Application of Hierarchical Temporal Memory Theory for Document Categorization

Deven Shah\textsuperscript{1}, Pinak Ghate\textsuperscript{2}, Manali Paranjape\textsuperscript{3}, and Amit Kumar\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}College of Engineering, Pune, India, shahdeven04@gmail.com
\textsuperscript{2}College of Engineering, Pune, India, pinakghate@gmail.com
\textsuperscript{3}College of Engineering, Pune, India, paranjape.manali@gmail.com
\textsuperscript{4}Maker’s Lab, Tech Mahindra Ltd., India, ak00494790@techmahindra.com

Abstract—The current work intends to study the performance of the Hierarchical Temporal Memory (HTM) theory for automated classification of text as well as documents. HTM is a biologically inspired theory based on the working principles of the human neocortex. The current study intends to provide an alternative framework for document categorization using the Spatial Pooler learning algorithm in the HTM Theory. As HTM accepts only a stream of binary data as input, Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) technique is used for extracting the top features from the input and converting them into binary format. The Spatial Pooler algorithm converts the binary input into sparse patterns with similar input text having overlapping spatial patterns making it easy for classifying the patterns into categories. The results obtained prove that HTM theory, although in its nascent stages, performs at par with most of the popular machine learning based classifiers.

Index Terms—Hierarchical Temporal Memory, Document Categorization, Machine Learning, Spatial Pooler, Latent Semantic Indexing, NuPIC, Supervised Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the elemental forms of document processing includes classification. Since the last couple of years, it is in demand because of the increasing availability of data in digital format which has resulted into the requirement of systematization of that data. Manual organization of huge data can be tedious if strict time constraints are set, increasing the necessity of automated document classification. The contexts of words in the documents play a very important role in deciding the category of the document. The human brain is very effective in consideration of contexts in the incoming information for taking the appropriate action.

The principles of HTM theory can be used to meet the requirements of organizing of data. HTM takes inspiration from the mammalian brain which has been evolving over millions of years and is able to process data efficiently. As HTM is biologically plausible, it is based on simple rules and not complex mathematics. HTM theory is being developed by a US based company called Numenta, Inc.

II. RELATED WORK

Some of the conventional methods for text/document classification are mentioned below:

A. Naive Bayes

The Naive Bayes classifier is a probabilistic classifier and is based on the Bayes theorem. It works well with small samples of data. The posterior probability of a particular document belonging to various classes is calculated. The document is assigned to the class with the highest posterior probability. The Naive Bayes classifier assumes strong independence between the features. This is a major limitation of this classifier and hence has low performance in cases where the features are correlated [1].

B. Support Vector Machines

Support Vector Machines (SVMs) are supervised machine learning algorithms. In case of a multi class problem, first the problem has to be decomposed into two separate class problems as SVM can work only with binary classification problem. They will probably give poor results when total number of samples are very less than the total number of features. In comparison with decision making classifier and logistic regression, SVM takes more time for computation [1].

C. K-Nearest Neighbour

K-Nearest Neighbour (KNN) is used for classification of objects by calculating the distance of training samples from each object. KNN classification is a simple and widely used approach for text classification. However, it is computationally intensive and classification time is high [1]. Also, it is difficult to find the ideal value of k [2].

D. Convolutional Neural Network

Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) works well with static text classifications. CNN is a type of feed forward neural network, comprising of neurons with trainable weights and biases. CNN comprises of a number of convolutional layers with nonlinear activation functions like ReLU or tanh applied to the results. CNN suffers from the limitations of the requirement of large data and big processing power to be able to predict accurately [3].

HTM theory is primarily used for Classification, Prediction and Anomaly Detection purposes. One of its application for Classification is mentioned below:
E. Land forms classification

As HTM based models have a common learning algorithm, it can be used for classifying images. HTM theory has been used for classifying different land-forms like trees, roads, buildings and farms using the images obtained from satellites. The framework used achieved an accuracy of 90.4%, [4] which is at par with the conventional machine learning techniques for image classification.

Since HTM theory can be used for image classification purposes, it can hold a promise to classify text/documents.

III. OVERVIEW OF HIERARCHICAL TEMPORAL MEMORY

HTM is a theory which seeks to apply the structural as well as algorithmic properties of the neocortex to machine learning problems [5]. The neocortex proves to be the center of intelligence in the mammalian brain. It is responsible for processing complex activities such as communication, planning and prediction. Structurally, neocortex is a 2 mm thick tissue divided into a number of different regions. A region is a network of interconnected neurons [5]. This attributes to the presence of input connections from different sensory organs [6], [7] like eyes, ears etc. The term “Hierarchical” in the theory is owing to the fact that, HTM network contains a hierarchy of levels arranged in the pyramid-like structure. These levels are present in the form of regions that are again composed of columns which finally consist of neurons. These neurons need not be physically arranged in a hierarchy, but are logically arranged in the hierarchical format. The lower levels in hierarchy represent data having lower abstraction/complexity. As we go higher in the hierarchy, the data abstraction stored in the memory increases. Time plays a crucial role in the way data is stored in mammalian brain. “Temporal” implies that the HTM network takes into consideration the sequence of the incoming data. A continuous stream of input data is aptly learned as spatial and temporal sequences.

A remarkable property of the neocortex is that the input from all the sensory organs is processed in the same manner. Hence, it has a common learning algorithm for inputs from all types of sensory organs [5].

A. Structure of a Neuron

Inside the mammalian brain, neurons play a central role in information handling. Some relevant parts of the neuron for our study are mentioned below.

1) Proximal Dendrites: Proximal dendrites are in close proximity to the cell body. The proximal dendrites are connected directly to the inputs from the sensory organs.

2) Distal Dendrites: Distal dendrites are the ones that are afar from the cell body. The distal dendrites have connections with various other neurons in the neocortex. Majority of the connections to the axon are from distal dendrites as compared to the connections made by proximal dendrites [8].

3) Synapse: A synapse is a connection between an axon of one neuron and dendrite of the other. The ongoing process of breaking and reforming these synapses between cells results in learning of new data and thus gradually forgetting the old one.

There is a permanence value associated with every synapse and a threshold linked with every neuron. Thus, for a neuron to get activated, the total number of synapses with permanence values higher than the threshold value must be more than the stimulus threshold.

B. Sparse Distributed Representation

Though the neocortex contains billions of neurons in highly interconnected manner, only a tiny fraction of them are active for a particular input [9]. Hence, only small percentage of active neurons are responsible for representing the input information. This is called as Sparse Distributed Representation (SDR). Even though single activated neuron has the potential to convey some meaning, the full information can only be conveyed when it is interpreted within the context of other neurons. As the information is spread across a tiny percentage of the active bits, SDRs are more noise tolerant than dense representations, making them ideal for text processing.

C. Spatial Pooler

HTM includes two important parts - Spatial Pooler (SP) and Temporal Pooler (TP). Spatial Pooler, also known as Pattern Memory, has been emphasized in this study.

The neurons in the neocortex are arranged in columns, which represent features of the input. Every neuron in a particular column, which represent different context for an input, is connected to specified number of bits in the input bit array. The selection of bits to be connected to the neurons in a particular column is random. The bits which are connected to a particular column are known as a potential pool of that particular column. Connections between input bit and the column neuron is called as a synapse. Every synapse has a value associated with it known as permanence value similar to that of a mammalian brain. Permanence value is always in the range of 0 and 1. There is a threshold value associated with synapse’s permanence.

If the permanence value of a synapse associated to an input bit is greater than the threshold, the activation of the column of

---

Fig. 1. System Architecture Diagram
neurons is influenced by the input bit. The permanence value of a synapse is adjusted in the learning phase. The main role of SP in HTM is finding spatial patterns in the input data. It is decomposed into three stages:

1) **Overlap**: In this stage, overlap score of each column is calculated. Overlap score is the count of active bits in the potential pool of a particular column having permanence value greater than the threshold.

2) **Inhibition**: The columns are sorted according to their overlap scores from highest to lowest. A particular fraction (in our study, 0.5%, Table I, NumActiveColumnsPerInhArea) of the top columns is selected (also called as active columns or the winning columns) for the learning phase. Rest other columns are inhibited from learning.

3) **Learning**: During Learning, the permanence value of the synapses in the potential pool of the winning columns is incremented (by synPermActiveInc, Table I) or decremented (by synPermInactiveDec, Table I). When the active column is connected to an active bit then the permanence value of the synapse corresponding to that active bit is incremented. However, when the active column is connected to an inactive bit then the permanence value of the synapse corresponding to that inactive bit is decremented. This is the result of column expecting that bit to be active. The synapse permanence is decremented as a punishment.

**IV. IMPLEMENTATION**

The flowchart in figure 1 is our high-level architecture diagram for document categorization. As the mammalian brain requires electrical signals for learning, the learning algorithm i.e., Spatial Pooler also requires bit patterns for processing. So, to convert text into bit arrays, Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) technique is used, which converts semantically similar sentences into similar bit arrays. These bit arrays (which need not be sparse) are fed to the Spatial Pooler where it simulates the working of neurons in the brain and gives SDR as the output. The active bits in the SDR represent the neurons which get activated in the Spatial Pooler. Since semantically similar text belong to the same category, it is easy to classify the text into different categories.

**A. Latent Semantic Indexing**

As HTM theory is modelled after the mammalian brain, its input also should be in accordance with the input format received by the brain. The brain receives input in the form of electrical signals which correspond to bit arrays. Latent Semantic Indexing(LSI) helps in determining hidden features in documents [10]. Thus the technique is used to extract the contextual-usage meaning of words from the documents [11]. The LSI framework consists of 3 steps which are mentioned below.

1) **Preprocessing of input data**: In the initial step, the input text is tokenized and stopwords are removed from every document of the corpus Each term in the text is then represented as a tuple containing term-id and term frequency. A matrix is created in which the rows denote the unique terms and the columns denote the documents. Every cell denotes the term count in the corresponding document. The matrix of term-frequency counts obtained from the term document matrix is then modified using the TF-IDF technique so as to give more weight to rare terms compared to common terms across documents and also to frequently occurring terms in a particular document. The formula for weighing each term can be represented as,$$
documenttermweight = f_{t,d} \times \ln(N/n_t)$$

Where:

- $f_{t,d}$ : count of term $t$ in document $d$
- $N$ : the total count of documents
- $n_t$ : the count of documents having term $t$

The term-document matrix gets modified to contain weights of each term in a given document. The dimensionality reduction of this matrix is done using Singular Value Decomposition (SVD).

2) **Singular Value Decomposition**: LSA uses SVD for generating the vectors of a particular text [12], [13]. The matrix $X$ (term-document) is used to calculate two matrices. These are,

$$Y = X^T X$$
$$Z = XX^T$$

Where:

- $X$ : term - document matrix
- $Y$ : document - document matrix
- $Z$ : term - term matrix

After finding eigenvectors of $Y$ and $Z$ matrices, we get left singular matrix, $L$ and right singular matrix, $R$ respectively.

We have used the wikipedia language corpus as it includes a large vocabulary which is useful for generic datasets. The corpus will change if the dataset is in a language other than English or contains a large number of words which are not present in the vocabulary.
Thus, term - document matrix, $X$, is divided into unique combination of three matrices as follows:

$$X = L\Sigma R^T$$  \hspace{1cm} (4)$$

Where:
- $L$: Term - Concept weight matrix
- $R^T$: Concept - Document weight matrix
- $\Sigma$: Diagonal matrix representing concept weights

$\Sigma$ is calculated by taking the square root of the eigenvalues of matrix $Y$.

To reduce the dimensionality of the matrices in equation (4), top $k$ concepts are selected and thus matrix $X$ is approximated as,

$$X_k = L_k\Sigma_k R_k^T$$  \hspace{1cm} (5)$$

In our study, $k$ is taken to be 400 in order to consider top 400 concepts. This marks the end of the training phase.

In the testing phase, after generating weight matrix using the Term Frequency - Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) model, input text gets converted into a query matrix, $Q$. This matrix $Q$ is then multiplied with matrices $L_k$ and $\Sigma_k$ to generate new query vectors calculated as follows:

$$NewQueryVectors = QL_k\Sigma_k$$  \hspace{1cm} (6)$$

3) Extraction of top features: The query vectors are converted into bit arrays of size 400. The indices of the top 40 features from the query vectors represent the ‘1’s in the bit arrays and the indices of the remaining features represent ‘0’s.

B. Spatial Pooler

The bit arrays from the LSI encoder are then passed to the Spatial Pooler for learning. The Spatial Pooler gives similar Sparse Distributed Representations (SDRs) for similar input text. The major parameters of the Spatial Pooler which significantly affect the accuracy of our model are mentioned in Table I.

| Parameters                        | Values |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| inputDimensions                  | 400    |
| columnDimensions                 | 20000  |
| potentialRadius                  | 200    |
| numActiveColumnsPerInhArea       | 100    |
| synPermActiveInc                 | 0.01   |
| synPermInactiveDec               | 0.008  |

The active indices of the SDR are then fed to the Classifier.

C. Classifier

In order to predict target class labels, a sequence of N-dimensional SDRs is assigned to a set of k class labels. The Classifier makes use of a single layer feed forward neural network. In the figure, the number of output neurons is equal to the number of predefined categories. The number of input neurons is equal to the number of bits in any SDR.

The algorithmic description of the classifier is as follows,

1) Matrix Initialisation: Since all classes have an equal chance of occurrence before learning, all values in the weight matrix are initialised to zero.

2) Inference: In this phase, the predicted class probabilities for each input pattern are calculated. The calculations include two steps as mentioned below.

i) Weighted sum: Weighted sum of the input is calculated for each output neuron to determine the activation levels of the neuron. Activation level of an output neuron can be determined by the summation of the product of all the input bits to the input layer neurons with the weights of its corresponding connections to the output layer neuron. The formula for the activation level being,

$$a_j = \sum_{i=1}^{N} w_{ij} \times x_i$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)$$

Where:
- $a_j$: activation level of the $j^{th}$ output layer neuron
- $n$: number of input layer neurons
- $w_{ij}$: weight of the connection from the $i^{th}$ input neuron to the $j^{th}$ output neuron.
- $x_i$: Input bit value. It is either 0 or 1.

ii) Softmaxing the activation levels: The probability distribution of the categories is calculated by exponentiating and normalizing the activation levels of the neurons in the output array using the softmax function. The formula for the probability distribution being.
\[ P[C_k|x, w] = y_k = \frac{e^{\alpha k}}{\sum_{i=1}^{k} e^{\alpha i}} \] (8)

Where:

- \( y_k \): Probability of predicting the category index \( k \).
- \( k \): Number of predefined categories.

3) Learning: During each iteration, the classifier makes a prediction of the category index of a given SDR. This prediction is of the form of the probability distribution over different category indexes. The connection weights are updated to learn and improve the prediction results. Connection weights are adjusted only for the active bits. The Connection Weights are determined using maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) on independent input SDRs. Since, the SDRs are independent of each other, they would satisfy the following equation.

\[ P[z^1, z^2, ..., z^t] = \prod_{t} P(z^t|x^t, w) \] (9)
\[ x^t = (x^t_1, x^t_2, x^t_3, ..., x^t_N) \] (10)

Where:

- \( z^t \): actual category index of \( t \)th SDR.
- \( x^t \): Sparse Distributed Representation.
- \( x^t_1 \): first bit of the \( t \)th SDR.
- \( w \): Connection weights.

A value of \( w \) is selected so that likelihood gets maximized. The loss function to select \( w \) \[14\], is as follows:

\[ L = -\ln \left( \prod_{t} P(y_t|x_t, w) \right) \] (11)
\[ = -\sum_{t} \ln P(y_t|x_t, w) \] (12)

Gradient descent is used is to minimize the loss function.

\[ \frac{\partial L}{\partial w_{ij}} = \frac{\partial L}{\partial a_j} \times \frac{\partial a_j}{\partial w_{ij}} \] (13)
\[ = (y_j - z_j) x_i \] (14)

Where:

- \( y_j \): Predicted probability of \( j \)th category index.
- \( z_j \): Actual probability of \( j \)th category index.
- \( x_i \): Input bit value to the \( i \)th input neuron.

Error in connection weight between \( i \)th input neuron to the \( j \)th output neuron is,

\[ Error_{ij} for \ active \ input \ bits = y_j - z_j \] (15)

\[ update_{ij} = \alpha \times Error_{ij} \] (16)

Where:

- \( \alpha \): Learning rate.

The value \( update_{ij} \) is used to update the connection weight between the \( i \)th input neuron to the \( j \)th output neuron using the formula,

\[ w_{new,ij} = w_{old,ij} + update_{ij} \] (17)

But, if we just want to update connection weights for the bits which are active we multiply \( update_{ij} \) with \( x_i \).

\[ w_{new,ij} = w_{old,ij} + update_{ij} \times x_i \] (18)

Where:

- \( w_{new,ij} \): updated weight of the connection from \( i \)th input neuron to the \( j \)th output neuron

The output layer neuron with the highest probability represents the category index of the input text.

V. Results

Many experiments were performed to test the accuracy and performance of our model. We selected two standard datasets for document classification, namely, 20 Newsgroup dataset from the sklearn dataset repository and Movie Reviews dataset from the NLTK corpus repository. The datasets were split into train set and test set in the ratio 9:1. The datasets were selected so that likelihood gets maximized. The classification framework used in this study gives comparable accuracies with the models mentioned in the table II on the same datasets.

| Classification Techniques | 20 newsgroup | Movie Reviews |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| SVM \[13\]                | ——           | 84.40%       |
| Decision Trees \[16\]     | ——           | 61.10%       |
| Naive Bayes \[17\], \[18\] | 86.00%       | 62.35%       |
| B-Tree \[19\]             | 82.64%       | ——           |
| Bayesian Networks \[20\]  | 78.58%       | ——           |
| HTM                       | 83.19%       | 73.60%       |

VI. Conclusion and Future Scope

This paper puts forward the results of using the Hierarchical Temporary Memory model for document categorization. The results prove that the HTM model gives an accuracy comparable to the conventional techniques used for text classification. The number of columns and the SDR sparsity has a significant effect on the performance of the spatial pooler. As
per our model, The optimal values of the number of columns was 20,000 and the sparsity was 0.5%.

The main advantages of this model are: a limited number of parameters, can be trained on small corpus and faster training.

In future, we plan to modify the encoding process of our model and also incorporate the Temporal Pooler which can help to increase the accuracy of the model.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to Mr. Nikhil Malhotra of Maker’s Lab, Tech Mahindra Ltd. and Mr. Satish Kumbhar of College of Engineering, Pune, for guiding us through the research.

REFERENCES

[1] P. Y. Pawar and S. Gawande, “A comparative study on different types of approaches to text categorization,” International Journal of Machine Learning and Computing, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 423, 2012.
[2] V. Korde and C. N. Mahender, “Text classification and classifiers: A survey,” International Journal of Artificial Intelligence & Applications, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 85, 2012.
[3] Z.-H. Zhou and J. Feng, “Deep forest: Towards an alternative to deep neural networks,” arXiv preprint arXiv:1702.08835, 2017.
[4] A. J. Perea, J. E. Meroho, and M. J. Aguiler, “Application of numenta® hierarchical temporal memory for land-use classification,” South African Journal of Science, vol. 105, no. 9-10, pp. 370–375, 2009.
[5] J. Hawkins, S. Ahmad, and D. Dubinsky, “Hierarchical temporal memory including htm cortical learning algorithms,” Technical report, Numenta, Palto Alto http://www.numenta.com/hmoverview/education/HTM_CorticalLearningAlgorithms.pdf, 2010.
[6] J. Hawkins and D. George, “Hierarchical temporal memory: Concepts, theory and terminology,” Technical report, Numenta, Tech. Rep., 2006.
[7] J. Hawkins and S. Blakeslee, On intelligence. Macmillan, 2007.
[8] J. Hawkins and S. Ahmad, “Why neurons have thousands of synapses, a theory of sequence memory in neocortex,” arXiv preprint arXiv:1511.00083, 2015.
[9] S. Ahmad and J. Hawkins, “How do neurons operate on sparse distributed representations? a mathematical theory of sparsity, neurons and active dendrites,” arXiv preprint arXiv:1601.00720, 2016.
[10] C. H. Papadimitriou, H. Tamaki, P. Raghavan, and S. Vempala, “Latent semantic indexing: A probabilistic analysis,” in Proceedings of the seventeenth ACM SIGACT-SIGMOD-SIGART symposium on Principles of database systems. ACM, 1998, pp. 159–168.
[11] T. K. Landauer, P. W. Foltz, and D. Laham, “An introduction to latent semantic analysis,” Discourse processes, vol. 25, no. 2-3, pp. 259–284, 1998.
[12] T. K. Landauer and S. T. Dumais, “A solution to plato’s problem: The latent semantic analysis theory of acquisition, induction, and representation of knowledge.” Psychological review, vol. 104, no. 2, p. 211, 1997.
[13] S. Deerwester, S. T. Dumais, G. W. Furnas, T. K. Landauer, and R. Harshman, “Indexing by latent semantic analysis,” Journal of the American society for information science, vol. 41, no. 6, p. 391, 1990.
[14] R. Neuneier and H. G. Zimmermann, “How to train neural networks,” in Neural Networks: Tricks of the Trade. Springer, 2012, pp. 369–418.
[15] A. Kennedy and D. Inkpen, “Sentiment classification of movie reviews using contextual valence shifters,” Computational intelligence, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 110–125, 2006.
[16] C.-T. Chu, R. Takahashi, and P.-C. Wang, “Classifying the sentiment of movie review data,” 2005.
[17] A. O. Adi and E. Celebi, “Classification of 20 news group with naive bayes classifier,” in Signal Processing and Communications Applications Conference (SIU), 2014 22nd. IEEE, 2014, pp. 2150–2153.
[18] L. L. Dhande and G. K. Patnaik, “Analyzing sentiment of movie review data using naive bayes neural classifier,” International Journal of Emerging Trends & Technology in Computer Science (IJETTCS), vol. 3, no. 4, 2014.