Hybrid methods of Brandt’s generalised likelihood ratio and
short-term energy for Malay word speech segmentation

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ABSTRACT

Speech segmentation is an important part for speech recognition, synthesizing and coding. Statistical based approach detects segmentation points via computing spectral distortion of the signal without prior knowledge of the acoustic information proved to be able to give good match, less omission but lot of insertion. In this study the segmentation is done both manually and automatically using Malay words in traditional Malay poetry. This study proposed a hybrid method of Brandt’s generalized likelihood ratio (GLR) and short-term energy algorithm. The Brandt’s algorithm tries to estimate the abrupt change in energy to determine the segmentation points. A total of five Pantun are used in read mode and spoken by one male student in a noise free room. Experiments are conducted to see the the accuracy, insertion, and omission of the segmentation points. Experimental results show on average 80% accuracy with 0.2 second time tolerance for automatic segmentation with the algorithm having no knowledge of the acoustic characteristics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humans mainly communicate with each other through words formed from languages. Information exchanges are easily achieved between two individuals that speaks the same language. Computers and digital systems also works as such. A computer can only understand instructions in one’s and zero’s and thus it is the compilers job to translate high level programming language into these instructions. Automatic Speech Recognition Systems (ASR) aim to “translate” vocal human words in natural language into information usable by computers and digital systems [1]. Speech signal varies greatly based on the context [2]. Even when the same speaker says the same word repeatedly will result in variation, even little, in the speech signal produced. Human communication are complimented with body language and simpler versions of language that better suit two way dialogues [1]. Among these, unclear word boundaries, noise signals, regional and geographical dialects, and speaker variability makes building an accurate ASR system harder.

ASR pre-processing stage will greatly determine the outcome of the later stages. Framing, noise removal, and segmentation are common processes that are done during pre-processing [2]. The focus of this paper is on continuous audio segmentation. Segmentation algorithm can be categorized as follow [3]: First is Metric-based segmentation where audio streams are segmented at the maxima of the distances between neighbouring windows placed at fixed sampling intervals. Second, Decoder-guided segmentation where audio streams are decoded followed by segmentation at silent points generated by the decoder. Third, Model-based segmentation such as the use of Gaussian mixture models. Segments are assumed at locations where there is a change in acoustic class. The incoming stream can be classified by using maximum likelihood selection.

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Speech segmentation can be defined as the process of finding the limits (with specific characteristic) in natural spoken language between words, syllables or phonemes. [4, 5]. The main objective of Speech segmentation is to serve other speech analysis problems such as speech synthesis, data training for speech recognizers, or to fabricate and label prosodic databases. Therefore, it can be viewed as a vital sub-issue for various fields in speech analysis and research. [6, 7]. The traditional approach handling this issue is by manual segmentation of speech, which is generally performed by specialized phoneticians. However, this method is based on listening and visual judgment on required boundaries which makes it inconsistent and time consuming. [8, 9]. Another method which is considered very convenient is an automatic segmentation. The speech can be automatically segmented into sub word units which are defined acoustically. [10] In Automatic Speech Recognition ASR systems, segmentation can be performed: (i) At the system training stage, when segmentation is applied to the training set recordings. (ii) At the recognition stage [5].

2. SEGMENTATION TECHNIQUES

Several well-established segmentation techniques have been proposed by previous researchers, such as in [10], that audio segmentation is performed using segment features. The proposed technique uses a log-linear segment model to determine the segmentation of the input audio stream [11]. First, the audio data is processed with a speaker independent acoustic model [12]. The decoding process will hypothesis the locations of sentence start and end. The resulting segments are also clustered and used in Constrained maximum likelihood linear regression (CMLLR) feature transformations and maximum likelihood linear regression (MLLR) mean transformations. The experimental results in [10] shows that the framework is applicable for various segments, boundary features, and for different change point detection methods.

The Hidden Markov Model (HMM) is one of the highly-used segmentation techniques. A refined HMM algorithm was tested for segmenting a Chinese corpus [11]. The method is carried out in 3 steps:

1. Obtain initial segmentation marks using HMM with forced alignment.
2. Create a super vector for each boundary of this database by placing acoustic vector near the boundary. The pseudo-triphone formed from the boundary are classified using a classification and regression tree (CART) where the pseudo-triphone are clustered into smaller number of classes. Then each leaf node on the CART is used to train a Gaussian Mixture Model (GMM).
3. For each labelled sentence, attempt to refine the boundary of each segment. Using the HMM boundary obtained above, compute the likelihood of this frame contains the actual boundary. The optimal boundary is assumed to be the frame that has maximum likelihood of the GMM model associated with the CART leaf node for the pseudo-triphone.

Experimental results in [5] shows that the refined HMM is more accurate than the standard HMM segmentation.

The Brandt’s generalized likelihood ratio (GLR) method aims to detect discontinuities in homogenous segment of the speech signal models using statistics to detect sequentially abrupt changes in the parameter of the model [11-14]. The signal $Y_n$, is described using an autoregressive model M, such that

$$M(A, \sigma) f(x) = \begin{cases} Y_n = \sum_{i=1}^{p} a_i Y_{n-i} + e_n \\ var(e_n) = \sigma^2 \end{cases}$$

(1)

where $e_n$ is a zero-mean noise with variance $\sigma^2$.

Assume the audio signal is windowed as in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Location of three windows in Brandt’s GLR

where W1 is described the signal $(Y_1, \ldots, Y_r)$ and W2 describes the signal $(Y_{r+1}, \ldots, Y_n)$. A jump is detected at $r$ if $D_0(r) \geq D_0$ if
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Figure 3. Manual segmentation using on the sentence “baik-baik jaga pedoman” using the wavesurfer program. Words segmented are “baik”, “baik”, “jaga”, “pedoman”.

3.2. Brandt’s GLR algorithm

Noise filtering is not required since little to no noise is present in the data. The data is first framed into individual frames of one (1) sentence each [22-24]. Then the Brandt’s GLR ratio is calculated for each sample as follow, using the windows in Figure 4.

1. The covariance of W1 and W2 are calculated using brute force calculations. W1 will start at r = 1 and will grow until n and the variance values of values for both W1 and W2 are calculated.
2. The variation of D_n is then calculated using equation (1) and graph D_n is plot.

Figure 4. Top shows the signal waveform for sentence “baik-baik jaga pedoman” Bottom shows variation of D_n. The red lines show the points of segmentation.

The segmentation points are then acquired by observing the highest ratio calculated by the Brandt’s GLR. Resulting segmentation points from the Brandt’s GLR method are compared to the reference segmented points from the manual segmentation that was done using the wavesurfer program by us. The measurement criterion is adapted from [25]. Let K = {K1, K2,…….,Kn} and R = {R1, R2,…….,Rn} be the segmented points in seconds obtained from the Brandt’s GLR and manual segmentation respectively. For each K_j, the corresponding point R_k is determined by the time instance closes to that of K_j. Thus a sequence R_k = {R_k1, R_k2,……., R_kn} is build to compare both segmentations.

Omission can be detected as when point in R_k is not in K_j and insertion when points in K_j is not in R_k. Number of similar points in both R_k and K_j are calculated as Match, m = (m/p * 100) where p is the number of points in R [26, 27]. Accuracy is calculated using, accuracy = ((m/p+n) * 100) which is affected by the number of insertions. The Brandt’s GLR method will be evaluated in terms of the number of omission and insertions, matches, and accuracy [28].
3.2 Short-term energy algorithm

The energy parameter has been used in speech segmentation since the 1970’s [29]. This algorithm was adopted and modified to better locate the beginning and ending of speech points for the isolated spoken Malay utterances and will be discussed in detail. This is a two-step search algorithm where the absolute energy (AE) for a coarse search is first used [19]. The speech signal was first divided into 50% overlapping frames of 10ms and then passed through a rectangular window [30, 31]. The AE was computed by summing the absolute magnitudes of speech samples in each frame as shown in (3).

$$E_s = \sum_{m=1}^{m=N} s(n)w(m-n)$$

where, \(w(m)\) rectangular window, \(N\) length frame duration ending at \(n=m\) and \(m\) speech samples overlapping at 10 ms.

The mean and standard deviation of the AE measure is first computed during the first 50ms of the speech, assuming there is only background noise [22]. This information was further used to compute the peak energy (IMX) for the entire interval in each speech sample and the silence energy (IMN) [23, 24]. Subsequently the IMX and IMN were used to set two energy thresholds: upper threshold (\(T_u\)) and lower threshold (\(T_l\)) according to (4).

$$T_i = \text{IMN} \left( 1 + 2\log_{10} \left( \frac{\text{IMX}}{\text{IMN}} \right) \right)$$

The upper threshold (\(T_u\)) will be computed as in (5) and (6).

$$W_L = \frac{\sum_i E_n(i)}{\sum_i 1}$$

$$T_u = T_l + 0.25(W_L - T_l)$$

where, \(W_L\) word length, \(I\) is index of all frames, having \(E(i)>T_l\)

Therefore, upper level for average energy is set to 0.25 based on experimental findings in case of high noise [25].

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the experiments, the Brandt’s GLR is applied on periodic frames of 0.4 seconds. The algorithm was tested on frames of 0.2 seconds but was find to create high amount of insertion thus lowering the accuracy of the segmentation. At 0.2 seconds, Brandt’s GLR produces twice the amount of segmentation points compared to the reference segmentation points as shown in Figure 5.

Each pantun is read in a controlled rhythm where each of the words in each sentence is read approximately 0.5 seconds apart from each other. Therefore 0.4 second framing is relatively effective for this type of segmentation. Pantun five (5) shows the worst accuracy as a lot of the words are made of prefixes such as dihati and membujang. Insertion occurs in between the prefix and the word hence lowering the accuracy of it. All of the other pantuns manage to be segmented with 80% accuracy with a 0.2 second tolerance.

Nine out of 20 of the data managed to be 100% segmented and overall result is presented in Table 1. And the 5th sentence from pantun two (2) achieved 100% segmentation within 0.1 second time tolerance. In that sentence, “suka hati kumbang yang terbang”, none of the words contains prefixes and suffixes, and contains no more than two syllable per words. Suffixes and prefixes can sometimes be captured as new words. For example, in the 3rd sentence of pantun five (5), the prefix “membu” in “membujang” was captured as a separate word. 0.4 second frames are chosen as it manages to segment words that are two syllables long without over segmenting. This however will cause over-segmentation in words that are three syllables or more which is commonly due to the presence of prefixes or suffixes.
Figure 5. Average accuracy of each pantun vs time tolerance

Table 1. Overall segmentation results for five (5) pantun

| Time tolerance (seconds) | Sentence | p (auto) | m (match) | n (miss) | accuracy (%) | p (auto) | m (match) | n (miss) | accuracy (%) | p (auto) | m (match) | n (miss) | accuracy (%) |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| 0 second                 | Poem 1   | 7        | 5         | 2        | 55.56       | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Sentence 1 | 8        | 2         | 6        | 14.29       | 8        | 4         | 4        | 33.33        | 8        | 5         | 3        | 45.45        |
|                          | Poem 1   | 7        | 1         | 6        | 7.69        | 7        | 3         | 4        | 27.27        | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Sentence 3 | 7        | 2         | 5        | 16.67       | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        |
|                          | Poem 1   | 6        | 2         | 4        | 20.00       | 6        | 5         | 1        | 71.43        | 6        | 6         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Sentence 1 | 8        | 3         | 5        | 23.08       | 8        | 5         | 3        | 45.45        | 8        | 6         | 2        | 60.00        |
|                          | Poem 2   | 7        | 2         | 5        | 16.67       | 7        | 3         | 4        | 27.27        | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        |
|                          | Sentence 2 | 7        | 2         | 5        | 16.67       | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Poem 3   | 7        | 2         | 5        | 16.67       | 7        | 4         | 3        | 40.00        | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        |
|                          | Sentence 1 | 7        | 4         | 3        | 40.00       | 7        | 5         | 2        | 55.56        | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Poem 3   | 6        | 2         | 4        | 20.00       | 6        | 5         | 1        | 71.43        | 6        | 6         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Sentence 3 | 7        | 3         | 4        | 27.27       | 7        | 4         | 3        | 40.00        | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        |
|                          | Poem 4   | 7        | 3         | 4        | 27.27       | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Sentence 2 | 7        | 2         | 5        | 16.67       | 7        | 5         | 2        | 55.56        | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Poem 4   | 7        | 0         | 7        | 0.00        | 7        | 4         | 3        | 40.00        | 7        | 5         | 2        | 55.56        |
|                          | Sentence 3 | 7        | 3         | 4        | 27.27       | 7        | 6         | 1        | 75.00        | 7        | 7         | 0        | 100.00       |
|                          | Poem 4   | 7        | 1         | 6        | 7.69        | 7        | 5         | 2        | 55.56        | 7        | 5         | 2        | 55.56        |
|                          | Sentence 1 | 9        | 2         | 7        | 12.50       | 9        | 3         | 6        | 20.00        | 9        | 7         | 2        | 63.64        |
|                          | Poem 5   | 8        | 1         | 7        | 6.67        | 8        | 4         | 4        | 33.33        | 8        | 6         | 2        | 60.00        |
|                          | Sentence 3 | 5        | 1         | 4        | 11.11       | 5        | 3         | 3        | 37.50        | 5        | 5         | 1        | 83.33        |

Figure 6 shows the reference segmentation of the word “membujang” and Figure 7 shows how the algorithm did it. The word “membujang” was read 0.6 seconds long, which was captured by two separate GLR frames thus causing over segmentation.
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5. CONCLUSION

Four out of five of the pantun managed to be segmented with 80% accuracy. However, it is to be noted that all the data is in read mode and was recited in a controlled rhyme thus making the segmentation process a lot simpler than if to be done on spontaneous speech where there will be multiple speakers which all speak at different pace. Salam recommended in [7] to use higher order of autoregressive model to purposely cause over segmentation and to remove the insertions using Neural Network. This might also help with segmentation of spontaneous data. To test this would be our future goal.

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