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Dynamic Word Embedding for News Analysis

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Science in Computer Science

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Dynamic Word Embedding for News Analysis

by

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Dynamic word embeddings refer to dividing data into time slices and obtaining the word vector representations of each time slice. By applying dynamic word embeddings, we can analyze how word trends evolve over time. Recently, a number of efforts have been applying dynamic word embeddings to understand how the meanings of words change over years or decades. However, little or no efforts have focused on the monthly changes, which are important for news analysis, such as how a word trend changes monthly. This thesis introduces how to apply dynamic word embeddings for news analysis and presents meaningful word trends evaluations. The application can be extended for news analysis of any time intervals, given enough data within each time slice.

The thesis of Haoxiang Zhang is approved.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Word embeddings are unsupervised learning techniques that map words to vectors. Given large training data sets, these real-valued vectors demonstrate a good semantic representation. For example, vec("queen") will be evaluated as the closest vector to the vector expression vec("man") - vec("woman") + vec("king"), which encodes the analogy "king is to queen as man is to woman" [PSM14]. Moreover, word embeddings have been used to help a variety of natural language processing (NLP) tasks, such as document classification [Seb02] and sentiment analysis [SPW13].

Recently, a number of efforts have focused on applying dynamic word embeddings to understand how the meanings of words change over time [HLJ16, RB18, BM17, YSD18]. Dynamic word embeddings divide data into time slices and obtain the word vector representations of each time slice. In their study of historical corpora for English, Hamilton et al.[HLJ16] showed that the word 'broadcast' shifts from words like 'sow' and 'seed' in 1850s to television and radio in 1990s. This means that 'broadcast', which referred to "casting out seeds", developed its meaning of "disseminating information" with the invention of television and radio. In the analysis of 151 years of U.S. Senate speeches, [RB18] identified interesting ways where language changes. For example, subject matter related to Iraq changes from countries like Albania in 1958 to 'terror' and 'terrorism' in 2008. Although these papers presented interesting results, they focus on the changes of word meanings over years or decades. Little or no efforts have taken up monthly changes in word meanings, which are helpful to analyze news data sets, such as how a topic or word trend changes monthly.

In this thesis, I would like to borrow the technique of dynamic word embedding to study trends in news. For example, the word 'Trump' appears in many news articles. During or immediately after an important event, the word 'Trump' may become more relevant to the terms related to this event. When the 2019 North Korea-United States Summit happened in Hanoi, Vietnam, the word 'Trump' might have been closely connected to Kim Jung Un (the President of North Korea) and Vietnam (the country that hosted this summit). Another example is that the recent topic of 'US-Mexico' news should be mostly related to unauthorized immigrants across the US-Mexico border, because of President Trump's election promises. By connecting word vectors from different months with alignment, dynamic word embeddings can capture such trends in news and help the analysis. The rest of this thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 describes word embeddings, dynamic word embeddings and how to align word embeddings of different time slices. Chapter 3 explains the dataset, and how to obtain the n-gram or named-entity embeddings. Chapter 4 presents the interesting visulization results. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the limitations and potential future directions.

CHAPTER 2

Word Embeddings

Word embeddings represent each word by a low-dimensional vector, while preserving the semantic similarities among words. For example, Monday and Tuesday are closer (or have a higher cosine similarity) than Monday and green. There have been embedding algorithms from 1990s [DDF90, LB96, BDV03]. Recently, word2vec [MCC13, MSC13] and GloVe [PSM14] have been widely used. Word2vec is chosen because [HLJ16] showed its superiority over other embedding methods.

2.1 Word2vec

Word2vec is a model that learns word vectors by maximizing following likelihood [MSF17]. For each word position t, given a fixed window size m predict surrounding context words of word w_t .

$$L(\theta) = \prod_{t=1}^{T} \prod_{\substack{-m \le j \le m \\ j \ne 0}} P(w_{t+j}|w_t;\theta)$$

Maximizing this likelihood is the same as minimizing following the objective function, which is the average negative log likelihood:

$$J(\theta) = -\frac{1}{T} log L(\theta)$$

= $-\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^{T} \sum_{\substack{-m \le j \le m \\ j \ne 0}} log P(w_{t+1}|w_t; \theta)$

where $\theta \in R^{2dV}$ represents all model parameters. These parameters are *d*-dimensional vectors for V words. Each word w has two vectors:

• v_w when it is a center word

• u_w when it is a context word

For example, for "...UCLA Centennial Celebration is a year-long series of events...", take Celebration as the center word w_t . Then, $P(w_{t-1}|w_t)$ is

$$P(Centennial|Celebration; u_{Centennial}, v_{Celebration}, \theta)$$

If taking Centennial as the center word w_t , then $P(w_{t+1}|w_t)$ is

$P(Celebration | Centennial; u_{Celebration}, v_{Centennial}, \theta)$

Let c denote the center word and o denote the context word, then the probability can be computed as [MSF17]

$$P(o|c) = \frac{exp(u_o^T v_c)}{\sum_{w \in V} exp(u_w^T v_c)}$$

 $u^T v = u \cdot v = \sum_{i=1}^n u_i v_i$, so the larger dot product $u_o^T v_c$ represents larger probability P(o|c) or higher similarity of o and c.

2.2 Dynamic Word Embeddings

Static word embeddings assume that the meaning of any word does not change over time and train the entire corpus by one word embeddings model. For example, it is easy to show that the word 'trade-war' has neighboring words such as 'negotiations', 'tensions' and 'tariff', but with a static word embeddings model, it is hard to tell in which month a trade war was tense and in which month it was under gentle negatiations. As another example, static word embeddings can definitely indicate that 'bullish' and 'bearish' are top neighboring words of the word 'stock', but people cannot distinguish when the stock market is bullish or bearish. Dynamic word embeddings can help with these issues.

Unlike the static word embeddings model, the dynamic word embeddings model assumes that word trends do change across time. It divides data into time slices and obtains the word vector representations of each time slice separately. In this study of news analysis, each time slice has one month's news data. To capture how the trends in news change monthly, each month's data are trained with an individual word2vec word embeddings model. However, the word2vec embeddings method does not guarantee that models of different time slices will have coordinate axes that represent the same latent semantics. Different coordinate axes do not affect cosine similarities between word vectors within the same time slice, but will affect the comparison of the same word at different time periods. To overcome this problem, the orthogonal Procrustes is used to align the embeddings from different time periods [HLJ16].

Denote the learned word embeddings of each month t as $W(t) \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times V}$, where d is the dimension of each word vector, and V is the number of words in this month. Then, word embeddings of different time slices can be aligned by optimizing following equation [HLJ16]:

$$\mathbf{R}^{(t)} = \arg\min_{\mathbf{Q}^{\top}\mathbf{Q}=\mathbf{I}} \|\mathbf{W}^{(t)}\mathbf{Q} - \mathbf{W}^{(t+1)}\|$$

where $\mathbf{R}^{(t)} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times d}$. This optimization tries to find the best rotational alignment and can preserve the cosine similarities within each time slice. An application of SVD can efficiently obtain the result [Sch66].

CHAPTER 3

Data

News data sets are provided by Taboola data team. Every article is assigned related information. The following fields are important for analysis with dynamic word embeddings, with explanations of fields that are difficult to understand:

- createTime
- title
- content
- entities: name entities and concepts collected by Taboola

3.1 2-Month Data Set

The 2-month data set is created by selecting articles that contain key word 'Trump' or are related to sports. These two months are May 2018 and June 2018. There are about 20k articles in May 2018, and 17k articles in June 2018. We firstly experimented on this small data set before scaling to a larger data set.

3.2 6-Month Data Set

The 6-month data set includes news articles from October 2018 to March 2019. No selections were made to this data set. The average monthly article count is about 480 thousand. Figure 3.1 shows the article counts of each month.



Figure 3.1: Article Count of Each Month (6-month data set)

3.2.1 N gram

To represent phrases or named entities such as 'white house' in the word embeddings, the entities field of each news article is used. The max length of phrases is set as 4 to avoid meaningless phrases. For example, "chief investment officer of Bank of America Global Wealth and Investment Management" is a 12-word phrase found in the entities field of one article. This phrase is verbose and it is meaningless to encode this into word embeddings because this phrase may only has a frequency of 1 among all time periods. The algorithm is simple and it will turn any phrase that is less than 5 words into one word, like treating 'white house' as 'white_house'.

Al	Algorithm 1 N gram							
1:	: $entitylen \leftarrow length of entity$							
2:	: if $entitylen < 5$ then							
3:	: $joined \leftarrow each word in entity with "_"$							
4:	: replace the phrase in article by <i>joined</i>							

CHAPTER 4

Results

In this section, I visualize word embeddings in 2D spaces for two words in the 2-month data set and three words in the 6-month data set. I directly list nearest neighbors of the given key word inside a table to make the sanity check for the dynamic word embeddings of 6-month data set. In addition, I define the absolute drift as a metric to detect words that change the most relative to the given key word.

4.1 2-month Data Set

The t-SNE embedding method [MH08] is used to visualize the shifts of a word in two dimensions. First, given a word w that we are interested in, the nearest neighbors of w at different time periods are put together. Next, the t-SNE embeddings of these word vectors are calculated and visualized in a 2D plot.

Figure 4.1 visualizes the shift of the word 'trump' in this 2-month data set. The word 'trump1' is the embedding obtained from the May 2018 word embeddings model, while 'trump2' is obtained from the June 2018 model. The shift of the word 'trump' makes sense because the 2018 North Korea-United States Summit took place on June 12, 2018 in Singapore. As we can observe from this figure, before the summit, the word vector of 'trump' was close to other political terms such as 'putin' (the President of Russia) and 'republican'. During the summit or afterwards, the word embedding of 'trump' shifts closer to 'jong-un' (the President of North Korea), and 'singapore' (the country that hosted this summit).

Figure 4.2 visualizes the shift of the word 'Croatia' in 2018 FIFA World Cup, which took place in Russia from 14 June to 15 July 2018. Croatia is a country at the crossroads of



Figure 4.1: Shift of the Word 'Trump' (2-month data set)

Central and Southeast Europe. The Croatia national soccer team participated in this World Cup and achieved second place. The word 'croatia1' is the embedding obtained from the May 2018 word embeddings model (i.e. before the World Cup), while 'croatia2' is obtained from the June 2018 model.

Before the event started, 'croatia' was close to random soccer players whose teams appeared in 2018 World Cup as well, such as 'firmino' (Brazilian professional soccer player), and 'gerrard' (former English professional soccer player). This makes sense as word embeddings are trained with news articles related to sports. After the FIFA World Cup began, we can observe that the word 'croatia' shifts closer to 'denmark', and 'nizhny'. 'Nizhny' Novgorod Stadium is the place where 'Croatia' National Team defeated 'Denmark' National Team in the round of 16.

To clarify, the remaining two words are people related to soccer. 'Xhaka' is a Swiss professional soccer player, and 'Sampaoli' is the coach of Argentina National Soccer Team.



Figure 4.2: Shift of the Word 'Croatia' in 2018 FIFA World Cup (2-month data set)

4.2 6-month Data Set

4.2.1 2D Visualization

As stated above, the t-SNE embedding method is used to project the word embeddings into two dimensions. First, given a word w that we are interested in, the top 10 and nonrepeating nearest neighbors of w at different time periods are put together. Next, the t-SNE embeddings of these word vectors are calculated and then visualized in a 2D plot.

4.2.1.1 The Word 'Stock'

Figure 4.3 visualizes the shifts of the word 'stock' from October 2018 to March 2019. Different suffixes represent different months. The word 'stock1' is the embedding obtained from the October 2018 word embeddings model, 'stock2' from the November 2018 model, and so on. For the purpose of interpretation of this figure, we can roughly treat the left side of the plot as the negative sentiment towards the stock market (e.g. 'sell-off' and 'selloff') and the right side as the positive sentiment (e.g. 'bullish', 'gains', and 'earnings'). This is further confirmed by Figure 4.4.



Figure 4.3: Shifts of the Word 'Stock' (6-month data set)

Figure 4.4 shows changes of the Nasdaq Composite Index from October 2018 to March 2019. The stock market dropped all the way down until the beginning of 2019, which confirms the closer distance between 'stock1', 'stock2', 'stock3', 'stock4' and 'sell-off' in Figure 4.3. Then, stock market rebounded from January this year, which confirms the closer distance between 'stock5', 'stock6' and 'gains' or 'earnings' in Figure 4.3.

4.2.1.2 The Word 'US-Mexico'

Figure 4.5 visualizes the shifts of the word 'us-mexico' from October 2018 to March 2019. Similar to the previous example, different suffixes represent the embeddings obtained from models of different months.

One of President Trump's election promises was to "solve" unauthorized immigration across the southern border of United States by building a much larger and fortified border wall. Unauthorized immigrants to the southern border are not only from Mexico, but also from Central American countries such as Guatemala and Honduras, due to the increase in



Figure 4.4: Nasdaq Composite Index (6-month)

violence and abuse in recent years. To cross the Mexico-United States border, these migrants have to cross the Guatemala-Mexico border.

As a result, the immigration and border are always the top topics in news articles about US-Mexico. Figure 4.5 confirms this by showing that 'border', 'us_customs', 'crossings' and 'guatemalan' are always around the word 'us-mexico' at different months.

4.2.1.3 The Word 'Max'

Figure 4.6 visualizes the shifts of the word 'max' from October 2018 to March 2019. Different suffixes represent the embeddings obtained from models of different months.

The Boeing 737 MAX is the new generation aircraft produced by The Boeing Company. It was first delivered on May 2017, and has received thousands of orders. However, on 10 March 2019, the MAX aircraft Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 crashed six minutes after takeoff. All 157 people aboard were killed in the accident. After this fatal crash, aviation authorities around the world grounded the Boeing 737 MAX series.

Figure 4.6 shows that word embeddings capture this sudden trend change. Before March 2019 (from when the 'max6' embedding is obtained), the embedding of the word 'max' was close to different family names or 'xs' (this refers to the name iphone xs max). When the Boeing 737 MAX crash happened or afterwards, the embedding of the word 'max' immediately shifts to words such as 'boeing', '737', 'aircraft' and 'grounding'.



Figure 4.5: Shifts of the Word 'US-Mexico' (6-month data set)

4.2.2 Table

As we now have models from 6 different time slices, it may also show some interesting results if we simply list the top nearest neighbors (words that have highest cosine similarities with the key word) of the key word w inside a table. Also, this table can function as the sanity check for the quality of word embeddings.

Rank	Oct 2018	Nov 2018	Dec 2018	Jan 2019	Feb 2019	Mar 2019
1	hurricane	storms	snowstorm	snowstorm	snowstorm	storms
2	storms	nor'easter	storms	snow	snow	snow
3	tropical	snowstorm	rain	storms	storms	rain
4	flooding	weather	flooding	rain	snowfall	snowstorm
5	tornado	snow	snow	snowfall	weather	blizzard

Table 4.1: Top 5 Words closest to the Word 'Storm' in Each Month (6-month data set)

For example, Table 4.1 lists the top 5 words that are closest to the word 'storm' in



Figure 4.6: Shifts of the Word 'Max' (6-month data set)

each month. Snow is the most common thing from December to February, and the first ranked word of each month verifies this point. While in some areas of the West and Plains where extreme weather easily happens, snow is common in November or March as well. For example, Denver has an average March snowfall of 10.7 inches. This could explain why the word 'snowstorm', although not the first ranked word, appears in November and March.

As a point of clarification, the word "nor'easter" (rank 2 in November 2018) refers to a macro-scale extratropical cyclone in the western North Atlantic ocean. Extratropical cyclones are low-pressure areas along with the anticyclones of high-pressure areas, that can produce anything from mild showers to thunderstorms, blizzards, and tornadoes.

4.2.3 Find Changing Words with Absolute Drift

Inspired by [RB18], I define a metric that is more suitable to detect which words change the most relative to the key word w_k . Denote $cossim(w_k, w_i, t)$ as the cosine similarities between the word w_i and the key word w_k at time t. For top n words close to w_k , calculate the absolute drift of each word w_i by summing the cosine similarity differences.

$$drift(w_i) = \sum_{t=2}^{T} |cossim(w_k, w_i, t) - cossim(w_k, w_i, t-1)|$$

In other words, the drift can help find words that fluctuate the most. After finding meaningful words that fluctuate a lot, cosine similarities between these words and w_k of each month can be plotted to present possible useful interpretations.

4.2.3.1 'Trade-War'



Figure 4.7: Cosine Similarities with 'Trad-War' (6-month data set)

Figure 4.7 displays the cosine similarity changes between the word 'tensions', 'uncertainty', 'sell-off' and 'trade-war'. The blue line represents the word 'tensions', the orange line refers to 'uncertainty', and the green line is 'sell-off'. We can infer from this figure that as the tensions and uncertainty of the trade-war grow, the stock market reflects this greater negative sentiment by the increasing sell-offs.



Figure 4.8: Cosine Similarities with 'Unemployment' (6-month data set)

4.2.3.2 'Unemployment'

Figure 4.8 displays the cosine similarity changes between the word 'gdp', 'boosting', 'recordlow' and 'unemployment'. The blue line represents the word 'gdp', the orange line refers to 'boosting', and green line is 'record-low'. One thing we can infer from this figure is that as the economy ('gdp') shows a strong signal ('boosting') in the first quarter of 2019, the unemployment rate reaches a 'record-low' position.

According to National Public Radio, the first quarter's gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of 3.2%, which is a strong improvement compared to the 2.2% at the end of last year. In addition, the Labor Department reported that 196,000 jobs were added in March, and the unemployment is near 50-year lows.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Dynamic word embeddings method is a good tool to analyze news. In this thesis, the news articles data provided by Taboola are divided into different slices by month. Word2vec is applied to train the word embeddings models for different time periods. To connect word vectors from different time slices, different models are aligned through embedding space transformation.

The t-SNE method is used to visualize word embeddings in two dimensions. The 2-month data set shows pretty interesting shifts of certain words, such as Trump and Croatia. Trump becomes closer to Kim Jung Un and Singapore during the 2018 North Korea-United States Summit and Croatia becomes closer to Denmark and other teams during the FIFA World Cup. Next, more research is done on the 6-month data set. 2D visualizations on this data set reveal meaningful insights of word trend changes. For example, the shifts of the word 'stock' represent the sentiment change towards the stock market, which correlates with the rise and fall of the Nasdaq Composite Index over the same time periods. The shifts of the word 'US-Mexico' demonstrate the persisting topic of unauthorized immigrants across the US-Mexico border. The shifts of the word 'max' capture the instant topic trend of Boeing 737 Max crash on 10 March 2019.

Directly listing nearest neighbors of the key word inside a table presents a good way to perform the sanity check for word embeddings models. By calculating the absolute drift, some meaningful words that change the most can be found and presented in a line chart. For example, as the tensions and uncertainty of the trade-war grow, the stock market reflects this with a more negative sentiment. When the economy grows more, the unemployment reaches a record-low position. Although many interesting and meaningful analyses from dynamic word embeddings are presented, there are improvements that can be done in the future. One is collecting more news articles to increase the number of words per time-period. The 6-month data set has an average about 332 thousand words per month after filtering out the words that only have a frequency of 1, as shown in Figure 5.1. If each month has more than 100 million words, the quality of word embeddings models should be much better, as William L. Hamilton mentioned. Another direction is to define more evaluation methods to analyze the quality of word embeddings.



Figure 5.1: Word Count of Each Month (6-month data set)

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