluates the assumed models using mean absolute error, root mean squared error, and mean absolute percentage error. Additional calculations examine hypothetical forecasting performance across one-hour, six-hour, twelve-hour, and twenty-four-hour prediction horizons. Under the assigned sample values, the hybrid architecture records lower forecasting errors than the two comparison configurations, while forecast uncertainty increases as the prediction horizon becomes longer. These numerical differences are illustrative and are not outputs of implemented learning algorithms. The study concludes that hybrid deep learning offers a useful methodological framework for combining multiple sources of temporal and contextual information in short-term energy forecasting. However, improvements must be demonstrated through reproducible experiments using representative datasets, appropriate benchmark models, temporal validation, and transparent error reporting. The proposed framework therefore provides a conceptual basis for future empirical research rather than evidence of established forecasting superiority.

Keywords: Hybrid Deep Learning, Short-Term Energy Forecasting, Electricity Demand, Neural Networks, Time-Series Forecasting, Recurrent Learning, Load Forecasting, Energy Analytics, Predictive Modeling, Smart Grid.

1. Introduction

Short-term energy demand forecasting is an important analytical function within modern electricity systems because generation and consumption must remain appropriately balanced over relatively short operating intervals. Reliable forecasts assist utilities in scheduling generation resources, planning reserves, managing grid operations, and responding to expected variations in electricity consumption. Electricity demand nevertheless follows complex patterns associated with time of day, day of week, weather conditions, seasonal behavior, and changes in consumer activity. Forecasting methods must therefore represent both repeated temporal structures and irregular demand fluctuations.

Traditional energy-demand forecasting has employed statistical time-series models, regression procedures, artificial neural networks, and support vector machines. Each approach offers particular advantages, but predictive performance can vary substantially across datasets and forecasting horizons. Hippert et al. (2001) reviewed neural-network approaches to short-term load forecasting, while Mohandes (2002) examined support vector machines for electrical load prediction. These studies demonstrated the usefulness of machine learning while also highlighting the importance of suitable input selection, model specification, and evaluation procedures when forecasting highly variable energy-demand sequences.

Hybrid forecasting developed from the recognition that different models may capture different characteristics of a time series. Zhang (2003) demonstrated the broader value of combining linear and nonlinear forecasting approaches, while Khashei and Bijari (2011) further investigated hybridization between statistical and neural models. Within electricity forecasting, wavelet decomposition combined with neural networks has been used to separate load signals into components associated with different frequencies. Such approaches illustrate how complementary analytical procedures can be integrated rather than relying on a single forecasting mechanism.

Deep learning extends this principle through architectures containing multiple computational layers capable of extracting increasingly abstract representations from complex data. Hinton et al. (2006) contributed to the development of deeper representation learning, while LeCun et al. (2015) summarized major advances in deep learning across several computational domains. Sequence-oriented neural architectures are particularly relevant to energy forecasting because electricity demand contains temporal dependencies. Nevertheless, greater model complexity does not automatically ensure better forecasts, especially when training data are limited or evaluation procedures are inappropriate.

The present hypothetical study examines a hybrid deep learning architecture designed to combine historical load sequences, local temporal features, weather variables, and calendar information for short-term forecasting. The research develops a structured methodological framework and uses illustrative numerical outcomes to demonstrate appropriate error calculations. It does not claim that an actual hybrid model was trained or that the reported error reductions were experimentally observed. The study instead focuses on how such an architecture can be evaluated and which methodological challenges require attention during future empirical implementation.

2. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to examine the methodological potential of hybrid deep learning for short-term energy-demand forecasting. Particular attention is given to temporal feature representation, model integration, forecasting-error evaluation, and changes in predictive performance across alternative forecast horizons.

2.1 Examination of Hybrid Deep Learning Architecture

The first objective is to examine how complementary deep learning components may be combined to represent short-term energy-demand patterns. The proposed architecture separates local temporal feature extraction from longer sequence modeling and incorporates additional weather and calendar variables through a contextual information branch. Such integration is intended to represent short-term fluctuations, recurrent consumption patterns, and nonlinear relationships simultaneously. The objective establishes a conceptual foundation for determining whether hybrid architecture design can provide richer representations than a single forecasting component.

The study also examines why architectural integration should be based on functional complementarity rather than increasing model complexity without justification. Different network components should address identifiable characteristics of the forecasting problem, such as local load variation, temporal dependence, or exogenous influence. A hybrid model containing unnecessary layers may increase computation and overfitting without improving generalization. Consequently, the objective emphasizes systematic model design, validation-based configuration, and comparison with simpler baselines before attributing improved forecasting performance to architectural complexity.

2.2 Evaluation of Short-Term Forecasting Accuracy

The second objective is to establish a structured method for evaluating short-term demand forecasts using multiple error measures. Mean absolute error, root mean squared error, and mean absolute percentage error are considered because they describe forecasting errors from different perspectives. The hypothetical analysis compares three conceptual model configurations using an identical assumed test sample. The objective is not to establish actual superiority but to demonstrate how forecasting performance should be compared under common evaluation conditions.

The research further examines how forecast accuracy may change as the prediction horizon becomes longer. One-hour-ahead forecasting generally uses more recent information than twenty-four-hour-ahead prediction and may therefore involve different levels of uncertainty. A separate hypothetical comparison evaluates the proposed hybrid architecture across four forecast horizons. The purpose is to illustrate horizon-sensitive assessment and emphasize that a single aggregate error value may not adequately represent model behavior across all short-term forecasting requirements.

2.3 Identification of Forecasting and Implementation Challenges

The third objective is to identify technical challenges affecting hybrid deep learning for energy-demand forecasting. Relevant issues include changing consumption behavior, weather uncertainty, missing observations, abnormal demand periods, computational requirements, and model overfitting. These conditions can influence both model training and subsequent evaluation. Recognizing them is important because forecasting accuracy achieved under carefully prepared historical data may not be maintained when operational demand conditions change or when future explanatory variables contain forecasting errors.

The objective also considers methodological requirements for credible comparison. Forecasting studies should preserve temporal order, prevent information from future observations entering training features, use consistent evaluation windows, and compare models under identical information conditions. Error measures should be clearly defined and accompanied by appropriate baseline models. These requirements reduce the risk that an apparently improved forecasting architecture benefits

primarily from data leakage, inconsistent preprocessing, or unequal model-selection procedures rather than genuine predictive capability.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Neural and Statistical Approaches to Load Forecasting

Hippert et al. (2001) reviewed artificial neural networks for short-term load forecasting and examined methodological issues involving architecture selection, training, and evaluation. Mohandes (2002) investigated support vector machines for short-term electricity forecasting and demonstrated the growing relevance of machine-learning techniques to demand prediction. Chen et al. (2004) later examined support vector machines within the EUNITE forecasting competition. Collectively, these studies established machine learning as an important alternative to conventional statistical load-forecasting procedures.

Taylor and McSharpy (2007) compared short-term forecasting techniques using European electricity-demand data and demonstrated the importance of evaluating alternative approaches under common conditions. Fan and Hyndman (2012) developed a semi-parametric additive model incorporating weather-related and calendar information. Ceperic et al. (2013) subsequently investigated a support vector regression strategy with systematic model-input selection. These studies emphasize that forecasting performance depends not only on the selected algorithm but also on feature engineering, model configuration, and the information available at the prediction time.

3.2 Hybrid Forecasting Models

A broader foundation for hybrid forecasting was provided by Zhang (2003), who combined ARIMA and artificial neural network modeling to represent both linear and nonlinear time-series characteristics. Khashei and Bijari (2011) developed an additional hybrid methodology for integrating these forecasting paradigms. Within electricity-demand research, wavelet-based decomposition has also been combined with neural prediction to separate low- and high-frequency behavior. These approaches demonstrate that decomposition and model integration may improve representation of complex temporal structures under suitable conditions.

Amjady (2007) examined a hybrid methodology for short-term bus-load forecasting, while Niu et al. (2010) combined support vector machine forecasting with an optimization procedure. Ko and Lee (2013) developed a hybrid short-term load forecasting model integrating support vector regression, radial-basis neural networks, and extended Kalman filtering. Such studies demonstrate substantial methodological diversity in hybrid forecasting. They also indicate that hybridization should be evaluated empirically because combinations that improve one dataset may not necessarily generalize to different load environments.

3.3 Deep Learning and Energy Forecasting Development

Hinton et al. (2006) provided an important contribution to deeper representation learning through efficient training of deep belief networks. LeCun et al. (2015) later reviewed deep learning and described how multilayer computational models can learn hierarchical representations from complex data. These developments provided a broader methodological foundation for applying deeper neural architectures to sequential forecasting. Their relevance to energy prediction arises from the ability of

multilayer models to learn nonlinear transformations from large collections of temporally organized observations.

Baliyan et al. (2015) reviewed artificial neural network approaches to short-term load forecasting and discussed hybrid networks combining neural prediction with optimization techniques. An advanced wavelet-neural forecasting approach reported in 2016 further demonstrated how signal decomposition, feature selection, and neural learning could be combined for very short-term electricity prediction. Hong et al. (2014, 2016) also emphasized benchmark datasets and rigorous forecasting evaluation through major energy forecasting competitions, strengthening the methodological basis for transparent comparative research.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Hybrid Architecture

The present study adopts a hypothetical methodological research design centered on a conceptual hybrid deep learning system. The proposed architecture contains three functional components. The first processes recent demand observations to extract short-duration temporal patterns. The second represents sequential relationships over an extended historical window through a recurrent learning component. The third receives exogenous variables such as temperature, humidity, hour category, weekday status, and holiday indicators. Outputs from these components are combined before generating the final demand forecast.

The architecture is intended to examine whether complementary temporal and contextual representations can be integrated within one predictive framework. A feedforward neural network and a recurrent deep model are included as conceptual comparison configurations. All three methods would receive identical training and testing information in a genuine experiment. Hyperparameter selection would be conducted using the validation period only, while the final test period would remain unavailable during model development. This structure reduces the risk of optimistic performance estimates arising from repeated test-set tuning.

4.2 Hypothetical Dataset and Data Preparation

The hypothetical dataset contains 8,000 sequential hourly electricity-demand observations representing an illustrative regional power system. The first 6,000 observations are assigned to model training, the subsequent 1,000 to validation, and the final 1,000 to independent testing. Each record conceptually includes electricity demand, temperature, relative humidity, hour of day, day of week, and holiday status. These quantities are constructed for methodological illustration and do not correspond to information collected from an actual electricity utility.

Data preparation conceptually includes chronological sorting, missing-value assessment, scaling of continuous predictors, encoding of calendar variables, and construction of historical demand windows. The model receives only information assumed to be available at each forecasting origin. Future demand observations are excluded from preceding training features. Weather inputs used in an operational system would ideally represent forecasted rather than retrospectively observed conditions when appropriate. This distinction is necessary because access to actual future weather could produce unrealistically favorable energy-demand forecasts during evaluation.

4.3 Forecasting Procedure and Error Measures

The hypothetical comparison considers three model configurations: a feedforward neural network, a recurrent deep learning model, and the proposed hybrid architecture. Each model conceptually predicts electricity demand for the same 1,000-observation test period. No actual training procedure has been executed for this manuscript. Instead, internally consistent illustrative error values are assigned to demonstrate comparative evaluation. The analysis focuses on point forecasts rather than probabilistic prediction intervals, although uncertainty estimation would be valuable in future empirical research.

Three standard error measures are employed. Mean absolute error is expressed as $MAE = (1/n)\sum|y_t - \hat{y}_t|$. Root mean squared error is $RMSE = \sqrt{[(1/n)\sum(y_t - \hat{y}_t)^2]}$. Mean absolute percentage error is represented as $MAPE = (100/n)\sum|(y_t - \hat{y}_t)/y_t|$, assuming strictly positive demand. These measures provide complementary information because RMSE gives greater weight to larger errors, while MAE and MAPE provide alternative interpretations of average forecasting deviation.

5. Analysis

5.1 Comparative Forecasting Performance of Model Architectures

The first hypothetical analysis compares three forecasting configurations using the same assumed 1,000-hour test period. The feedforward neural network is assigned an MAE of 31.8 MW, an RMSE of 42.6 MW, and a MAPE of 3.84%. The recurrent configuration records lower illustrative errors, while the hybrid architecture is assigned the smallest values. These results are deliberately constructed examples intended to demonstrate error reporting and cannot be interpreted as experimentally observed model performance.

The hypothetical comparison suggests how complementary temporal processing could be evaluated against simpler alternatives. The hybrid architecture records an illustrative MAPE of 2.71%, compared with 3.22% for the recurrent model and 3.84% for the feedforward network. However, these differences do not establish statistical or practical superiority. A genuine experiment would require repeated evaluation, suitable error-comparison procedures, identical data availability, and analysis of computational cost before concluding that the additional architecture components provide a reproducible forecasting advantage.

Table 1: Hypothetical Forecasting Error Across Alternative Model Architectures

Forecasting Model	MAE (MW)	RMSE (MW)	MAPE (%)
Feedforward Neural Network	31.8	42.6	3.84
Recurrent Deep Learning Model	26.9	36.1	3.22
Hybrid Deep Learning Architecture	22.7	30.4	2.71

Note: The values are illustrative assumptions based on a conceptual 1,000-observation test period. No neural network was trained to produce these results.

5.2 Forecasting Performance Across Prediction Horizons

The second hypothetical analysis examines the hybrid architecture across four forecast horizons. Illustrative error values increase progressively as the forecasting interval extends from one hour to

twenty-four hours. The one-hour horizon is assigned an RMSE of 22.1 MW and MAPE of 1.92%, while the twenty-four-hour horizon records 37.9 MW and 3.41%. The example demonstrates why short-term forecasting performance should be reported according to prediction horizon instead of relying solely on one aggregate accuracy statistic.

Longer-horizon forecasts are conceptually more difficult because more recent demand information becomes unavailable and uncertainty in explanatory variables may increase. Nevertheless, the precise relationship between horizon and error depends on the dataset, model design, weather information, seasonal patterns, and evaluation procedure. The numerical pattern shown below was constructed to demonstrate a plausible evaluation format rather than a universal forecasting law. Actual model performance could increase, decrease, or vary irregularly across particular horizons.

Table 2: Hypothetical Hybrid Model Performance Across Forecast Horizons

Forecast Horizon	MAE (MW)	RMSE (MW)	MAPE (%)
1 Hour Ahead	16.4	22.1	1.92
6 Hours Ahead	19.8	26.8	2.34
12 Hours Ahead	23.6	31.7	2.86
24 Hours Ahead	28.4	37.9	3.41

Note: All values are illustrative and do not represent measurements from an implemented hybrid deep learning model.

6. Discussion

6.1 Hybrid Architecture and Forecasting Accuracy

The hypothetical comparison illustrates how hybrid architectures can be evaluated when different model components are intended to represent complementary characteristics of electricity demand. Historical load sequences contain recurring temporal structures as well as shorter fluctuations, while weather and calendar variables provide additional contextual information. Combining these inputs may therefore offer a richer predictive representation than relying on one data source. However, the presence of multiple components alone cannot establish that a hybrid model is more accurate than simpler alternatives.

The methodological rationale is consistent with earlier hybrid forecasting research, including Zhang (2003), Khashei and Bijari (2011), and Ko and Lee (2013). These studies demonstrate that combining methods can be useful when the components address different properties of a forecasting problem. The present manuscript extends that conceptual principle toward deeper sequence architectures. Nevertheless, an empirical hybrid model should be subjected to ablation analysis so that any improvement can be associated with identifiable architecture components rather than overall increases in parameter count.

6.2 Forecast Horizon and Prediction Reliability

The second analytical comparison illustrates an increase in hypothetical forecasting errors at longer prediction horizons. This pattern is methodologically plausible because short-horizon forecasts can rely more strongly on recently observed consumption and immediate temporal dependence. As the forecast horizon expands, uncertainty associated with future consumption behavior and exogenous variables may become more influential. Energy forecasting studies should therefore specify the forecasting horizon clearly and avoid presenting performance measured at one interval as representative of all operational requirements.

Forecast-horizon evaluation also affects model selection. An architecture optimized for one-hour-ahead forecasting may not provide equivalent advantages for day-ahead predictions. Taylor and McSharry (2007) demonstrated the importance of comparing short-term forecasting approaches systematically, while Hong et al. (2014) reinforced the value of benchmark-oriented evaluation in energy forecasting competitions. Future hybrid deep learning research should therefore report horizon-specific errors, use consistent forecasting origins, and distinguish direct multi-horizon prediction from recursive forecasting procedures.

6.3 Comparison With Earlier Forecasting Approaches

Traditional statistical methods remain important forecasting baselines because their relative simplicity can provide useful benchmarks for more complex architectures. Support vector regression and neural networks have also shown substantial relevance to electricity-load prediction. Mohandes (2002), Chen et al. (2004), Fan and Hyndman (2012), and Ceperic et al. (2013) demonstrate the diversity of successful forecasting methodologies. Consequently, a hybrid deep learning study should compare performance against several credible alternatives instead of selecting only weak baseline models.

The increasing availability of smart-meter and high-frequency energy data creates additional opportunities for deeper architectures, but larger datasets do not remove the need for methodological discipline. Complex models may fit detailed historical relationships that do not remain stable in future periods. Proper temporal validation, regularization, early stopping, and independent testing are therefore essential. The value of hybrid deep learning should ultimately be judged through reliable out-of-sample forecasting performance, computational feasibility, and robustness under changing operational conditions rather than architectural sophistication alone.

7. Challenges

7.1 Data Quality and Changing Demand Patterns

Energy-demand datasets may contain missing observations, measurement errors, abnormal consumption periods, changes in meter configuration, and shifts in customer behavior. These characteristics can affect both model training and forecast evaluation. Deep architectures can represent complex relationships but may also learn undesirable patterns when historical information contains systematic errors. Appropriate preprocessing therefore requires careful identification of data problems without removing genuine high-demand or low-demand events merely because they appear statistically unusual.

Changing demand patterns create an additional difficulty because relationships learned from historical observations may become less representative over time. Growth in distributed generation, electric mobility, energy efficiency, and altered consumer routines can modify temporal load structures. A forecasting architecture trained on one operational period may consequently require recalibration or

retraining. Model monitoring should assess whether forecast errors are increasing systematically and whether changing feature distributions indicate that previously learned relationships should be reconsidered.

7.2 Model Complexity and Overfitting

Hybrid deep learning architectures may contain many parameters and interacting computational components. This flexibility enables representation of complicated nonlinear relationships but also increases the possibility of fitting random characteristics of the training sample. Overfitting becomes particularly important when the available historical sequence is short relative to model complexity. Validation-based architecture selection, regularization, dropout where appropriate, and controlled parameter tuning are therefore necessary to assess whether apparent training improvements translate into genuinely better forecasts.

Computational cost is another concern because deeper models may require substantially more processing for training and optimization than statistical or conventional machine-learning alternatives. Utilities may need frequent model updates as new load observations become available. Consequently, a small reduction in prediction error should be interpreted alongside additional requirements for computation, memory, model maintenance, and inference. Comparative studies should therefore document resource requirements instead of evaluating model suitability exclusively through forecast-error metrics.

7.3 Weather Uncertainty and Evaluation Reliability

Weather conditions can strongly influence electricity consumption, particularly when heating or cooling demand responds to temperature. A forecasting model evaluated using actual future weather observations may appear more accurate than an operational model that must rely on weather forecasts. This creates an important evaluation issue because explanatory information available retrospectively may differ from information available when real forecasts are issued. Researchers should specify whether historical observed weather or forecasted weather is used during model evaluation.

Evaluation reliability also depends on temporal data splitting. Randomly mixing observations from different periods between training and testing can allow highly related future and past patterns to appear in both samples and may produce overly optimistic errors. Short-term forecasting should generally preserve chronological order and evaluate the model on observations occurring after the training period. Hyperparameter tuning should remain confined to training and validation information. These safeguards help ensure that reported accuracy represents realistic out-of-sample forecasting rather than inadvertent information leakage.

8. Conclusion

Hybrid deep learning provides a promising methodological approach for short-term energy-demand forecasting because it can integrate multiple forms of temporal and contextual information within a unified predictive architecture. The present hypothetical study developed a conceptual framework combining local temporal feature extraction, sequence learning, weather variables, and calendar information. Its structure demonstrates how a hybrid forecasting system can be compared with simpler neural alternatives through consistent training, validation, and testing procedures.

The illustrative analysis assigned lower MAE, RMSE, and MAPE values to the hybrid configuration and demonstrated increasing forecast errors across longer prediction horizons. These values were created specifically for methodological demonstration and do not provide empirical evidence that hybrid deep learning outperforms alternative forecasting techniques. Genuine performance claims require implementation on representative energy-demand datasets, appropriate benchmark models, reproducible parameter settings, statistical error comparison, and independent temporal testing.

The study concludes that future research should evaluate hybrid deep learning according to predictive accuracy, model robustness, computational requirements, and sensitivity to changing demand conditions. Particular attention should be given to temporal data leakage, weather-forecast uncertainty, architecture overfitting, and horizon-specific evaluation. When these methodological requirements are addressed carefully, hybrid architectures can be investigated as a credible approach for improving the reliability of short-term energy-demand forecasting in increasingly data-intensive power systems.

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