BME-UW at SR’19: Surface realization with Interpreted Regular Tree Grammars

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Abstract

The Surface Realization Shared Task involves mapping Universal Dependency graphs to raw text, i.e. restoring word order and inflection from a graph of typed, directed dependencies between lemmas. Interpreted Regular Tree Grammars (IRTGs) encode the correspondence between generations in multiple algebras, and have previously been used for semantic parsing from raw text. Our system induces an IRTG for simultaneously building pairs of surface forms and UD graphs in the SR’19 training data, then prunes this grammar for each UD graph in the test data for efficient parsing and generation of the surface ordering of lemmas. For the inflection step we use a standard sequence-to-sequence model with a biLSTM encoder and an LSTM decoder with attention. Both components of our system are available on GitHub under an MIT license.

1 Introduction

The ‘shallow’ (T1) track of the Surface Realization task (Mille et al., 2019) involves mapping Universal Dependencies (UD) graphs (De Marneffe et al., 2014) to surface forms, i.e. restoring word order and inflection based on the typed grammatical dependencies among a set of lemmas. We used a hybrid method that restores word order by IRTG rules, see Section 2, induced from the training data, see Section 3, and performs inflection using a standard sequence-to-sequence model with a biLSTM encoder and an LSTM decoder with attention, see Section 4. This architecture fits well with the recent trend toward eXplainable AI (Gunning, 2017), and is not as data-hungry as end-to-end neural systems. Only 8 of the 12 teams participated on the non-English portion of the track, with BME-UW ranked second in automated, and generally in the top three in human evaluation. The IRTG based system is available under https://github.com/adaamko/surface_realization, the inflection system was trained using the framework under https://github.com/juditacs/deep-morphology.

2 Rule format: IRTGs and s-graphs

Several common tasks in natural language processing involve graph transformations, in particular those that handle syntactic trees, dependency structures such as UD, or semantic graphs such as AMR (Banarescu et al., 2013) and 4lang (Kornai et al., 2015). Interpreted Regular Tree Grammars (IRTGs) (Koller, 2015) encode the correspondence between sets of such structures and have in recent years been used to perform syntactic parsing (Koller and Kuhlmann, 2012), generation (Koller and Engonopoulos, 2017), and semantic parsing (Groschwitz et al., 2015, 2018). In previous work (Ács et al., 2019) we encoded transformations between raw text, phrase structure (PS) trees, UD and 4lang semantic graphs to build a single IRTG that allows for mapping between any pair of such structures.

IRTGs are Regular Tree Grammars in which each rule is mapped to operations in an arbitrary number of algebras. Hence, derivations of an IRTG correspond to synchronous generation of objects in each of these algebras, and an IRTG...
has two abstract arguments, designated so named after the corresponding UD relation, in a way that vertices with matching sources are merged, i.e. when two s-graphs $G_1$ and $G_2$ are merged, the resulting s-graph $G'$ will contain all nodes of $G_1$ and $G_2$, and when a pair of nodes $(v_1, v_2) \in E(G_1) \times E(G_2)$ have the same source name, they will be mapped to a single node $v'$ in $G'$ that has all adjacent edges of $v_1$ and $v_2$. Sources can also be renamed or forgotten using the operations $\text{ren}_{a \leftrightarrow b}$ and $f_{\delta_a}$, where $a$ and $b$ are sources from the set $A$. Next we shall provide a small example with string and s-graph interpretations.

The Algebraic Language Toolkit, or alto\(^1\) (Gontrum et al., 2017), is an open-source parser for IRTGs that implements a variety of algebras to use as interpretations of IRTGs, including the string algebra and s-graph algebra. An alto grammar file must declare all interpretation algebras and for each RTG rule provide mappings to operations in each of these algebras. Figure 1 shows a minimal example of an IRTG with two interpretations. The abstract RTG rule \_nsubj, so named after the corresponding UD relation, has two abstract arguments, designated VERB and NOUN. The string interpretation establishes that the surface form of the second argument (NOUN) is to precede the first argument (VERB). The ud interpretation adds a directed nsubj edge between the subgraphs corresponding to each argument, by a series of rename, merge, and forget operations. Angle brackets after nodes indicate source names. In our s-graph grammars, every subgraph at every point of the derivation has exactly one node labeled with the <root> source, indicating the head of the phrase, which could be connected to a ROOT node to create a well-formed UD-graph. The interpretation in our example contains a graph literal, describing the graph $r<\text{root}> \nsubj d1<\text{dep1}>$. This graph is first merged with the graph corresponding to the first argument, then the result is merged with the graph obtained by renaming the root source of the second argument’s graph to dep. r\_dep and f\_dep are Alto’s shorthands for renaming the root source to dep and forgetting the dep source. Terminal rules create string and UD literals. This toy grammar is therefore a representation of the parallel derivations of the sentence John sleeps and the UD graph \( \nsubj \text{John} \rightarrow \text{sleeps} \). The next section will describe our method for building such grammars automatically from UD datasets and using them for the word order restoration step of the Surface Realization task.

### 3 Rule induction

As seen already in the example IRTG in the previous section, we represent the correspondence between strings and UD graphs as synchronized generations in two algebras. Since our goal is to learn rules of such a grammar using UD datasets containing sentences and corresponding UD graphs, we need a method to assign derivations to UD graphs in the s-graph algebra, i.e. a series of steps that build the UD graph from its nodes, through subgraphs. We choose to represent the construc-

\(^1\)https://github.com/coli-saar/alto
The UD graph depicted in Figure 2 would hence correspond to the RTG rules in Figure 3 (interpretations are omitted for better readability). Note that we create rules that operate at the part-of-speech level, lemmas can then be inserted by terminal rules generated separately for each sentence. The simplest approach to constructing a (weighted) IRTG would be to simply include all rules “observed” in the training data, along with a probability calculated from the relative frequency of a given configuration among all occurrences of a head of a particular POS-tag. In practice we prune this grammar to include only those rules that are applicable to a given sentence and that are compatible with the value of the \textit{lin} feature (see below), and parse each UD graph using a much smaller grammar. We may also add new rules to the pruned grammar to ensure a successful parsing process (that may or may not yield the correct results).

After generating a static list of IRTG rules from the training data, we dynamically generate a reduced IRTG grammar for each sentence. In a preprocessing step we read all UD graphs that are to be parsed, and for each node and its set of dependents we check if there’s a rule in our grammar covering this subgraph. If there’s more than one matching rule, we check if the \textit{lin} feature is present in the input, which allows us to identify the single matching rule. If we identify a unique rule matching the subgraph, we add one to its frequency to increase the rule’s probability. In other words, sufficiently specific patterns of the test data are used as additional training data. If no rules matching a subgraph are present in our static grammar, we add binary rules for each dependent, some of which rules may already be present in the grammar, in which case we increase their frequencies. This ensures that the grammar will cover the new subgraph but will prefer to build it from subgraphs we have already seen in the training data. If the \textit{lin} feature is not present in the input, we add two rules per dependent, corresponding to each possible word order.

When parsing individual UD graphs, we prune the grammar by deleting all rules that generate POS tags that are not present in the graph (or generate more instances of a POS tag than the tag’s total frequency in the graph). We further delete all rules that contradict any \textit{lin} features present in the input (only the +/- sign of feature values is considered). This step must be skipped if it would mean deleting both of a pair of rules, e.g. because a word has punctuation both before and after it. We can then use this pruned grammar to obtain the most probable parse of the UD-graph and the corresponding string interpretation. The average parsing time of \texttt{alto} is around 2 seconds per sentence. In a few cases, sentence length would slow down parsing considerably; for all graphs that would take more than one minute to parse (less than 1.5% of the data) we fall back to a grammar that uses binary rules only, i.e. connects all edges of the graph one-by-one.

We illustrate the kind of decisions the parser must make through a simple example. Consider the sentence in Figure 4. Our system correctly predicted the word order based on the UD graph, the top parse involves attaching all dependencies of the predicate \textit{enjoy} using the two rules in Figure 5 (s-graph interpretations are omitted for readability). The second most probable derivation applies the three rules in Figure 6 and would yield the incorrect surface realization \textit{I enjoyed really reading it}. 

![Figure 2: Sample UD analysis](image)

![Figure 3: sample RTG rules (interpretations omitted)](image)

![Figure 4: Example from the UD dataset](image)
These parses illustrate a more general phenomenon: since the probabilities of individual rules are roughly similar, the system prefers derivations with fewer rules, which attach more nodes at the same time. Counterexamples with radically different rule probabilities are in principle possible, but on average the system prefers specific (more detailed) rules over generic (less detailed) ones, which makes the Elsewhere Principle (Kiparsky, 1973) an emergent, rather than an externally enforced, property of the grammar as a whole.

4 Reinforcement

In order to map sequences of lemmas to surface forms, we train a standard seq2seq (Sutskever et al., 2014) system with a bidirectional LSTM (Hochreiter and Schmidhuber, 1997) encoder and an LSTM decoder with Luong’s attention (Luong et al., 2015). We include all CoNLL-U fields in the input, namely the lemma, the UPOS, the XPOS and the list of morphological tags. We also experimented with adding the position of the token in the sentence (original_id=N) during training time. For inference, we use the order generated by the IRTG component. This improves the performance in most, but not all languages (see Table 1). Figure 7 shows an English example of our input and output format.

5 Evaluation

5.1 The Surface Realization Task

We participate in the ‘shallow’ track of the 2019 Surface Realization Shared Task (SR’19). The task involves mapping UD graphs of lemmas to surface forms in 11 languages. Training data for the task was created from the Universal Dependencies treebanks (Nivre et al., 2018) using methods described in (Mille et al., 2018) and contains UD treebanks with word forms replaced by lemmas word order information removed via scrambling. Two additional features have been added to the dataset, the lin feature encoding the relative order of a word and its governor and the originalId for reconstructing word order (in the training data only).

5.2 Results

The primary method of evaluation at SR’19 is human evaluation of two aspects of each output sentence: readability and semantic similarity to the original sentence. The detailed results are presented in (Mille et al., 2019). On 4 of the 5 datasets involved in the human evaluation scheme, our system was outperformed significantly by only two other systems in terms of readability. In terms of semantic similarity we are outperformed by only 1 or 2 systems on three of the five datasets. Automatic evaluation was performed using three metrics, described also in (Mille et al., 2019). Table 2 presents macro-average values for the top four teams, those that submitted outputs for all datasets. Our system ranks second among these four teams on two out of three metrics. On individual datasets, our system mostly performs below or around the average of all systems, with the ex-
| language | use position | batch size | hidden size | layers | embedding size | dev acc  |
|----------|--------------|------------|-------------|--------|----------------|----------|
| ar       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 93.68    |
| en       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 96.09    |
| es       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 98.70    |
| fr       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 94.59    |
| hi       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 98.26    |
| id       | True         | 256        | 128         | 1      | 100            | 93.77    |
| ja       | False        | 32         | 1024        | 2      | 100            | 91.61    |
| ko       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 98.43    |
| pt       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 91.43    |
| ru       | True         | 128        | 512         | 2      | 100            | 97.46    |
| zh       | False        | 32         | 128         | 1      | 100            | 98.81    |

Table 1: Highest performing configurations for each language. Dev acc refers to a randomly selected subsection of the train data as the dev sets did not have gold standard inflection.

| System     | BLEU   | NIST   | DIST   |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|
| IMS        | 79.97  | 12.79  | 81.62  |
| BME-UW     | 50.04  | 11.39  | 56.11  |
| LORIA      | 47.67  | 10.32  | 65.78  |
| Tilburg    | 45.18  | 10.05  | 56.11  |

Table 2: Macro-average of the top four systems across all datasets

6 Conclusions, further work

The weighting scheme described in Section 3 is in many ways similar to the way psycholinguists think about grammatical rules. Those rules that are based on fewer examples are used more rarely. In the limiting case, singleton examples are rarely abstracted into rules, they are memorized as is, and the key mechanism for such examples to override the general rules, e.g. that mice overrides *mouses, is the same Elsewhere Principle (Giegerich, 2001) that we see as a derived, emergent property of the system.

Perhaps one modification that would bring the system even closer to psychological reality would be to use morphological features when restoring the id-s. While this remains future work, we consider it a strong point in favor of XAI that such questions can be raised: explainability makes it possible to leverage decades of psycholinguistic work, currently almost entirely ignored in the deep neural net paradigm which, in its laboratory pure form, pays no attention to biological or psychological evidence.

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