Natural Language Processing with Deep Learning

neural machine translation (NMT)
What is Neural Machine Translation?

• Neural Machine Translation (NMT) is a way to do Machine Translation with a single neural network.

• The neural network architecture is called sequence-to-sequence (aka seq2seq) and it involves two RNNs.
Neural Machine Translation (NMT)

The sequence-to-sequence model

Encoding of the source sentence. Provides initial hidden state for Decoder RNN.

Encoder RNN produces an encoding of the source sentence.

Decoder RNN is a Language Model that generates target sentence, conditioned on encoding.

Note: This diagram shows test time behavior: decoder output is fed in as next step’s input.
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 → short text)
  • **Dialogue** (previous utterances → next utterance)
  • **Parsing** (input text → output parse as sequence)
  • **Code generation** (natural language → 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 $P(y|x)$:
  \[ P(y|x) = P(y_1|x) P(y_2|y_1, x) P(y_3|y_1, y_2, x) \ldots P(y_T|y_1, \ldots, y_{T-1}, x) \]

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

- **Question**: How to train a NMT system?
- **Answer**: Get a big parallel corpus...
Training a Neural Machine Translation system

\[ J = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^{T} J_t \]

= negative log prob of “he”

= negative log prob of “with”

= negative log prob of <END>

Seq2seq is optimized as a **single system**. Backpropagation operates “end-to-end”.

Source sentence (from corpus)

 Target sentence (from corpus)
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)*
  • → *he _____*
  • → *he hit _____*
  • → *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

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

$$= \prod_{t=1}^{T} P(y_t|y_1, \ldots, y_{t-1}, x)$$

• We could try computing all possible sequences $y$
  
  • This means that on each step $t$ of the decoder, we’re tracking $V^t$ possible partial translations, where $V$ is vocab size
  
  • This $O(V^T)$ complexity is far too expensive!
Beam search decoding

- **Core idea:** 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:

\[
\text{score}(y_1, \ldots, y_t) = \log P_{LM}(y_1, \ldots, y_t | x) = \sum_{i=1}^{t} \log P_{LM}(y_i | y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)
\]

  - 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 search decoding: example

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

Backtrack to obtain the full hypothesis
Beam search decoding: stopping criterion

• In greedy decoding, usually we decode until the model produces a <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

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

- **Problem with this:** longer hypotheses have lower scores

- **Fix:** Normalize by length. Use this to select top one instead:

$$\frac{1}{t} \sum_{i=1}^{t} \log P_{LM}(y_i | y_1, \ldots, y_{i-1}, x)$$
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!
MT progress over time
[Edinburgh En-De WMT newstest2013 Cased BLEU; NMT 2015 from U. Montréal]

NMT: the biggest success story of NLP Deep Learning

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

- **2014**: First seq2seq paper published
- **2016**: Google Translate switches from SMT to NMT
- **This is amazing!**
  - **SMT** systems, built by hundreds of engineers over many years, outperformed by NMT systems trained by a handful 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

Further reading: “Has AI surpassed humans at translation? Not even close!”
https://www.skynettoday.com/editorials/state_of_nmt
Sequence-to-sequence: the bottleneck problem

Encoding of the source sentence. This needs to capture all information about the source sentence. Information bottleneck!

Source sentence (input)

Target sentence (output)

<START> he hit me with a pie <END>
Attention

- **Attention** provides a solution to the bottleneck problem.

- **Core idea**: 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.
Sequence-to-sequence with attention

Source sentence (input):

\[
\text{il a m' entarté}
\]

\[
<\text{START}> \ 	ext{he} \ 	ext{hit} \ 	ext{me} \ 	ext{with} \ a
\]

Encoder RNN

Attention scores

Attention distribution

Attention output

Decoder RNN

\[
pie
\]

\[
\hat{y}_6
\]
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:
  \[
e^t = [s^T_t h_1, \ldots, s^T_t h_N] \in \mathbb{R}^N
  \]
- We take softmax to get the attention distribution \( \alpha^t \) for this step (this is a probability distribution and sums to 1)
  \[
  \alpha^t = \text{softmax}(e^t) \in \mathbb{R}^N
  \]
- We use \( \alpha^t \) to take a weighted sum of the encoder hidden states to get the attention output \( a_t \)
  \[
a_t = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \alpha_i^t h_i \in \mathbb{R}^h
  \]
- Finally we concatenate the attention output \( a_t \) with the decoder hidden state \( s_t \) and proceed as in the non-attention seq2seq model
  \[
  [a_t; s_t] \in \mathbb{R}^{2h}
  \]
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.
- **However**: 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*, **attention** 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, attention 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 $e \in \mathbb{R}^N$
  2. Taking softmax to get attention distribution $\alpha$:

\[
\alpha = \text{softmax}(e) \in \mathbb{R}^N
\]

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

\[
a = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \alpha_i h_i \in \mathbb{R}^{d_1}
\]

thus obtaining the attention output $a$ (sometimes called the context vector)
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**: $e_i = s^T W h_i \in \mathbb{R}$
  - Where $W \in \mathbb{R}^{d_2 \times d_1}$ is a weight matrix

- **Additive attention**: $e_i = v^T \tanh(W_1 h_i + W_2 s) \in \mathbb{R}$
  - 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

More information: