Natural Language Processing with Deep Learning CS224N/Ling284



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Lecture 7: Machine Translation, Sequence-to-Sequence and Attention

# **Lecture Plan**

Today we will:

- 1. Introduce a new task: Machine Translation [15 mins], which is a major use-case of
- 2. A new neural architecture: sequence-to-sequence [45 mins], which is improved by
- 3. A new neural technique: attention [20 mins]
- Announcements
  - Assignment 3 is due today I hope your dependency parsers are parsing text!
  - Assignment 4 out today covered in this lecture, you get 9 days for it (!), due Thu
    - Get started early! It's bigger and harder than the previous assignments
  - Thursday's lecture about choosing final projects

# **Section 1: Pre-Neural Machine Translation**

# **Machine Translation**

**Machine Translation (MT)** is the task of translating a sentence *x* from one language (the source language) to a sentence *y* in another language (the target language).

*x:* L'homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers

y: Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains

# The early history of MT: 1950s

- Machine translation re powerful than high sc
- Foundational work on information theory
- MT heavily funded by systems doing word s
- Human language is m languages!
- Little understanding c
- Problem soon appeare

1 minute video showing 1954 MT: https://youtu.be/K-HfpsHPmvw



# **1990s-2010s: Statistical Machine Translation**

- <u>Core idea</u>: Learn a probabilistic model from data
- Suppose we're translating French  $\rightarrow$  English.
- We want to find best English sentence y, given French sentence x

 $\operatorname{argmax}_{y} P(y|x)$ 

 Use Bayes Rule to break this down into two components to be learned separately:



# 1990s-2010s: Statistical Machine Translation

- Question: How to learn translation model P(x|y)?
- First, need large amount of parallel data (e.g., pairs of human-translated French/English sentences)



# **Learning alignment for SMT**

- <u>Question</u>: How to learn translation model P(x|y) from the parallel corpus?
- Break it down further: Introduce latent *a* variable into the model: P(x, a|y)

where *a* is the alignment, i.e. word-level correspondence between source sentence *x* and target sentence *y* 



# What is alignment?

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Alignment is the correspondence between particular words in the translated sentence pair.

- Typological differences between languages lead to complicated alignments!
- Note: Some words have no counterpart



# **Alignment is complex**

Alignment can be many-to-one

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autochtones

# **Alignment is complex**

Alignment can be one-to-many

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# **Alignment is complex**

Alignment can be many-to-many (phrase-level)



# Learning alignment for SMT

- We learn P(x, a|y) as a combination of many factors, including:
  - Probability of particular words aligning (also depends on position in sent)
  - Probability of particular words having a particular fertility (number of corresponding words)

• etc.

- Alignments *a* are latent variables: They aren't explicitly specified in the data!
  - Require the use of special learning algorithms (like Expectation-Maximization) for learning the parameters of distributions with latent variables
    - In older days, we used to do a lot of that in CS 224N, but now see CS 228!

# **Decoding for SMT**



- We could enumerate every possible *y* and calculate the probability? → Too expensive!
- Answer: Impose strong independence assumptions in model, use dynamic programming for globally optimal solutions (e.g. Viterbi algorithm).
- This process is called *decoding*

# **Decoding for SMT**





<u>Source:</u> "Statistical Machine Translation", Chapter 6, Koehn, 2009. <u>https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/statistical-machine-translation/94EADF9F680558E13BE759997553CDE5</u>

# **1990s-2010s: Statistical Machine Translation**

- SMT was a huge research field
- The best systems were extremely complex
  - Hundreds of important details we haven't mentioned here
  - Systems had many separately-designed subcomponents
  - Lots of feature engineering
    - Need to design features to capture particular language phenomena
  - Require compiling and maintaining extra resources
    - Like tables of equivalent phrases
  - Lots of human effort to maintain
    - Repeated effort for each language pair!

# **Section 2: Neural Machine Translation**

# 2014

(dramatic reenactment)

# 2014

research

anslation

(dramatic reenactment)

# What is Neural Machine Translation?

- Neural Machine Translation (NMT) is a way to do Machine Translation with a *single* end-to-end neural network
- The neural network architecture is called a sequence-to-sequence model (aka seq2seq) and it involves two RNNs

# **Neural Machine Translation (NMT)**

#### The sequence-to-sequence model



# Sequence-to-sequence is versatile!

- Sequence-to-sequence is useful for *more than just MT*
- Many NLP tasks can be phrased as sequence-to-sequence:
  - Summarization (long text  $\rightarrow$  short text)
  - Dialogue (previous utterances  $\rightarrow$  next utterance)
  - Parsing (input text → output parse as sequence)
  - Code generation (natural language  $\rightarrow$  Python code)

# **Neural Machine Translation (NMT)**

- The sequence-to-sequence model is an example of a Conditional Language Model
  - Language Model because the decoder is predicting the next word of the target sentence *y*
  - **Conditional** because its predictions are *also* conditioned on the source sentence *x*
- NMT directly calculates P(y|x):

$$P(y|x) = P(y_1|x) P(y_2|y_1, x) P(y_3|y_1, y_2, x) \dots P(y_T|y_1, \dots, y_{T-1}, x)$$

Probability of next target word, given target words so far and source sentence x

- **<u>Question</u>**: How to train a NMT system?
- <u>Answer</u>: Get a big parallel corpus...

# **Training a Neural Machine Translation system**



Seq2seq is optimized as a single system. Backpropagation operates "end-to-end".

# **Multi-layer RNNs**

- RNNs are already "deep" on one dimension (they unroll over many timesteps)
- We can also make them "deep" in another dimension by applying multiple RNNs

   this is a multi-layer RNN.
- This allows the network to compute more complex representations
  - The lower RNNs should compute lower-level features and the higher RNNs should compute higher-level features.
- Multi-layer RNNs are also called *stacked RNNs*.

# Multi-layer deep encoder-decoder machine translation net



Conditioning = Bottleneck

# **Multi-layer RNNs in practice**

- High-performing RNNs are usually multi-layer (but aren't as deep as convolutional or feed-forward networks)
- For example: In a 2017 paper, Britz et al. find that for Neural Machine Translation, 2 to 4 layers is best for the encoder RNN, and 4 layers is best for the decoder RNN
  - Often 2 layers is a lot better than 1, and 3 might be a little better than 2
  - Usually, skip-connections/dense-connections are needed to train deeper RNNs (e.g., 8 layers)
- Transformer-based networks (e.g., BERT) are usually deeper, like 12 or 24 layers.
  - You will learn about Transformers later; they have a lot of skipping-like connections

# **Greedy decoding**

 We saw how to generate (or "decode") the target sentence by taking argmax on each step of the decoder



- This is greedy decoding (take most probable word on each step)
- **Problems with this method?**

# **Problems with greedy decoding**

- Greedy decoding has no way to undo decisions!
  - Input: il a m'entarté (he hit me with a pie)
  - $\rightarrow$  he \_\_\_\_\_
  - $\rightarrow$  he hit \_\_\_\_\_
  - $\rightarrow$  he hit a \_\_\_\_\_

(whoops! no going back now...)

• How to fix this?

# **Exhaustive search decoding**

• Ideally, we want to find a (length T) translation y that maximizes

$$P(y|x) = P(y_1|x) P(y_2|y_1, x) P(y_3|y_1, y_2, x) \dots, P(y_T|y_1, \dots, y_{T-1}, x)$$
$$= \prod_{t=1}^T P(y_t|y_1, \dots, y_{t-1}, x)$$

- We could try computing all possible sequences y
  - This means that on each step t of the decoder, we're tracking V<sup>t</sup> possible partial translations, where V is vocab size
  - This O(V<sup>T</sup>) complexity is far too expensive!

# **Beam search decoding**

- <u>Core idea</u>: On each step of decoder, keep track of the k most probable partial translations (which we call hypotheses)
  - *k* is the beam size (in practice around 5 to 10)
- A hypothesis  $y_1, \ldots, y_t$  has a score which is its log probability:

score
$$(y_1, \dots, y_t) = \log P_{LM}(y_1, \dots, y_t | x) = \sum_{i=1}^t \log P_{LM}(y_i | y_1, \dots, y_{i-1}, x)$$

- Scores are all negative, and higher score is better
- We search for high-scoring hypotheses, tracking top k on each step
- Beam search is not guaranteed to find optimal solution
- But much more efficient than exhaustive search!

Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \ldots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 

<START>

Calculate prob dist of next word

Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \dots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \dots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 



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top k next words and calculate scores
Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \ldots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 



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For each of the *k* hypotheses, find top *k* next words and calculate scores

Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \dots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \dots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 





Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \dots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{t} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \dots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 



-1.8

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Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \ldots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 



Of these k<sup>2</sup> hypotheses, just keep k with highest scores

Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \ldots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 



For each of the *k* hypotheses, find top *k* next words and calculate scores

Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \ldots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 



This is the top-scoring hypothesis!

Beam size = k = 2. Blue numbers =  $score(y_1, \ldots, y_t) = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \log P_{LM}(y_i|y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)$ 



Backtrack to obtain the full hypothesis

#### Beam search decoding: stopping criterion

- In greedy decoding, usually we decode until the model produces an <END> token
  - **For example:** *<START> he hit me with a pie <END>*
- In beam search decoding, different hypotheses may produce <END> tokens on different timesteps
  - When a hypothesis produces <END>, that hypothesis is complete.
  - Place it aside and continue exploring other hypotheses via beam search.
- Usually we continue beam search until:
  - We reach timestep T (where T is some pre-defined cutoff), or
  - We have at least *n* completed hypotheses (where *n* is pre-defined cutoff)

#### Beam search decoding: finishing up

- We have our list of completed hypotheses.
- How to select top one with highest score?
- Each hypothesis  $y_1, \ldots, y_t$  on our list has a score

score
$$(y_1, \dots, y_t) = \log P_{LM}(y_1, \dots, y_t | x) = \sum_{i=1}^t \log P_{LM}(y_i | y_1, \dots, y_{i-1}, x)$$

- **Problem with this:** longer hypotheses have lower scores
- **Fix:** Normalize by length. Use this to select top one instead:

$$\frac{1}{t} \sum_{i=1}^{t} \log P_{\text{LM}}(y_i | y_1, \dots, y_{i-1}, x)$$

#### **Advantages of NMT**

Compared to SMT, NMT has many advantages:

- Better performance
  - More fluent
  - Better use of context
  - Better use of phrase similarities
- A single neural network to be optimized end-to-end
  - No subcomponents to be individually optimized
- Requires much less human engineering effort
  - No feature engineering
  - Same method for all language pairs

#### **Disadvantages of NMT?**

Compared to SMT:

- NMT is less interpretable
  - Hard to debug
- NMT is difficult to control
  - For example, can't easily specify rules or guidelines for translation
  - Safety concerns!

#### How do we evaluate Machine Translation?

**BLEU** (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy)

You'll see BLEU in detail in Assignment 4!

- BLEU compares the <u>machine-written translation</u> to one or several <u>human-written</u> <u>translation(s)</u>, and computes a <u>similarity score</u> based on:
  - *n*-gram precision (usually for 1, 2, 3 and 4-grams)
  - Plus a penalty for too-short system translations
- BLEU is useful but imperfect
  - There are many valid ways to translate a sentence
  - So a good translation can get a poor BLEU score because it has low *n*-gram overlap with the human translation <sup>(3)</sup>

#### **MT progress over time**

[Edinburgh En-De WMT newstest2013 Cased BLEU; NMT 2015 from U. Montréal; NMT 2019 FAIR on newstest2019]



Sources: <a href="http://www.meta-net.eu/events/meta-forum-2016/slides/09\_sennrich.pdf">http://www.meta-net.eu/events/meta-forum-2016/slides/09\_sennrich.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.meta-net.eu/events/meta-forum-2016/slides/09\_sennrich.pdf">http://matrix.statmt.org/</a>

## NMT: perhaps the biggest success story of NLP Deep Learning?

Neural Machine Translation went from a fringe research attempt in **2014** to the leading standard method in **2016** 

- **2014**: First seq2seq paper published
- **2016**: Google Translate switches from SMT to NMT and by 2018 everyone has



- This is amazing!
  - **SMT** systems, built by hundreds of engineers over many years, outperformed by NMT systems trained by a small group of engineers in a few months

## So, is Machine Translation solved?

- Nope!
- Many difficulties remain:
  - Out-of-vocabulary words
  - Domain mismatch between train and test data
  - Maintaining context over longer text
  - Low-resource language pairs
  - Failures to accurately capture sentence meaning
  - Pronoun (or zero pronoun) resolution errors
  - Morphological agreement errors

#### So is Machine Translation solved?

- Nope!
- Using common sense is still hard



#### So is Machine Translation solved?

• Nope!

• NMT picks up biases in training data



Didn't specify gender

Source: <u>https://hackernoon.com/bias-sexist-or-this-is-the-way-it-should-be-ce1f7c8c683c</u>

#### So is Machine Translation solved?

- Nope!
- Uninterpretable systems do strange things
- (But I think this problem has been fixed in Google Translate by 2021?)



Open in Google Translate

Feedback

#### **NMT research continues**

NMT is a **flagship task** for NLP Deep Learning

- NMT research has pioneered many of the recent innovations of NLP Deep Learning
- In **2021**: NMT research continues to thrive
  - Researchers have found many, many improvements to the "vanilla" seq2seq NMT system we've just presented
  - But we'll present in a minute one improvement so integral that it is the new vanilla...

# ATTENTION

#### **Assignment 4: Cherokee-English machine translation!**

- Cherokee is an endangered Native American language about 2000 fluent speakers
- Extremely low resource: About 20k parallel sentences available, most from the bible
- AAYB KFRT SPVY TƏHT DHJG. HAAFT ASWOTƏJT GHƏRT LƏNGLƏT OƏ APWOT STA DHŁTJPVLT DJ OLƏPA SƏƏJ DOJƏFT DOHLT.

Long ago were seven boys who used to spend all their time down by the townhouse playing games, rolling a stone wheel along the ground, sliding and striking it with a stick

- Writing system is a syllabary of symbols for each CV unit (85 letters)
- Many thanks to Shiyue Zhang, Benjamin Frey, and Mohit Bansal from UNC Chapel Hill for the resources for this assignment!
- Cherokee is not available on Google Translate!

#### Cherokee

- Cherokee originally lived in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee
- Most speakers now in Oklahoma, following the Trail of Tears; some in NC
- Writing system Invented by Sequoyah around 1820 someone who was previously illiterate
  - Very effective: In the following decades Cherokee literacy was higher than for white people in the southeastern United States



#### **Section 3: Attention**

#### **Sequence-to-sequence: the bottleneck problem**



**Problems with this architecture?** 

#### Sequence-to-sequence: the bottleneck problem



#### Attention

- Attention provides a solution to the bottleneck problem.
- <u>Core idea</u>: on each step of the decoder, use *direct connection to the encoder* to *focus* on a particular part of the source sequence



• First, we will show via diagram (no equations), then we will show with equations























Decoder RNN





Sometimes we take the attention output from the previous step, and also feed it into the decoder (along with the usual decoder input). We do this in Assignment 4.

# Decoder RNN















Decoder RNN

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#### **Attention: in equations**

- We have encoder hidden states  $h_1, \ldots, h_N \in \mathbb{R}^h$
- On timestep *t*, we have decoder hidden state  $s_t \in \mathbb{R}^h$
- We get the attention scores  $e^t$  for this step:

$$oldsymbol{e}^t = [oldsymbol{s}_t^Toldsymbol{h}_1, \dots, oldsymbol{s}_t^Toldsymbol{h}_N] \in \mathbb{R}^N$$

• We take softmax to get the attention distribution  $\alpha^t$  for this step (this is a probability distribution and sums to 1)

$$\alpha^t = \operatorname{softmax}(\boldsymbol{e}^t) \in \mathbb{R}^N$$

• We use  $\alpha^t$  to take a weighted sum of the encoder hidden states to get the attention output  $a_t$ 

$$\boldsymbol{a}_t = \sum_{i=1} \alpha_i^t \boldsymbol{h}_i \in \mathbb{R}^h$$

• Finally we concatenate the attention output  $a_t$  with the decoder hidden state  $s_t$  and proceed as in the non-attention seq2seq model

$$[oldsymbol{a}_t;oldsymbol{s}_t]\in\mathbb{R}^{2h}$$

#### **Attention is great**

- Attention significantly improves NMT performance
  - It's very useful to allow decoder to focus on certain parts of the source
- Attention solves the bottleneck problem
  - Attention allows decoder to look directly at source; bypass bottleneck
- Attention helps with vanishing gradient problem
  - Provides shortcut to faraway states
- Attention provides some interpretability
  - By inspecting attention distribution, we can see what the decoder was focusing on
  - We get (soft) alignment for free!
  - This is cool because we never explicitly trained an alignment system
  - The network just learned alignment by itself



#### **Attention is a** *general* **Deep Learning technique**

- We've seen that attention is a great way to improve the sequence-to-sequence model for Machine Translation.
- <u>However</u>: You can use attention in many architectures (not just seq2seq) and many tasks (not just MT)
- More general definition of attention:
  - Given a set of vector values, and a vector query, <u>attention</u> is a technique to compute a weighted sum of the values, dependent on the query.
- We sometimes say that the query *attends to* the values.
- For example, in the seq2seq + attention model, each decoder hidden state (query) attends to all the encoder hidden states (values).

#### **Attention is a** *general* **Deep Learning technique**

#### More general definition of attention:

Given a set of vector *values*, and a vector *query*, <u>attention</u> is a technique to compute a weighted sum of the values, dependent on the query.

#### Intuition:

- The weighted sum is a *selective summary* of the information contained in the values, where the query determines which values to focus on.
- Attention is a way to obtain a *fixed-size representation of an* arbitrary set of representations (the values), dependent on some other representation (the query).

#### There are *several* attention variants

- We have some values  $h_1, \ldots, h_N \in \mathbb{R}^{d_1}$  and a query  $s \in \mathbb{R}^{d_2}$
- Attention always involves:
  - 1. Computing the *attention scores*
  - **2.** Taking softmax to get *attention distribution*  $\alpha$ :

 $\alpha = \operatorname{softmax}(\boldsymbol{e}) \in \mathbb{R}^N$ 

3. Using attention distribution to take weighted sum of values:

$$oldsymbol{a} = \sum_{i=1}^N lpha_i oldsymbol{h}_i \in \mathbb{R}^{d_1}$$

thus obtaining the *attention output* **a** (sometimes called the *context vector*)

$$oldsymbol{e} \in \mathbb{R}^N ext{ multiple ways} ext{ to do this}$$

#### **Attention variants**

There are several ways you can compute  $e \in \mathbb{R}^N$  from  $h_1, \ldots, h_N \in \mathbb{R}^{d_1}$ and  $s \in \mathbb{R}^{d_2}$ :

- Basic dot-product attention:  $e_i = s^T h_i \in \mathbb{R}$ 
  - Note: this assumes  $d_1 = d_2$
  - This is the version we saw earlier
- Multiplicative attention:  $oldsymbol{e}_i = oldsymbol{s}^T oldsymbol{W} oldsymbol{h}_i \in \mathbb{R}$ 
  - Where  $oldsymbol{W} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_2 imes d_1}$  is a weight matrix
- Additive attention:  $\boldsymbol{e}_i = \boldsymbol{v}^T \mathrm{tanh}(\boldsymbol{W}_1 \boldsymbol{h}_i + \boldsymbol{W}_2 \boldsymbol{s}) \in \mathbb{R}$ 
  - Where  $W_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{d_3 \times d_1}$ ,  $W_2 \in \mathbb{R}^{d_3 \times d_2}$  are weight matrices and  $v \in \mathbb{R}^{d_3}$  is a weight vector.
  - $d_3$  (the attention dimensionality) is a hyperparameter

#### **Summary of today's lecture**

- We learned some history of Machine Translation (MT)
- Since 2014, Neural MT rapidly replaced intricate Statistical MT



 Sequence-to-sequence is the architecture for NMT (uses 2 models: encoder and decoder)

- Attention is a way to *focus on particular parts* of the input
  - Improves sequence-to-sequence a lot!

