An On-device Deep-Learning Approach for Attribute Extraction from Heterogeneous Unstructured Text

Mahesh Gorijala Aniruddha Bala Pinaki Bhaskar Krishnaditya Vikram Mupparthi
Advanced Technology Lab (ATL)
Samsung R&D Institute India - Bangalore (SRI-B)
{m.gorijala, aniruddha.b, pinaki.b, krish.aditya, vikram.m}@samsung.com

Abstract

Mobile devices, with their rapidly growing usage, have turned into rich sources of user information, holding critical insights for betterment of user experience and personalization. Creating, receiving and storing important information in the form of unstructured text has become a part and parcel of daily routine of users. From purchase deliveries in Short Message Service (SMS) or Notifications, to event booking details in Calendar applications, mobile devices serve as a portal for understanding user interests, behaviours and activities through information extraction. In this paper, we address the challenge of on-device extraction of user information from unstructured data in natural language from heterogeneous sources like messages, notification, calendar etc. The issue of privacy concern is effectively eliminated by the on-device nature of the proposed solution. Our proposed solution consists of 3 components – A Naive-Bayes based classifier for domain identification, a Dual Character and Word based Bidirectional Long Short Term Memory (Bi-LSTM) and Conditional Random Field (CRF) model for attribute extraction and a rule-based Entity Linker. Our solution achieved a 93.29% F1 score on five domains (shopping, travel, event, service and personal). Since on-device deployment has memory and latency constraints, we ensure minimal model size and optimal inference latency. To demonstrate the efficacy of our approach, we have experimented on CoNLL-2003 dataset and achieved comparable performance to existing benchmark results.

1 Introduction

With an estimated 3.5 billion active users or about 80% of all mobile subscribers, Short Message Service (SMS) was the most widely used communication application in the past few years. Even with the advent of social media and messenger applications, communication and information storage in digitised form are vastly prevalent via SMS, notifications, calendar invites and mail. Some examples we readily see are casual conversations with a friend over SMS, online shopping related notifications and event booking details, just to name a few.

According to 2020 Annual report by CTIA, there were 2.1 trillion text messages exchanged worldwide, an increase of 52 billion messages since 2019. According to SMS marketing statistics for 2020/2021 reported by FinancesOnline, 98% of SMS are opened compared to only 20% of emails and 95% of the read SMS are responded to within 3 minutes of delivery. Moreover, SMS is still the most powerful marketing tool for businesses with 75% of customers preferring receiving offers via SMS. The CTR for text messages is much higher (9.18%), compared to other marketing channels such as Google Adwords (1.91%) and Facebook (0.90%).

Apart from SMS and notifications, researchers have investigated other potential data sources like calendar, email, user utterances and communication logs for extracting information. In fact, many establishments are making use of the personal knowledge extracted from different sources on smartphones to provide better service. For example, Google extracts and summarizes travel, event and accommodation reservation information from emails. However, most of the published literature is focussed on singular sources of information and/or certain domains of interest like bio-medical,
### Data Source

| Information Extracted | Inference Drawn |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Messages              | Preferred vendors, products, venues, payment modes etc. |
| Calendar              | Preferred relations |
| Call & Message logs   | Frequent caller, callee, message sender and receiver |
| Notifications         | User’s details, preference and interest |

Table 1: Particular data items extracted and high-level inferences drawn from the data sources.

In this paper, we address the challenge of on-device extraction of user information from unstructured data in natural language from heterogeneous sources, which include SMS, notifications, calendar etc. Our proposed system offers a unique method for efficient on-device functionalities. We achieve 93.29% F1 score on five domains (shopping, travel, event, service and personal). The system is implemented as a service on the device. The information that is obtained from these data sources with a preliminary analysis and the high-level inferences sought from it, are summarized in Table 1. The abundance of personal information on smartphones can hence be safely utilized for many apps like recommender systems, virtual personal assistants, on-device content presentation, to provide better services to end users. This provides a holistic view about the user encompassing users’ behaviours, interests, activities, etc.

A key consideration is the constant ongoing conflict between the service provider’s desire to track the consumer and the consumer’s concern for the privacy of their data. This issue is effectively addressed by the on-device nature of the proposed system, letting the user enjoy its benefits conveniently as the data processing is limited to local environment.

Some of the features afforded by this new dimension of user’s data, which enables personalized device intelligence, are as follows:

- User’s attention can be proactively drawn to offers and discounts regarding the products of only the categories they wish to purchase, filtering all the annoying spam.
- Enable simplified interaction with smart assistant
- Event reminders can be triggered appropriately
- Convenient grouping or reordering of SMS/Notification/Calendar data according to user preferences
- Assist in better planning of activities, for instance, booking airport cab with prior knowledge of user’s travel plans
- Recommender services based on understanding of user’s shopping behaviour or preferred types of events (like concerts, sports matches, photography, art etc.)

### 2 Related Work

Digital communication devices continue to offer a growing variety of personalized services to enhance user experience. This is facilitated by increased access and extraction of user information available in both structured and unstructured forms. Structured data, generally consisting of text entered in template fashion or in any pre-defined format (like date, zip code etc.), can be conveniently processed whereas unstructured text (like Short Message Service (SMS), Notifications, Calendar events etc.) poses multiple interesting challenges.

Firstly, apart from emanating from heterogeneous sources on the device, unstructured data on mobile devices does not always conform to grammatical correctness, rendering it difficult for most of the existing Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques better suited for formal grammar. Secondly, most of the advanced information extraction techniques demand server-based deployment, raising privacy concerns of user data storage on cloud. There is limited exploration on on-device information extraction from unstructured text, befitting
its memory and latency constraint requirements. Thirdly, owing to the special nature of data in consideration, there is a lack of standardised benchmark datasets. Most of the previous works have shown a significant amount of research effort being directed to collection, curation and pre-processing of short-text corpus. After data procurement comes the daunting task of annotation based on the identified guidelines of entities and attributes relevant to each domain of interest.

There is some pre-existing work on domain classification and information extraction from email, SMS, notifications and social media text. Most of the previous works handling SMS are primarily focused on spam-filtering or certain rudimentary levels of classification. Almeida et al. (2011) and Cormack et al. (2007), limit the task to binary classification of SMS as spam or non-spam. Dewi et al. (2017), explore the possibility of multi-class classification of messages into 4 categories with limited data instances. They achieve best results with logistic regression. In comparison, we categorize messages into 6 classes and perform further information extraction.

With regard to information extraction from short texts like SMS and notifications, traditionally various approaches have been investigated including use of POS taggers, regular expressions, hidden Markov models (HMM), logistic regression, specific syntactic parsers or a combination of the above. Jiang et al. (2010) investigate the extraction of named entities related to events or activities from Chinese SMSes in handsets, using Hidden Markov models (HMM). Although their method achieves a lower F-score on a small SMS corpus of 1,000 messages, the authors significantly reduce the memory consumption. Polifroni et al. (2010) implement logistic regression to recognize name, date, location and time entities from messages. Their reported F-scores for names and locations reaches 88 on an individual word basis, but they do not report on computational or memory resources required of their approach or exact corpus size. Cooper et al. (2005), exploit the syntactic structure in messages and used pattern matching for extraction. Since pattern matching is not robust to variations in data, Ek et al. (2011) complement pattern matching with a logistic regression based classifier.

Recent works on SMS and notifications involves the use of deep learning models for information extraction. Vatsal et al. (2020) implement a hybrid hierarchical LSTM-CNN architecture for SMS classification and then use class specific entity parsers based on pattern matching. Li et al. (2018) use the insight that notifications are formatted using templates. Templates are extracted using longest common subsequence mining and then clustered using DBSCAN algorithm. Template semantic rules are then generated using a Bi-LSTM network.

We believe ours is the first work that provides a generalized deep learning architecture for information extraction from multiple unstructured data sources. We also categorize inputs into multiple domains and link the attributes to pre-existing entities in the database. Our system pipeline has been designed to cater to multiple applications such as customization services, recommender systems, knowledge base population, etc. requiring the holistic understanding of users.

3 Proposed Methodology

The proposed information extraction pipeline consists of 3 major components – Domain Classifier, Attribute Extractor and Entity Linker. A pictorial representation of the pipeline is depicted in Fig. 1.

![Figure 1: System Overview](image)

3.1 Data Preprocessing

We converted messages and notifications into a more generalised format by using pattern matching. All date and time variations were mapped to (DATE) and (TIME) tokens respectively and currency values were mapped to (CURRENCY) tokens. All other numeric values were replaced by (NUM) and alphanumeric values were converted to

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We also tried to use the domain information as an input to our attribute extraction model, however, it did not improve the overall performance.

### 3.3 Attribute Extractor

This module extracts a predefined set of attributes (listed in Table 3) from the unstructured part of the data, which contain the pieces of information about the event/activity being conveyed by the data. Attribute extraction is modelled as a sequence labelling task. We implement a dual character and word embedding based Bi-LSTM (Hochreiter and Schmidhuber, 1997) followed by a CRF (Lafferty et al., 2001) trained on the sequence labelled set of messages, notifications and calendar. In the training dataset, all attribute tokens in a training sample are appropriately marked with one of the a) “B” for beginning, b) “M” for middle and c) “E” for end token, followed by the attribute type tags. Non-attribute tokens are marked with “O” (other) tag. E.g., “Your order for Samsung Galaxy S20 will be delivered today” is marked as “O O O B-Product M-Product E-Product B-Status M-Status E-Status B-EndDate”. All tokens in the training dataset with frequency greater than 5 are included in vocabulary and the remaining tokens are substituted by the ⟨UNK⟩ token. We also create a character vocabulary required for generating character based word embeddings. Using the two vocabularies, we generate word and character lookup tables that are required for tokenization of input.

Fig. 3 describes the process of generating embeddings for each token in the input sentence. The input sequence is first encoded using the word lookup table and then passed into an embedding layer, which gives us $W_{emb}$. Each character is then considered as a token and encoded using the character lookup table. The output is passed into bidirectional LSTM$_{char}$, which generates forward and backward representations. These are then concatenated to give character based word embedding. Ultimately, the word embedding and the character based word embedding are concatenated to give the final token embedding. The computations performed inside LSTM cells are as follows:

\[
i_t = \sigma(w_i[h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_i) \quad (1)
\]
\[
f_t = \sigma(w_f[h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_f) \quad (2)
\]
\[
o_t = \sigma(w_o[h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_o) \quad (3)
\]
\[
g_t = \tanh(w_g[h_{t-1}, x_t] + b_g) \quad (4)
\]
\[
c_t = f_t * c_{t-1} + i_t * g_t \quad (5)
\]
\[
h_t = o_t * \tanh(c_t) \quad (6)
\]
Figure 3: Word Embedding Generation in Dual Bi-LSTM: The representation of a word is formed by concatenating the word embedding and the character level representation of the word from char LSTM.

Where \( i_t, f_t, o_t \) and \( g_t \) are input, forget, output and cell gates respectively, \( x_t \) is input at time step \( t \), \( h_t \) is hidden state and \( c_t \) is cell state. The hidden states at final time step are considered as representation of input sequence. The proposed attribute extractor model is depicted in Fig. 4. The input token embeddings are fed into the Bi-LSTM encoder followed by a fully connected layer. This generates emission scores, which represent likelihood of word being a certain tag. The role of the CRF layer is to model the joint likelihood of the entire tag sequence. This is achieved by calculating the transition scores, which represent the likelihood of word being a certain tag given the previous word was a certain tag. For decoding, Viterbi algorithm is used to find the tag sequence with maximum likelihood.

3.4 Entity Linker

This module links the entities identified by the attribute extraction module to an appropriate entity in the existing database having either the same or different name. It also processes the “Sender” information (for messages and notifications) and “Date” information (for calendar events) and accordingly adds entities if they weren’t identified by the attribute extractor from the main content. As entity linking module gets diverse attributes as its input, it’s implemented with different approaches.

- We use off-the-shelf string matching algorithms such as FuzzyWuzzy \(^5\) based on Levenshtein Distance and phonetic algorithms such as Soundex \(^6\) for linking the vendor attribute.
- We use an ontology and a predefined set of rules to match Source Location, Destination, Travel Mode, Travel Class, Event Type, Service Type, Status, Relationship and Occasion attributes.
- In case of Start Date, Start Time, End Date and End Time, we identify all possible variations in our data and map them to a standard format using pattern matching.
- Some attributes like ID, Product, Vehicle Number, Event Name and Amount are left unmatched.

4 Dataset

For data collection we sent out an organization wide broadcast seeking voluntary participation from users with diverse demographics. For this purpose, the users were required to install an application developed by the team. The application masked the user’s private information such as name, contact number, financial details etc. and allowed the user the option to filter messages before sharing.

We collected \( \sim 90K \) \((90,811)\) messages, \( \sim 55K \) \((54990)\) notification and \( \sim 1K \) calendar

\(^5\)https://pypi.org/project/fuzzywuzzy/
\(^6\)https://pypi.org/project/soundex/
data. We then filtered the collected data to get \( \sim 17k \) (16,959) relevant messages, \( \sim 7K \) (7321) relevant notifications and 720 calendar data and classified them into 5 domains (Shopping, Travel, Event, Service, Personal). The data distribution over these domains is shown in Table 2.

The collected data was then clustered based on similar templates for the ease of annotation. For e.g. the product delivery messages from Amazon follows a certain template with only change being in certain fields such as product name, delivery agent contact etc. We then chose an exemplar from each of these clusters and asked annotators to annotate each of the words in the text with the appropriate tag. We then curated a test set from \( \sim 9k \) relevant data collected from different individuals. This was kept separate from the training data and was handpicked to include unique instances.

Table 1 in appendix displays one sample instance per domain and the identified relevant attributes while Table 2 covers the entity linker output for the previously chosen sample instances along with relevant fields like Sender and Date. The list of all relevant attributes was generated by a comprehensive analysis of collected data and usefulness of information contained in the data source. The distribution and relevant domains for each attribute is given in Table 3.

| Attribute | Relevant Domains | Count |
|-----------|------------------|-------|
| ID        | Shopping, Travel, Event, Service | 3652  |
| Status    | Shopping, Travel, Event, Service | 8751  |
| Vendor    | Shopping, Travel, Event, Service | 3961  |
| Product   | Shopping         | 2910  |
| Start Date| Travel, Event    | 2749  |
| End Date  | Shopping, Travel, Event, Service | 2164  |
| Start Time| Travel, Event, Service | 2913  |
| End Time  | Travel, Event, Service | 1458  |
| Travel Mode| Travel          | 1835  |
| Travel Class| Travel        | 840   |
| PNR       | Travel           | 1553  |
| Vehicle Number| Travel       | 1829  |
| Source Location| Travel       | 2117  |
| Destination| Travel, Event   | 2402  |
| Event Name | Event           | 639   |
| Event Type | Event           | 131   |
| Service Type| Service        | 143   |
| Amount    | Shopping, Travel | 1203  |
| Relationship| Personal       | 41    |
| Occasion  | Personal        | 76    |

Table 3: Distribution of Attributes and Relevant Domains

5 Experiments and Results

5.1 Evaluation Metrics

We performed evaluation on the test set (described in Table 2). We used weighted F1 score, precision and recall to evaluate performance of our proposed pipeline. Since our system focuses on on-device extraction, latency and memory usage are also critical.
metrics. The total model size (including embedding size) is also reported for every model. The latency measurements were done by averaging over randomly picked 100 data points.

5.2 Domain Classifier
We compare 3 different models for domain classification and the model parameters are given in Table 4.

- **Hybrid Naïve Bayes Classifier**: This is the proposed domain classifier. We computed Tf-Idf of unigram, bigram, trigram and quadgram tokens and used these to compute class probabilities.
- **Deep Neural Network (DNN)**: We generate token embeddings using a filtered version of Glove embeddings to reduce memory usage. The model accepts these token embeddings as input and generates a distribution over the predefined set of domains.
- **Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)**: Like in the previous model, we generate token embeddings using filtered version of Glove embeddings. These token embeddings act as input for convolutional layers that extract feature maps. This is further passed into Max-pooling layer and then a final linear layer which gives output distribution.

From Table 5, we can see that all the models gave comparably high F1 scores on the test data with the Naïve Bayes classifier just edging the other two. Contrary to expectations, the deep learning based approaches do not outperform the simpler Naïve Bayes model. This is because the domains do not overlap and have very distinct samples and hence, do not need a complex model for accurate distinction. Since all computed latencies are very low, we give preference to memory usage during selection.

5.3 Attribute Extractor
We compare the performance of 3 deep learning models with different encoders followed by a CRF decoder.

- **Bi-LSTM + CRF**: This is the standard approach for sequence labelling. The Bi-LSTM encodes the input and the CRF acts as the decoder. This model uses only the word level features of the sentence as input.

| Metric       | Naïve Bayes | CNN  | DNN  |
|--------------|-------------|------|------|
| F1 Score     | 0.9596      | 0.9551 | 0.9561 |
| Precision    | 0.9713      | 0.9472 | 0.9487 |
| Recall       | 0.9482      | 0.9632 | 0.9637 |
| Model Size (KB) | 2680      | 378  | 983  |
| Embedding Size (KB) | NA        | 4636  | 4636  |
| Total Memory (KB) | 2680      | 5014  | 5619  |
| Latency (ms) | 91.7        | 14.7 | 19.8 |

Table 5: Domain Classifier Results

- **Dual Bi-LSTM + CRF**: This is the proposed model. It captures the character level information along with word level features.
- **Transformer + CRF**: We use a multi-headed transformer encoder followed by a CRF decoder.

The model details for each aforementioned approach are given in Table 6. We also experiment addition of the domain classifier output as input into the attribute extraction model. The domain is added as an extra input to the message/notification and then the combined input is fed into the embedding layer.

We see from Table 7 that our proposed Dual Bi-LSTM encoder just outperforms the standard Bi-LSTM. This verifies the ability of character embeddings to capture greater morphological diversity, which is especially visible in SMS and notifications. We also experiment with the transformer model for the attribute extraction task. Owing to the huge model size of pre-trained transformers like BERT, we limit ourselves to a custom two layer transformer model which is trained from scratch. The inferior performance of the transformer model compared to the Bi-LSTM model can be attributed to over-parameterization and lack of pre-training. We also observe that adding domain input slightly worsens the performance. This is because our attributes are structured such that similar attributes across different domains are considered as one. E.g. Delivery Date, Event Date and Service Date are all
considered as End Date. Hence, adding the domain input adds to the complexity of input and we observe slight drop in performance.

We also run our models on the popular English NER dataset - CoNLL2003. It contains four different named entities: PERSON, LOCATION, ORGANIZATION, and MISC. The dataset consists of 14000 training samples, 3200 validation samples and 3500 test samples. The data is tokenized using the same preprocessing as mentioned in 3.1.

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| BiLSTM + CRF | Dual Bi-LSTM + CRF | Transformer + CRF |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Number of layers | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Embedding Dimension | 128 | 128 | 128 |
| Number of hidden units | 128 | 128 | 128 |
| Word embedding dimension | 64 | 64 | 64 |
| Character embedding dimension | 64 | 64 | 64 |
| Number of char-LSTM hidden units | 64 | 64 | 64 |

Table 6: Attribute Extractor Model Parameters

| Metric | Dual Bi-LSTM + CRF | Bi-LSTM + CRF | Transformer + CRF |
|--------|--------------------|--------------|------------------|
| F1 Score | 0.9329 | 0.9308 | 0.9037 |
| F1 Score (with domain) | **0.9311** | 0.9289 | 0.8976 |
| Precision | 0.9392 | 0.9333 | 0.9132 |
| Recall | 0.9281 | **0.9307** | 0.9078 |
| Model Size (MB) | 6.4 | **5.4** | 27 |
| Latency (ms) | 77 | **50** | 116 |

Table 7: Attribute Extractor Results on our collected dataset

The results of our models on CoNLL2003 test set are given in Table 8. We see that our proposed model achieves reasonably high F1 score (within ~ 1% of current state of the art). A significant advantage of our approach is the simplicity of the model which allows it to be deployed on-device as well. Unlike our proposed model that involves training embeddings from scratch, all models that outperform our proposed model make use of powerful pre-trained or contextualized embeddings. Another interesting trend we observe is the similar pattern of performance of our three models across both datasets. This verifies that our proposed model performs the best for on-device entity extraction.

5.4 Entity Linker

For the entity linker we achieve an F1 score of 0.98. This module has a very high F1 score because most of the entity linking is done using string-matching and phonetic algorithms and regex pattern matching as compared to earlier modules, which involved machine learning/ deep learning models. The model size for this module is 284KB and latency is 40 ms.

5.5 Engine Pipeline

The complete engine pipeline is implemented as a service on device. The attribute extractor is implemented in PyTorch and the trained model is converted to android (v10) compatible version using the Pytorch JIT module. On-device inference is done using PyTorch android runtime. Similarly, Domain classifier is implemented in tensorflow and on-device inference is done using tensorflow-lite android library. Trained models were tested and deployed on Samsung Galaxy S10 and Note 10 devices.

The final end to end pipeline consists of 4 different modules, Classifier, Attribute Extractor, Entity Linker & Triplet Builder. The respective F1 scores achieved on the test set for the 4 modules are 95.96, 93.29, 98 & 92.4 respectively. The end to end accuracy of the overall system is 81.06 %. The outputs of each of these individual modules is included in the appendix. After porting to the device the model and app sizes were recorded to be 8.31 MB & 48.87 MB respectively, and engine’s latency was measured to be ~200 ms.
6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have proposed a unique on-device pipeline to extract relevant information from unstructured sources such as messages, notification, calendar entries etc. By making on-device extraction very efficient, we eliminate the issue of user privacy while providing a platform for an enhanced personalised experience. Since the relevant domains are majorly non-overlapping, a Naïve Bayes classifier gives sufficiently good performance. For attribute extraction, we propose a dual word and character based Bi-LSTM + CRF model, which achieves best results on our self-curated test set as well as CONLL-2003 test set.

The feasibility of such a system was claimed through an on-device implementation using the proposed approach. The applications of such an on-device system can be envisioned across various personalization and recommendation services while maintaining user privacy.

7 Future Work

A possible extension of this work is to extend the English information extraction system to a multilingual one. This is an interesting area of exploration because each language has a different morphology, so it will be more challenging for a single model to capture multilingual features. Currently, our system is a pipeline consisting of several models, which can cause propagation of error. So, exploring the possibility of an end-to-end information extraction system is another direction in which we can expand our research.

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