Decoupling Encoder and Decoder Networks for Abstractive Document Summarization

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Abstract

Abstractive document summarization seeks to automatically generate a summary for a document, based on some abstract “understanding” of the original document. State-of-the-art techniques traditionally use attentive encoder–decoder architectures. However, due to the large number of parameters in these models, they require large training datasets and long training times. In this paper, we propose decoupling the encoder and decoder networks, and training them separately. We encode documents using an unsupervised document encoder, and then feed the document vector to a recurrent neural network decoder. With this decoupled architecture, we decrease the number of parameters in the decoder substantially, and shorten its training time. Experiments show that the decoupled model achieves comparable performance with state-of-the-art models for in-domain documents, but less well for out-of-domain documents.

1 Introduction

Abstractive document summarization is a challenging natural language understanding task. Abstractive methods first encode the original document into a high-level representation, and then decode it into the target summary.

Rush et al. (2015) proposed the task of headline generation as the first step towards abstractive summarization. Instead of using the full document, the authors experimented with using the first sentence as input, with the aim of generating a coherent headline given the sentence.

The current state-of-art system for the task is based on an attentive encoder and a recurrent decoder (Chopra et al., 2016), which is an extension of the methodology of Rush et al. (2015). The encoder and decoder are trained jointly, and the decoder attends to different parts of the document during generation. It has a large number of parameters, and thus requires large-scale training data and long training times.

In this paper, we propose decoupling the encoder and decoder. We encode documents using \textit{doc2vec} (Le and Mikolov, 2014), as it has been demonstrated to be a competitive unsupervised document encoder (Lau and Baldwin, 2016). We incorporate \textit{doc2vec} vectors of input documents to the decoder as an additional signal, to generate sentences that are not only coherent but are also related to the original documents. Compared to the standard joint encoder–decoder design, the decoupled architecture has less parameters for the decoder, and thus requires less training data and trains faster.\textsuperscript{1} The downside of the decoupled architecture is that the \textit{doc2vec} signal is not updated in the decoder, and its document representation could be sub-optimal for the decoder to generate good summaries. Our experiments reveal that the decoupled architecture works well in-domain, but less well out-of-domain, as a consequence of the fixed capacity of the document encoding as well as having no explicit copy mechanism.

2 Attentive Recurrent Neural Network: A Joint Encoder–Decoder Architecture

The attentive recurrent neural network is composed of an attentive encoder and a recurrent decoder (Chopra et al., 2016), where the encoder is

\textsuperscript{1}The training time is decreased from 4 days (with full GIGAWORD) for the coupled model (Rush et al., 2015) to 2 days (with 75\% GIGAWORD) in our model with comparable in-domain performance.
Figure 1: Encoder–decoder architectures

(a) Joint encoder–decoder architecture

(b) Decoupled encoder–decoder architecture

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3 Decoupled Encoder–decoder Architecture for Document Summarization

A decoupled encoder–decoder architecture has a clear boundary between the encoder and decoder: it can be seen as a pipeline model where the output of the encoder is fed as an input to the decoder, so

The encoder and decoder modules can be trained separately. Figure 1b illustrates how the encoder and decoder are decoupled from each other. Here, we use doc2vec the document encoder and a long-short term memory network (LSTM: Hochreiter and Schmidhuber (1997)) as the decoder.

doc2vec is an extension of word2vec (Mikolov et al., 2013), a popular deep learning method for learning word embeddings. In word2vec (based on the skipgram variant) the embedding of a target word is learnt by optimising it to predict its position-indexed neighbouring words. doc2vec (based on the dbow variant) is based on the same idea, except that the target word is now the document itself, and the document vector is optimised to predict the document words. Note that the dbow implementation does not take into account the order of the words (hence its name “distributed bag of words”). Once the model is trained, embeddings of new/unseen documents can be inferred from the pre-trained model efficiently. As an encoder, doc2vec is completely unsupervised, and uses no labelled information or signal from the decoder.

The decoder is an RNN language model (Mikolov et al., 2010), implemented as an LSTM (Hochreiter and Schmidhuber, 1997). Formally:

$$
\begin{align*}
  i_t &= W_i x_t + U_i h_{t-1} + b_i \\
  f_t &= W_f x_t + U_f h_{t-1} + b_f \\
  o_t &= W_o x_t + U_o h_{t-1} + b_o \\
  j_t &= W_j x_t + U_j h_{t-1} + b_j \\
  c_t &= c_{t-1} \ast \sigma(f_t) + \text{tanh}(j_t) \ast \sigma(i_t) \\
  h_t &= \text{tanh}(c_t) \ast \sigma(o_t)
\end{align*}
$$

(1)

where $i_t$, $f_t$ and $o_t$ are input, forget and output gates, respectively; $j_t$, $c_t$ and $h_t$ represent the new
Combination Equation

\begin{align*}
\text{add-input} & \quad i'_t = i_t + d \\
\text{add-hidden} & \quad h'_t = h_t + d \\
\text{stack-input} & \quad i'_t = [i_t; d] \\
\text{stack-hidden} & \quad h'_t = [h_t; d] \\
\text{mlp-input} & \quad i'_t = \tanh(W_i i_t + W_d d + b) \\
\text{mlp-hidden} & \quad h'_t = \tanh(W_i h_t + W_d d + b)
\end{align*}

Table 1: Incorporation of doc2vec signal in the decoder. \(d\) denotes the doc2vec vector; \(i_t\) (\(h_t\)) is the input (hidden) vector at time \(t\); and "[; ;]" denotes vector concatenation.

input, new context and new hidden state, respectively; \(\ast\) is the elementwise vector product; and \(\sigma\) is the sigmoid activation function.

Given an input word and previous hidden state, the decoder predicts the next word and generates the summary one word at a time.

To generate summaries that are related to the document, we incorporate the doc2vec input document signal to the decoder using several methods proposed by Hoang et al. (2016). There are two layers where we can incorporate doc2vec: in the input layer (input), or hidden layer (hidden). There are three methods of incorporation: addition (add), stacking (stack), or via a multilayer perceptron (mlp). Table 1 illustrates the 6 possible approaches to incorporation.

Note that add requires doc2vec to have the same vector dimensionality as the layer it is combined with, and stack-hidden doubles the hidden size (assuming they have the same dimensions), resulting in a large output projection matrix and longer training time.

4 Experiments and Results

4.1 Datasets

We test our decoupled architecture for the headline generation task. Following Chopra et al. (2016), we run experiments using GIGAWORD, DUC03 and DUC04.3

GIGAWORD is preprocessed according to Rush et al. (2015), yielding 4.3 million examples. For in-domain experiments, we randomly sample 2,000 examples for each validation and test set, and use the remaining examples for training. We tune hyper-parameters based on validation perplexity and evaluate performance on the test set

using the ROUGE metric (Lin, 2004), following the same evaluation style of benchmark systems (Rush et al., 2015; Chopra et al., 2016). For out-of-domain experiments, we use the same models trained from GIGAWORD, but tune using DUC03 and test on DUC04; DUC03 and DUC04 each have 500 examples.

For the doc2vec encoder, we train using GIGAWORD and infer document vectors for validation and test examples using the trained model. Valid and test examples are excluded from the doc2vec training data.

4.2 Hyper-parameter tuning

For the encoder, we explore using a range of document lengths (first 20/30/40/50 words) to generate the input representation. Validation results show that using the first 20 words produces the best performance, suggesting that this length contains sufficient information to generate headlines.

We next test the 6 different ways to incorporate doc2vec into the decoder. We find that stacking the doc2vec vector with the input (stack-input) has the most consistent performance, while mlp is competitive, and add performs the worst. Interestingly, for mlp and stack, we find the difference between input and hidden to be small.

For the recurrent decoder, hyper-parameters that are tuned include the mini-batch size, hidden layer size, number of LSTM layers, number of training epochs, learning rate, and drop out rate. The best results is achieved with a mini-batch size of 128, hidden size of 900, and one LSTM layer. The best perplexity is obtained after 3 to 4 epochs, with a learning rate of 0.001. More training epochs are needed when we reduce the learning rate to 0.0001. For in-domain experiments, the best results are achieved with a dropout rate of 0.1, while for out-of-domain experiments, the best performance prefers a higher dropout rate at 0.4. This suggests that dropout plays an important role in combating over-fitting, and it is especially useful for out-of-domain data.

4.3 Results

We compare our model (RDS: Recurrent Decoupled Summarizer) with 4 state-of-art models: ABS, ABS+ (Rush et al., 2015); RAS-LSTM and RAS-Elman (Chopra et al., 2016), which are all joint encoder–decoder models. For in-domain results, we present ROUGE-1/2/L full-length F-scores in Table 2. For out-of-domain results we
A North Korean man arrived in Seoul Wednesday and sought asylum after escaping his hunger-stricken homeland, government officials said.

A North Korean man arrives in Seoul to seek asylum for homeland security officials say.

D North Korean man defects to South Korea.

King Norodom Sihanouk has declined requests to chair a summit of Cambodia’s top political leaders, saying the meeting would not bring any progress in deadlocked negotiations to form a government.

A King Sihanouk declines to meet Cambodian leaders on eve of talks with Cambodia.

D Cambodian king refuses to meet with leaders of political leaders.

Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, who seems a perennial Nobel peace prize also-ran, could have won the coveted honor in 1978 had it not been for strict deadline rules for nominations.

A Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter wins top honor for Nobel peace prize nominations.

D Carter wins Nobel prize in literature.

Table 4: System generated article summaries. I: reference summary; A: RAS-Elman; and D: RDS.

For out-of-domain experiments, we compute ROUGE recall at 75 bytes and find that RDS performs poorly, even worse than the baseline method Prefix. This suggests that the decoupled architecture is sensitive to domain differences, and highlights a potential downside of the architecture. Investigating methods that can improve cross-domain performance is a direction for future work.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

We present some summaries for DUC documents generated by RAS-Elman and RDS in Table 4 to better understand possible reasons for the poor in-domain performance of RDS. The first observation is the shorter headlines generated by RDS compared to the DUC reference summaries and RAS-Elman headlines. RDS headlines are short — at an average length of 8.13 — and this is due to the short length of GIGAWORD titles it is trained on, at 8.50 words on average. On the other hand, the average length of DUC reference summaries and RAS-Elman headlines is 11.63 and 13.08 words respectively; this explains why RAS-Elman achieves better performance, since a longer sentence would have a better chance to score higher in ROUGE.

We also find that RDS often generates similar words and is penalised by ROUGE as it uses exact...
word matching, as is evidenced by Sihanouk and Cambodian king in the second example. Lastly, the bag-of-words view of the doc2vec encoder results in some meaning loss: in the third example, Jimmy Carter did not actually win the Nobel peace prize, for example.

We also computed the source copy rate of the systems. We find that, on average, RDS copies only 50.7% of its predicted words from input document, while ABS and ABS+ copy at a rate of 85.4% and 91.5%. This is interesting, as it suggests that it paraphrases more than other systems, while achieving similar ROUGE performance.

To summarise, we proposed decoupling the encoder–decoder architecture as is traditionally used in sequence-to-sequence problems. We tested the decoupled system on news title generation, and found that it performed competitively in-domain. Out-of-domain experiments, however, reveal sub-par performance, suggesting that the decoupled architecture is susceptible to domain differences.

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Informal manual evaluation for RDS, ABS, ABS+ and RAS on GIGAWORD reveals that ABS, ABS+ and RAS are also generating words that are of similar meaning, and that overall, RDS is less preferred by annotators. Source copy rate is defined as the fraction of generated words that are in the original source documents.

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