IN5550: Neural Methods in Natural Language Processing
Sub-lecture 5.3
Capturing Language Structure: Enter Recurrent Neural Networks

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So far: MLPs + embeddings as inputs



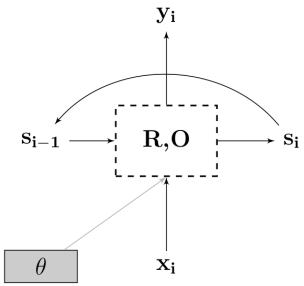
- Embeddings have benefits over discrete feature vectors; can make use of unlabeled data + information sharing across features.
- MLPs can learn certain feature combinations...
- ...but there are limitations when it comes to learning ordering and positional information.
- We still lack power for representing sentences and documents of arbitrary length.
- Summing or averaging embeddings? Gives a fixed-length representation, but no information about order or structure.
- Concatenation? Would blow up the parameter space.

Contents



1 Enter recurrent neural networks

Recurrent Neural Networks in the Abstract

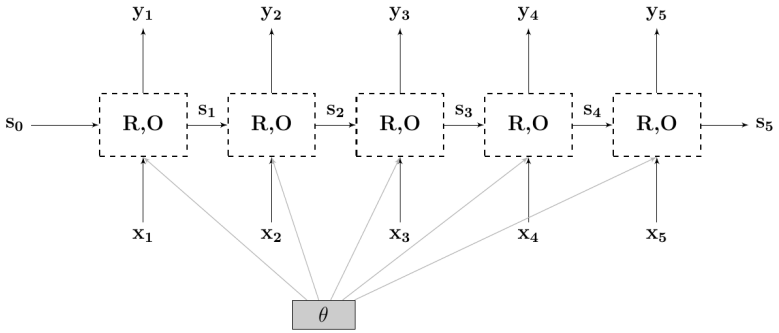


- Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) take variable-length sequences as input
- map input sequence $\boldsymbol{x_{1:n}}$ to output $\boldsymbol{y_{1:n}}$
- unlike feed-forward architectures, RNNs contain cycles
- are highly sensitive to linear order; need not make any Markov assumptions
- internal state sequence $\boldsymbol{s_{1:n}}$ as 'history'

$$\begin{aligned} \text{RNN}(\boldsymbol{x_{1:n}}, \boldsymbol{s_0}) &= \boldsymbol{y_{1:n}} \\ \boldsymbol{s_i} &= R(\boldsymbol{s_{i-1}}, \boldsymbol{x_i}) \\ \boldsymbol{y_i} &= O(\boldsymbol{s_i}) \end{aligned}$$

$$\boldsymbol{x_i} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_x};\ \boldsymbol{y_i} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_y};\ \boldsymbol{s_i} \in \mathbb{R}^{f(d_y)}$$

Still High-Level: The RNN Abstraction Unrolled



- This is how it looks like in a *PyTorch* or *TensorFlow* computational graph.
- Each state s_i and output y_i depend on the full previous context, e.g.

$$s_4 = R(R(R(R(x_1, s_o), x_2), x_3)x_4) \quad (1)$$

- Functions $R(\cdot)$ and $O(\cdot)$ shared across time points; fewer parameters

Implementing the RNN Abstraction



- We have yet to define the nature of the $R(\cdot)$ and $O(\cdot)$ functions
- RNNs are actually a family of architectures; much variation for $R(\cdot)$

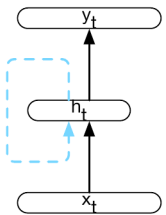
Arguably the Most Basic RNN Implementation

$$\begin{aligned} \boldsymbol{s_i} &= R(\boldsymbol{s_{i-1}}, \boldsymbol{x_i}) = \boldsymbol{s_{i-1}} + \boldsymbol{x_i} \\ \boldsymbol{y_i} &= O(\boldsymbol{s_i}) = \boldsymbol{s_i} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

- Does this maybe look familiar? Merely a continuous bag of words
- order-insensitive: *Google acquired YouTube* $\equiv$ *YouTube acquired Google*
- actually has no parameters of it own: $\theta = \{\}$; thus, no learning ability

The 'Simple' RNN

- We want to learn the dependencies between elements of the sequence
- nature of the $R(\cdot)$ function needs to be determined during training



The Elman RNN: most basic type

$$\begin{aligned} \boldsymbol{s_i} &= R(\boldsymbol{s_{i-1}}, \boldsymbol{x_i}) = g(\boldsymbol{s_{i-1}}\boldsymbol{W^s} + \boldsymbol{x_i}\boldsymbol{W^x} + \boldsymbol{b}) \\ \boldsymbol{y_i} &= O(\boldsymbol{s_i}) = \boldsymbol{s_i} \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

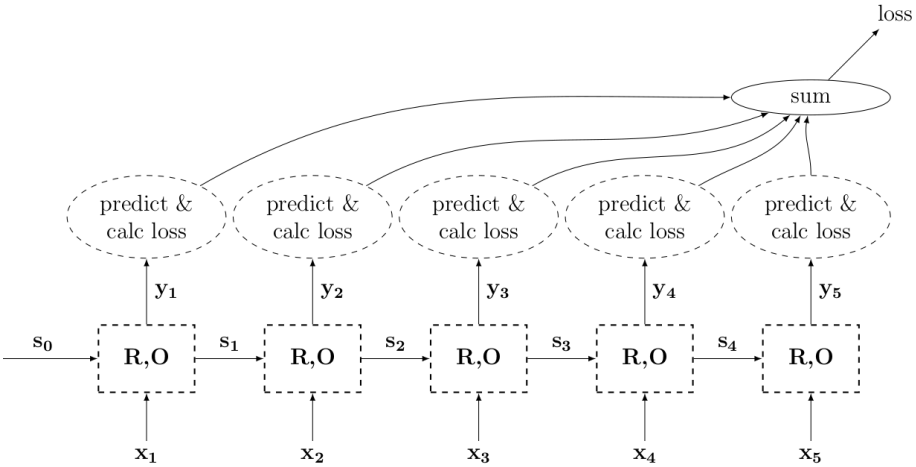
$$\boldsymbol{x_i} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_x};\ \boldsymbol{s_1}, \boldsymbol{y_i} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_y};\ \boldsymbol{W^x} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_x \times d_s};\ \boldsymbol{W^s} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_s \times d_s};\ \boldsymbol{b} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_s}$$

[Elman, 1990]

- Linear transformations of states and inputs; non-linear activation
- alternative, equivalent definition of $R(\cdot)$:

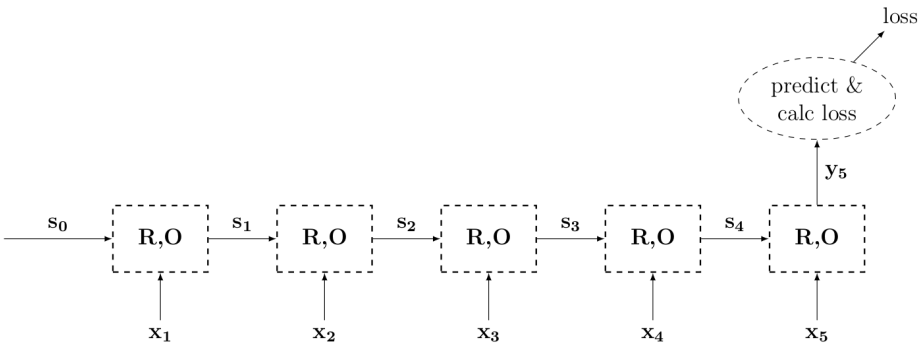
$$\boldsymbol{s_i} = g([\boldsymbol{s_{i-1}}; \boldsymbol{x_i}]\boldsymbol{W} + \boldsymbol{b}) \tag{4}$$

Training Recurrent Neural Networks end-to-end



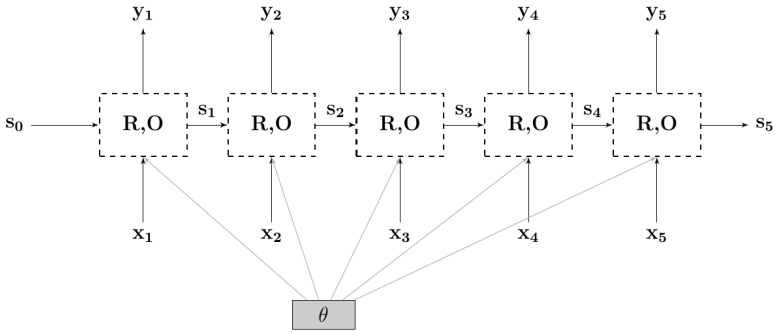
- Elman RNN in a sequence labeling task, e.g. classification from output states y_i
- standard loss functions, optimizers and Back-propagation Through Time (BPTT)

An Alternate Training Regime: sequence classification



- Focus on final output state: y_n as encoding of full sequence $x_{1:n}$
- Looking familiar? Mapping variable-length sequence to a fixed-size vector
- sentence-level classification; language modeling; conditioned generation
  - a.k.a. sequence–to–sequence models; e.g. translation or summarization

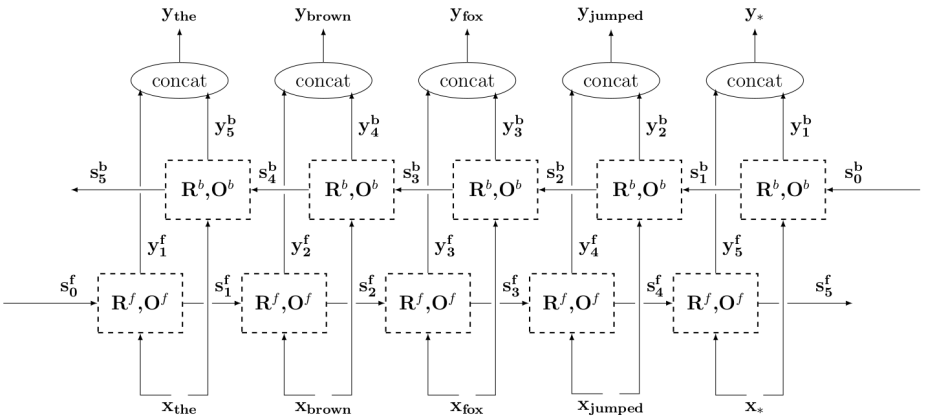
Unrolled RNNs, in a Sense, are very Deep MLPs



$$
\begin{aligned}
\boldsymbol{s_i} &= R(\boldsymbol{s_{i-1}}, \boldsymbol{x_i}) = g(\boldsymbol{s_{i-1}}\boldsymbol{W^s} + \boldsymbol{x_i}\boldsymbol{W^x} + \boldsymbol{b}) \\
&= g(g(\boldsymbol{s_{i-2}}\boldsymbol{W^s} + \boldsymbol{x_{i-1}}\boldsymbol{W^x} + \boldsymbol{b})\boldsymbol{W^s} + \boldsymbol{x_i}\boldsymbol{W^x} + \boldsymbol{b})
\end{aligned}
\tag{5}
$$

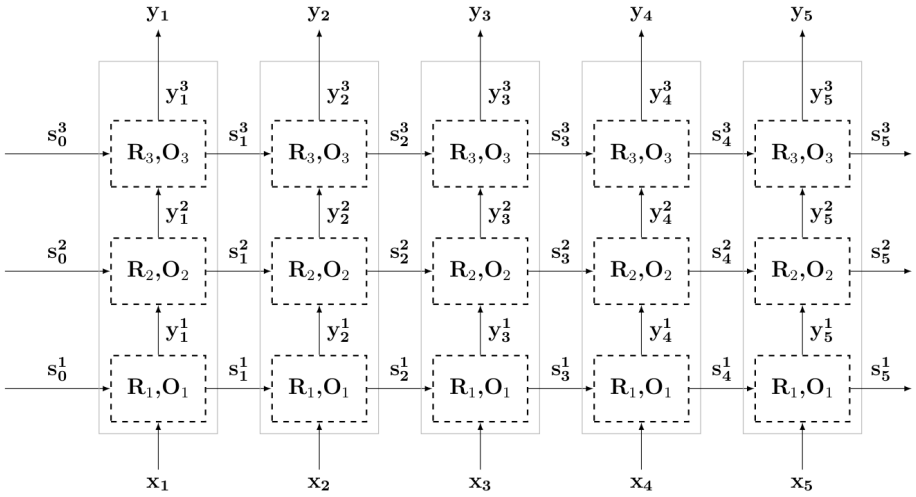
- $\boldsymbol{W^s}$, $\boldsymbol{W^x}$ shared across all layers $\rightarrow$ exploding or vanishing gradients (later about this)

Variants: Bi-Directional Recurrent Networks



- Bidirectional models capture full left and right context: 'history' and 'future' for each x_i
- moderate increase in parameters (double); still linear-time computation

Variants: 'Deep' (Stacked) Recurrent Networks



How to use these architectures? See the (optional) sub-lecture 5.5.

References I



Elman, J. L. (1990).
Finding structure in time.
Cognitive science, 14(2):179–211.