CTM: An Example-Based Translation Aid System

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Abstract

This paper describes a Japanese-English translation aid system, CTM, which has a useful capability for flexible retrieval of texts from bilingual corpora or translation databases. Translation examples (pairs of a text and its translation equivalent) are very helpful for us to translate the similar text. Our character-based best match retrieval method can retrieve translation examples similar to the given input. This method has the following advantages: (1) this method accepts free-style translation examples, i.e., pairs of any text string and its translation equivalent, (2) morphological analysis is unnecessary, (3) this method accepts free-style inputs (i.e., any text strings) for retrieval. We show the retrieval examples with the following characteristic features: phrasal expression, long-distance dependency, idiom, synonym, and semantic ambiguity.

1 Introduction

In the late 1980's, several commercial Japanese-English machine translation systems had been developed in Japan. In these systems, the computer is the agent of translation, while the user assists in editing the translation inputs and revising the results. Although they are useful to translate large amounts of texts roughly and rapidly, high quality translation is impossible.

Translation aid is another kind of machine translation: the user is the agent of translation, while the computer provides him or her with the helpful tools, e.g., quick-retrieval electronic dictionaries. A quick-retrieval bilingual corpus is also useful, specifically when it has the flexible (best match) retrieval mechanism. Because translation examples (pairs of source text and its translation equivalent) are very helpful for us to translate the similar text. This type of system is called as example-based translation aid [6], and there are two prototype systems in Japanese-English translation: ETOC [8] and Nakamura's system [5].

![Figure 1: Basic Configuration of Example-Based Translation Aid](image)

Figure 1 shows the basic configuration of example-based translation aid (ETBA). It consists of two components: the translation database is the collection of translation examples, and the best match retrieval engine is to retrieve the example that is the most similar to the given input text. The characteristic of the ETBA system is that it accepts free-style text inputs for the retrieval: it frees the user from learning the formal language for database query.

The central problem in ETBA is the implementation of the best match retrieval. Two methods were proposed: one is the syntax-matching driven by generalization rules in ETOC [8], and the other is Nakamura's method using content words [5]. They are the word-based best match retrieval methods, which need morphological analysis.

This paper proposes the character-based best match retrieval method, specifically for Japanese texts. Compared with the word-based methods, the character-based method has the following advantages:

- Morphological analysis is unnecessary.
- Some kind of synonyms can be retrieved without a thesaurus.

This method has been implemented in CTM, a Japanese-English translation aid system for writing/ translating technical papers.

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1 In word-based (resp. character-based) best match retrieval method, a word (resp. character) is a primitive.
2 CTM is named from the Japanese phrase, "Chotto Isukatte Mitene", which means "use it any time you want".

*The author had been transferred from Kyoto University on April 1, 1992. This work was done at Kyoto University.
2 The Character-Based Best Match Retrieval Method

2.1 Characteristics of Japanese Written Texts

Japanese written texts have remarkable characteristics as follows. They cannot be found in European languages, i.e., English, French, and German.

1. The number of characters is very large.

The number of characters that are used in text is more than 7,000 in Japanese, while it is less than a hundred in a European language.

2. Synonyms often have the same Kanji character.

Japanese characters are divided into three types: Hiragana (83 characters), Katakana (86 characters), and Kanji. A Hiragana or Katakana character expresses a sound, and a Kanji character represents a semantic primitive. For example, the Kanji character "思" means "thinking", and it is used for constructing several words concerned with thinking: e.g., 思考 (thinking), 考察 (consideration), 頭 (head), 考慮 (consideration), 考える (think), 考えるする (devise).

3. There is no delimiter between words.

In European languages, the white space is the delimiter for word separation. In contrast, Japanese has no explicit delimiter. Therefore, the main part of Japanese morphological analysis is to divide a text string into words: it is not an easy task.

These characteristics of Japanese suggest the character-based best match, because

1. While the word-based method needs morphological analysis, the character-based method does not need it.

2. In order to retrieve synonyms the word-based method needs a thesaurus. In contrast, the character-based method can retrieve some kind of synonyms without a thesaurus, because synonyms often have the same Kanji character in Japanese.

2.2 The Character-Based Best Match

The character-based best match can be determined by defining the distance or similarity measure between two strings.

The simple measure of similarity between two strings, \( A = a_1a_2 \cdots a_x \) and \( B = b_1b_2 \cdots b_y \), is the number of the matching characters considering the character order constraint. It is not particularly good measure, but makes a convenient starting point. We define it as follows:

\[
S(A, B) = s(x, y)
\]

\[
s(i, j) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{if } i = 0 \lor j = 0 \\
\max \left( s(i - 1, j - 1) + m(i, j), s(i - 1, j), s(i, j - 1) \right) & \text{if } (1 \leq i \leq x) \land (1 \leq j \leq y) 
\end{cases}
\]

\[
m(i, j) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } a_i = b_j \\
0 & \text{if } a_i \neq b_j 
\end{cases}
\]

This measure often produces the undesirable results, because we ignore continuation of matching characters. For example, consider the following strings:

\( A = \text{問題を解決する} \) (solve the problem)

\( B = \text{彼は問題を解決した。} \)

(He solved the problem yesterday.)

\( B' = \text{問題の解決を決定する} \)

(determine the method for solving the problem)

We want to be \( S(A, B) > S(A, B') \), but the above measure produces \( S(A, B) < S(A, B') \). To solve the problem, we consider the bonus for continuous matching characters. It can be done by modifying \( m(i, j) \) in the above definition:

\[
S(A, B) = s(x, y)
\]

\[
s(i, j) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{if } i = 0 \lor j = 0 \\
\max \left( s(i - 1, j - 1) + \min(cm(i, j), W), s(i - 1, j), s(i, j - 1) \right) & \text{if } (1 \leq i \leq x) \land (1 \leq j \leq y) 
\end{cases}
\]

\[
cm(i, j) = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{if } i = 0 \lor j = 0 \\
\min(cm(i - 1, j - 1) + m(i, j), \min(cm(i, j), W)) & \text{if } (1 \leq i \leq x) \land (1 \leq j \leq y) 
\end{cases}
\]

\[
m(i, j) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } a_i = b_j \\
0 & \text{if } a_i \neq b_j 
\end{cases}
\]

This is the similarity score that we use, where \( W \) is a parameter that determines the maximum value of the bonus for the continuous matching characters. When \( W = 1 \), this definition is the same with the previous definition. Table 1 shows \( S(A, B) \) and \( S(A, B') \) with varying values of \( W \). Usually we use \( W = 4 \).

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3 For example, a Japanese morphological analysis program developed by Kyoto University fails to analyze 3 ~ 5% of sentences.

4 This value was determined empirically. It may be explained as follows. The average character length of a Japanese word is about two, and we feel that the continuous matching of two words is the strong match.
2.3 Acceleration by Character Index

At the best match retrieval, we use the acceleration method using the character index. The character index is the table of every character with ID's of examples in which the character is appeared. Table 2 shows an example of translation database and Table 3 shows the character index of it.

In the first stage of the retrieval, the character index is used for the pre-selection of the examples. Figure 2 illustrates the pre-selection process: it is

1. Look up the records for the characters that are appeared in the input string.
2. For every example, compute the pre-selection score, PSS, which can be obtained by counting the number of the example ID's in the records. It is the number of matching characters between the input string and the example ignoring the character order constraint.
3. Select the top N examples that have the largest pre-selection score, where N is the parameter and we usually use N = 200.

In the second stage of the retrieval, the similarity scores of pre-selected examples are computed, and the examples are ordered by the score.

3 The CTM System

Above mentioned retrieval mechanism has been implemented in CTM, a Japanese-English translation aid system. CTM is written by C and runs on Sun Workstations. Figure 3 shows the configuration of CTM: it consists of three programs.

mkdb The program to create the character index from the translation database.

CTM server The main program, which retrieves the best matched examples with the given input.

MTC The client program on NEmacs (Nihongo (Japanese) GNU Emacs), which interacts the CTM server via Ethernet.

The translation database of CTM is text files, in which a Japanese text string and an English text string appear one after the other. These files can be made from Japanese text files and the correspondent English text files by using the alignment program [1] semi-automatically. We have made the translation database from several sources: Table 4 shows our translation databases.

4 Retrieval Examples

We show here CTM retrieval examples with the following features: phrasal expression, long-distance dependency, idiom, synonym, and semantic ambiguity.

Figure 4 shows a retrieval example of phrasal expression “いくつかの観点から考察する (consider from several points of view)”. Although there is no exact matched expression in the database, CTM can retrieve helpful examples for us to translate it.

\[\text{Example: } \text{いくつかの観点から考察する} \]

\[\text{Output: } \text{consider from several points of view} \]

\[\text{CTM} \text{ server} \]
Table 4: The CTM Translation Databases

| Name           | Direction | Records | K Byte | Source(s)                                      |
|----------------|-----------|---------|--------|-----------------------------------------------|
| ScienceYYMM    | E→J       | 11,115  | 3,175  | Scientific American & its Japanese translation (Nikkei Science) |
| ML1            | E→J       | 2,055   | 458    | Chap. 1 - 4 in Machine Learning [3] & its Japanese translation |
| JK             | J→E       | 4,230   | 139    | Entry words on [4]                            |
| MTE            | J→E       | 3,938   | 379    | Test examples on [2]                          |
| EX             | J→E       | 6,624   | 505    | Translation examples collected by Oikawa      |
| TJ             | J→E       | 1,467   | 259    | The column, Teensei-Jingo, on Asahi Newspaper |
| KD             | J→E       | 38,190  | 2,729  | Examples on [7]                               |
| Total          |           | 67,619  | 7,733  |                                                |

**Score = 28, DB = Science8710, ID = 598, File = 03.ej**

In particular, we examine methods for finding the maximally-specific conjunctive generalizations (MSC-generalizations) that cover all of the training examples of a given concept.

**Score = 7, DB = Science9003, ID = 468, File = 03.ej**

Figure 5: Example (Long-Distance Dependency)

CTM supports the retrieval of long-distance dependency: Figure 5 shows three retrieval examples for the Japanese construction "NOUN+ Spiele+ ~1.1, where "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter". There are several translation of "wound". The first input "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter". The second input "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter". The third input "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter".

Figure 6: Example (Idiom)

CTM supports the retrieval of long-distance dependency: Figure 5 shows a retrieval example, where "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter". There are several translation of "wound". The first input "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter". The second input "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter". The third input "near" is a case marker and "wound" is the past form of the verb "enter".

Figure 7: Example (Synonym)

with "consider" and two examples with two synonyms, "gain insight into" and "observe".

Figure 8 shows three retrieval examples for the Japanese construction "NOUN+ KOTO+ ~1.1, where "NOUN" is a case marker and "KOTO" is a case marker. The first retrieval example is literal meaning, and the second example is idiomatic meaning. The retrieval examples show the following three cases:

1. "human enters the room" (human enters the room)
2. "the wind blows into the room" (the wind blows into the room)
3. "the book arrives at the bookstore" (the book arrives at the bookstore)
5 Evaluation

It is very difficult to evaluate a translation aid system, because its effectiveness essentially depends on the user's satisfaction: when the user feels that the system is helpful, it is effective. The evaluation of CTM is now in progress, and we show some results of experiments here.

The Retrieval Time

Empirically, we obtained the following equation, which estimates the retrieval time (millisecond).

\[
time(l, k, N) = l \times (10 \times k + 2/3 \times N)
\]

where \( l \) is the length of the input string, \( k \) (mega byte) is the database size, and \( N \) is the pre-selection parameter. For example, if \( l = 10 \) (characters), \( k = 8 \) (mega byte), \( N = 200 \), then \( time = 2,133 \) (milliseconds). It shows that the current system responds in a few seconds and it is not so fast. The more acceleration is need for the larger database.

Evaluation of 100 retrievals

We have evaluated 100 retrieval results by hand. We have given one of the following grades to each retrieved example.

A The example exactly matches the input.
B The example provides enough information about the translation of the whole input.
C The example provides information about the translation of some part of the input.
F The example provides almost no information about the translation of the input.

We evaluated top five examples for each retrieval, and the best grade of them is used for the evaluation of a retrieval. The table shows the result of the evaluation. The table shows that (1) we can obtain very useful information from 47% of the retrievals, (2) we can obtain at least some information from 81% of the retrievals.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Ms. Yuko Tomita, who helped me to make the translation databases.

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