THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Machine Translation

07: Open-vocabulary Translation

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MT – 2018 – 07

1 Refresher

2 Open-vocabulary models
- Non-Solution: Ignore Rare Words
- Solution 1: Approximative Softmax
- Solution 2: Back-off Models
- Solution 3: Subword NMT
- Solution 4: Character-level NMT

Text Representation

how do we represent text in NMT?

- 1-hot encoding
  - lookup of word embedding for input
  - probability distribution over vocabulary for output
- large vocabularies
  - increase network size
  - decrease training and decoding speed
- typical network vocabulary size: 10 000–100 000 symbols

vocabulary		representation of "cat": 1-hot vector	representation of "cat": embedding
0	the	0	0.1
1	cat	1	0.3
2	is	0	0.7
.	.	.	0.5
1024	mat	0	

Problem

translation is open-vocabulary problem

- many training corpora contain millions of word types
- productive word formation processes (compounding; derivation) allow formation and understanding of unseen words
- names, numbers are morphologically simple, but open word classes

Non-Solution: Ignore Rare Words

- replace out-of-vocabulary words with UNK
- a vocabulary of 50 000 words covers 95% of text

this gets you 95% of the way...
... if you only care about automatic metrics

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why 95% is not enough

rare outcomes have high self-information

source	The **indoor temperature** is very pleasant.	
reference	Das **Raumklima** ist sehr angenehm.	
[Bahdanau et al., 2015]	Die **UNK** ist sehr angenehm.	✗
[Jean et al., 2015]	Die **Innenpool** ist sehr angenehm.	✗
[**Sennrich**, Haddow, Birch, ACL 2016]	Die **Innen+ temperatur** ist sehr angenehm.	✓

Solution 1: Approximative Softmax

approximative softmax [Jean et al., 2015]

compute softmax over "active" subset of vocabulary
$\rightarrow$ smaller weight matrix, faster softmax

- at training time: vocabulary based on words occurring in training set partition
- at test time: determine likely target words based on source text (using cheap method like translation dictionary)

limitations

- allows larger vocabulary, but still not open
- network may not learn good representation of rare words

Solution 2: Back-off Models

back-off models [Jean et al., 2015, Luong et al., 2015]

- replace rare words with UNK at training time
- when system produces UNK, align UNK to source word, and translate this with back-off method

source	The **indoor temperature** is very pleasant.	
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[Jean et al., 2015]	Die **Innenpool** ist sehr angenehm.	✗

limitations

- compounds: hard to model 1-to-many relationships
- morphology: hard to predict inflection with back-off dictionary
- names: if alphabets differ, we need transliteration
- alignment: attention model unreliable

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Subwords for NMT: Motivation

MT is an open-vocabulary problem

- compounding and other productive morphological processes
  - they charge a carry-on bag fee.
  - sie erheben eine Hand|gepäck|gebühr.
- names
  - Obama(English; German)
  - Обама (Russian)
  - オバマ (o-ba-ma) (Japanese)
- technical terms, numbers, etc.

Subword units

segmentation algorithms: wishlist

- **open-vocabulary NMT**: encode *all* words through small vocabulary
- encoding generalizes to unseen words
- small text size
- good translation quality

our experiments [Sennrich et al., 2016]

- after preliminary experiments, we propose:
  - character n-grams (with shortlist of unsegmented words)
  - segmentation via *byte pair encoding* (BPE)

Byte pair encoding for word segmentation

bottom-up character merging

- starting point: character-level representation
  → computationally expensive
- compress representation based on information theory
  → byte pair encoding [Gage, 1994]
- repeatedly replace most frequent symbol pair ('A','B') with 'AB'
- hyperparameter: when to stop
  → controls vocabulary size

word	freq
'l o w</w>'	5
'l o w e r</w>'	2
'n e w e s t</w>'	6
'w i d e s t</w>'	3

vocabulary:
l o w</w> w e r</w> n s t</w> i d

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word	freq
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l o w</w> w e r</w> n s t</w> i d
es

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word	freq
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vocabulary:
l o w</w> w e r</w> n s t</w> i d
es **est</w>**

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word	freq
'**lo** w</w>'	5
'**lo** w e r</w>'	2
'n e w **est</w>**'	6
'w i d **est</w>**'	3

vocabulary:
l o w</w> w e r</w> n s t</w> i d
es est</w> **lo**

Byte pair encoding for word segmentation

why BPE?

- open-vocabulary:
  operations learned on training set can be applied to unknown words
- compression of frequent character sequences improves efficiency
  → trade-off between text length and vocabulary size

'l o w e s t</w>'	e s	→	es
	es t</w>	→	est</w>
	l o	→	lo

Byte pair encoding for word segmentation

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Byte pair encoding for word segmentation

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'l o w **est</w>**'

e s	→	es
es t</w>	→	**est</w>**
l o	→	lo

Byte pair encoding for word segmentation

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'**lo** w est</w>'

e s	→	es
es t</w>	→	est</w>
l o	→	**lo**

Evaluation: data and methods

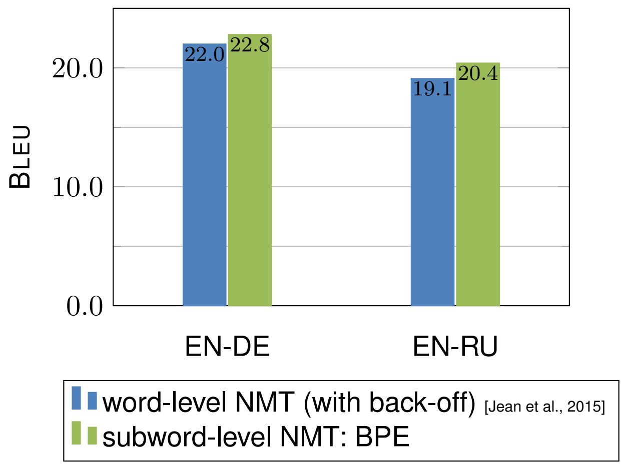
data

- WMT 15 English→German and English→Russian

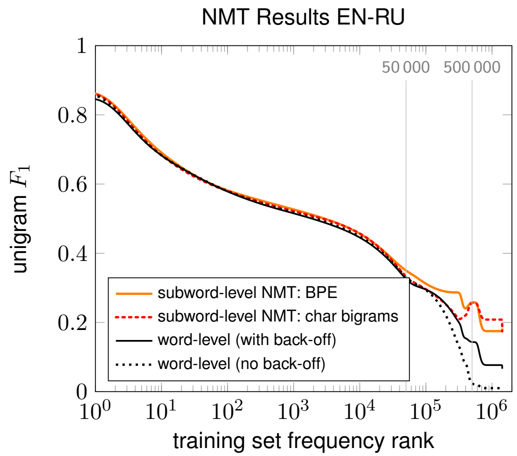
model

- attentional encoder–decoder neural network
- parameters and settings as in [Bahdanau et al, 2014]

Subword NMT: Translation Quality



Subword NMT: Translation Quality



Examples

system	sentence
source	health research institutes
reference	Gesundheitsforschungsinstitute
word-level (with back-off)	Forschungsinstitute
character bigrams	Fo|rs|ch|un|gs|in|st|it|ut|io|ne|n
BPE	Gesundheits|forsch|ungsin|stitute
source	rakfisk
reference	ракфиска (rakfiska)
word-level (with back-off)	rakfisk → UNK → rakfisk
character bigrams	ra|kf|is|k → ра|кф|ис|к (ra|kf|is|k)
BPE	rak|f|isk → рак|ф|иска (rak|f|iska)

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Character-level Models

- advantages:
  - (mostly) open-vocabulary
  - no heuristic or language-specific segmentation
  - neural network can conceivably learn from raw character sequences
- drawbacks:
  - increasing sequence length slows training/decoding (reported x2–x4 increase in training time)
  - naive char-level encoder-decoders are currently resource-limited [Luong and Manning, 2016]
- open questions
  - on which level should we represent meaning?
  - on which level should attention operate?

Character-level Models

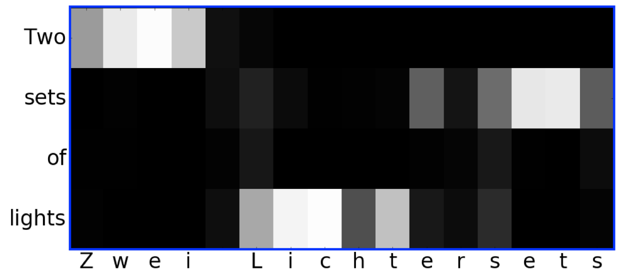
hierarchical model: back-off revisited [Luong and Manning, 2016]

- word-level model produces UNKs
- for each UNK, character-level model predicts word based on word hidden state
- pros:
  - prediction is more flexible than dictionary look-up
  - more efficient than pure character-level translation
- cons:
  - independence assumptions between main model and backoff model

Character-level Models

character-level output [Chung et al., 2016]

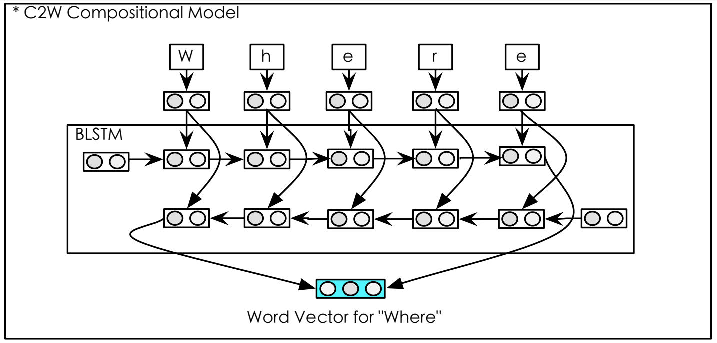
- no word segmentation on target side
- encoder is BPE-level
- good results for EN→{DE,CS,RU,FI}
- long training time (≈ x2 compared to BPE-level model)



Character-level Models

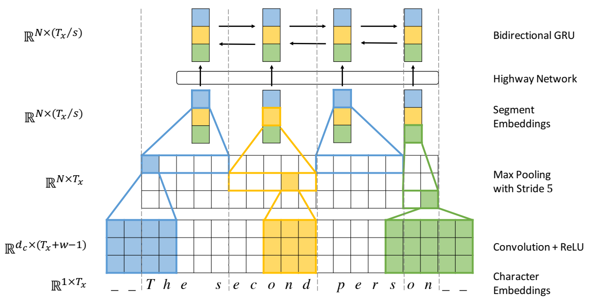
character-level input [Ling et al., 2015]

hierarchical representation: RNN states represent words, but their representation is computed from character-level LSTM



Fully Character-level NMT [Lee et al., 2016]

- goal: get rid of word boundaries
- character-level RNN on target side
- source side: convolution and max-pooling layers



Conclusion

- BPE-level subword segmentation is currently the most widely used technique for open-vocabulary NMT
- character-level models are theoretically attractive, but currently require specialized architectures and more computational resources
- the presented methods allow open vocabulary; how well we generalize is other question
  → next lecture: morphology

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