

# Natural Language Processing

## Week 4: The Compression Journey

From Meaning to Numbers and Back Again

### Imagine You're Designing a Translation System

#### Your Challenge:

Translate this 40-word sentence into French:

*"The International Conference on Machine Learning, which is one of the premier venues for presenting research in machine learning and attracts submissions from researchers around the world, accepted our paper."*

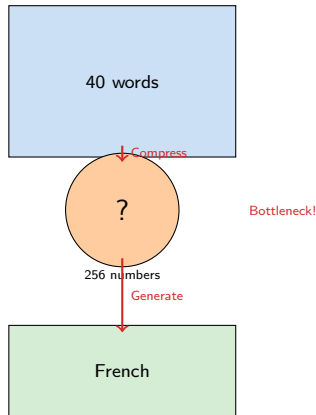
#### Design Constraints:

- 1 You can only write down 256 numbers total
- 2 These numbers must capture ALL the meaning
- 3 Then translate from just those 256 numbers
- 4 You cannot look back at the original!

**Question:** Can 256 numbers really hold 40 words of meaning?  
What happens to:

- "International" (important detail)
- "premier venues" (significance)
- "researchers around the world" (scale)

#### Your Design:



#### Think about it:

## By the end of this lecture, you will understand:

- ① Why we need numbers to represent words (from first principles)
- ② How compression creates an information bottleneck
- ③ What “context” and “hidden state” actually mean
- ④ How attention solves the compression problem
- ⑤ Why this matters for all modern NLP

## Prerequisites from Week 3:

- Basic understanding that neural networks process numbers
- Concept of sequential processing (RNN idea)
- Backpropagation intuition

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# The Core Problem: Computers Don't Understand Words

## Start with the fundamental challenge:

You want to translate: “The black cat sat on the mat” → French

## The Computer's Dilemma:

- Computer sees: ['T', 'h', 'e', ' ', 'b', 'l', 'a', 'c', 'k', ' ', 'c', 'a', 't', ' ', 's', 'a', 't', ' ', 'o', 'n', ' ', 't', 'h', 'e', ' ', 'm', 'a', 't']
- These are just character codes (bytes)
- **No meaning, no relationships, no structure**

## What the computer sees:

- “cat” = [99, 97, 116]
- “dog” = [100, 111, 103]
- “sat” = [115, 97, 116]

## Problem:

- “cat” and “sat” share [97, 116]
- Does that mean they're similar?
- **No! Character overlap  $\neq$  meaning**

**Key Question:** How do we give computers a “numerical understanding” of word meaning?

# From Words to Numbers: The Embedding Idea

**The solution:** Represent each word as a vector of numbers

**Build intuition with simple example:**

Imagine describing animals with just 3 properties:

- Size (0=tiny, 1=huge)
- Cuteness (0=scary, 1=adorable)
- Speed (0=slow, 1=fast)

Word	Size	Cute	Speed
cat	0.3	0.9	0.6
dog	0.5	0.8	0.5
mouse	0.1	0.7	0.8
elephant	0.95	0.4	0.2

Now computers can compute:

- Similarity: cat  $\approx$  dog (vectors are close)
- Difference: cat  $\neq$  elephant (vectors are far)
- **This is called a “word embedding”**

**Reality:** We use 100-300 dimensions (not just 3), learned from data

## Checkpoint: Understanding Embeddings

# What is a “Hidden State”? Building Intuition

**Now we have numbers for words. Next problem: Understanding sentences**

**Human analogy - Reading comprehension:**

As you read “The black cat sat on the mat”:

- ➊ After “The” → You know: article, something coming
- ➋ After “The black” → You know: a dark-colored thing
- ➌ After “The black cat” → You know: a specific animal
- ➍ After full sentence → You know: complete scene

**Your “understanding” evolves as you read!**

**Neural network equivalent:**

- Network maintains a vector that represents “current understanding”
- This vector updates with each new word
- **This evolving vector is called the “hidden state”**
- Final hidden state = complete understanding of sentence

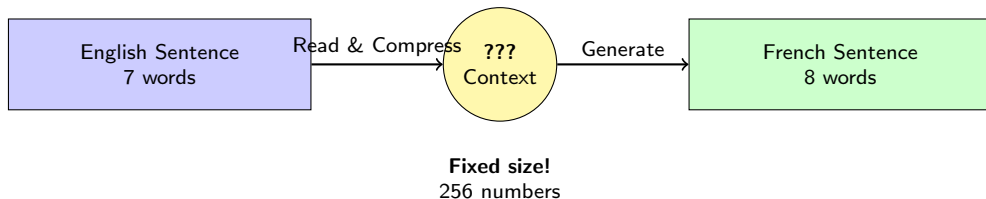
**Technical name:** When we update understanding word-by-word, we call this a “Recurrent Neural Network” (RNN from Week 3)

# The Compression Problem Emerges

Now the real challenge appears:

We need to translate: "The black cat sat on the mat" → "Le chat noir s'est assis sur le tapis"

**Two-stage process (like human translation):**



**The bottleneck:**

- 7 words of meaning → compressed to 256 numbers
- Then generate 8 words from just those 256 numbers
- **Can 256 numbers hold all the information?**

**Key Question:** What happens with longer sentences? 100 words → still 256 numbers?



## Quantifying the Compression Problem

Let's calculate how much compression we're doing:

Information content (rough estimate):

- Each word embedding: 100 dimensions (numbers)
- 7-word sentence:  $7 \times 100 = 700$  numbers of information
- Context vector: **only 256 numbers**
- **Compression ratio:  $700:256 \approx 2.7:1$**

What about longer sentences?

Length	Input Dims	Context Dims	Ratio	Quality
5 words	500	256	2:1	Good
20 words	2000	256	8:1	Mediocre
50 words	5000	256	20:1	Poor
100 words	10000	256	40:1	Very Poor

**The Information Bottleneck:** Longer sentences lose more information!  
Like trying to fit a whole book into a single paragraph - something must be lost.

**Next question:** Can we avoid this bottleneck? (Spoiler: Yes, with attention!)

# The Two-Network Architecture

**The key insight: Separate “reading” from “writing”**

**Why two networks? Build from human behavior:**

When YOU translate:

- ❶ **Phase 1 (Reading):** Read and understand the English sentence
  - Process word-by-word
  - Build complete understanding
  - Store meaning in your memory
- ❷ **Phase 2 (Writing):** Generate the French translation
  - Start from your understanding
  - Generate word-by-word in French
  - Use grammar and vocabulary of target language

**Neural equivalent:**

- **Encoder network:** Reads input, builds “hidden state” (understanding)
- **Context vector:** Final hidden state (compressed meaning)
- **Decoder network:** Generates output from context

**Technical names you now understand:**

- “Sequence-to-Sequence” (Seq2Seq) = this two-network setup
- “Encoder-Decoder architecture” = same thing

## Intuition: Why Two Networks?

Just like human translation: **FIRST** fully understand the source sentence (encoder). **THEN** generate the target (decoder).

# Encoder: Building Understanding Step-by-Step

## Concrete example: Encoding “The cat sat”

### Step-by-step processing:

#### Step 1: Read “The”

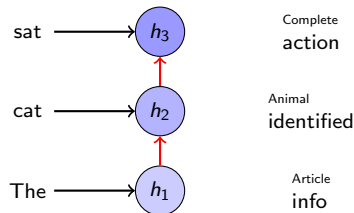
- Convert to embedding:  $[0.2, 0.5, -0.1, \dots]$  (100d)
- Initial understanding:  $h_0 = [0, 0, 0, \dots]$  (256d)
- Update:  $h_1 = \text{RNN}(\text{“The”}, h_0)$
- New understanding:  $[0.1, -0.05, 0.03, \dots]$  (256d)

#### Step 2: Read “cat”

- Embedding:  $[0.7, -0.3, 0.4, \dots]$  (100d)
- Previous understanding:  $h_1$
- Update:  $h_2 = \text{RNN}(\text{“cat”}, h_1)$
- New understanding:  $[0.3, 0.2, -0.1, \dots]$  (256d)

#### Step 3: Read “sat”

- Embedding:  $[-0.2, 0.6, 0.1, \dots]$
- Update:  $h_3 = \text{RNN}(\text{“sat”}, h_2)$
- **Final understanding:  $h_3 = \text{context vector}$**



### Key insight:

- Each  $h_t$  = accumulated understanding
- Always 256 dimensions
- Final  $h_3$  goes to decoder

# Decoder: Generating from Understanding

Now generate French from the context vector

Generation process:

Step 0: Start

- Input:  $iSTART_i$  token
- Context:  $c = h_3$  from encoder (256d)
- Generate:  $s_0 = \text{RNN}(iSTART_i, c)$
- Predict probabilities:  $P(\text{"Le"}) = 0.6, P(\text{"Un"}) = 0.3, \dots$
- **Choose "Le"**

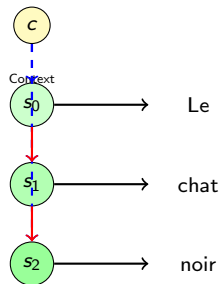
Step 1: Continue

- Input: "Le" (what we just generated)
- Context: still  $c$  (same context!)
- Generate:  $s_1 = \text{RNN}(\text{"Le"}, s_0, c)$
- Predict:  $P(\text{"chat"}) = 0.7, P(\text{"chien"}) = 0.2, \dots$
- **Choose "chat"**

Step 2: Continue until  $iEND_i$

- Input: "chat"
- Generate:  $s_2 = \text{RNN}(\text{"chat"}, s_1, c)$

(From Meaning to Numbers and Back Again)



Key observations:

- Context  $c$  used at every step
- Previous word fed back in
- Generate one word at a time
- Stop when  $iEND_i$  predicted

# The First Success: Short Sentences Work Great!

Initial results (5-10 word sentences):

English	French Translation	Result
The cat sat	Le chat s'est assis	Perfect!
I love you	Je t'aime	Perfect!
Hello world	Bonjour le monde	Perfect!
Good morning	Bonjour	Perfect!
See you later	A plus tard	Perfect!

Performance on short sentences:

- 5-10 words: **BLEU 35.2** (excellent quality)
- Captures meaning correctly
- Word order appropriate
- Grammar correct

**Breakthrough moment:** For the first time, neural networks can translate sentences end-to-end!  
No hand-crafted rules, no phrase tables - just learned from data.

**Key Question:** If it works so well for short sentences, what happens with long ones?

# The Failure Pattern Emerges

Testing with longer sentences reveals a problem:

Experimental results (Bahdanau et al., 2014):

Sentence Length	Compression Ratio	BLEU Score	Quality Drop
5-10 words	2:1	35.2	Baseline
10-20 words	5:1	28.5	-19%
20-30 words	10:1	18.7	-47%
30-40 words	15:1	12.4	-65%
40+ words	20:1	8.1	-77%
<i>Pattern: Quality drops as compression ratio increases</i>			

The trend is clear:

- Short sentences (< 10 words): Excellent
- Medium sentences (10-20 words): Good
- Long sentences (20-30 words): Poor
- Very long (30+ words): Terrible

**The Pattern:** Performance degrades predictably with sentence length!  
Something systematic is failing as inputs get longer.

## What gets lost in long sentences? Let's trace it:

### Input sentence (42 words):

*"The International Conference on Machine Learning, which is one of the premier venues for presenting research in machine learning and attracts submissions from researchers around the world, accepted our paper."*

### Compressed to 256 numbers...

#### What Survived:

- General topic: ML conference
- Sentiment: Positive
- Main fact: Paper accepted
- Basic structure: Conference does X

**Capacity used:** 200/256 numbers

#### What Got Lost:

- "International" modifier
- "premier venues" importance
- "researchers around the world" scale
- Exact conference name
- "submissions" detail

**Overflow:** 42 words → need 420 numbers, only have 256!

### Root cause analysis:

- Fixed 256-number container for ANY sentence length
- Information overflow gets discarded
- Network keeps only high-level summary
- Details necessarily lost

## Introspection exercise: How do YOU actually translate?

Translating: "The black cat sat on the mat" → "Le chat noir s'est assis sur le tapis"

### Honest observation:

- Writing "Le" → You look back at "The"
- Writing "chat" → You look back at "cat"
- Writing "noir" → You look back at "black"
- Writing "s'est assis" → You look back at "sat"
- Writing "sur" → You look back at "on"
- Writing "le" → You look back at "the"
- Writing "tapis" → You look back at "mat"

### Critical realization:

- You DON'T compress everything into one memory
- You keep the original English visible
- You **selectively attend** to relevant words
- Different output words need different input words

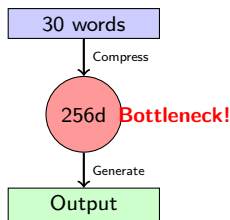
**Aha Moment:** Humans don't compress - they SELECT!



# The Attention Hypothesis

From compression to selection:

Old Way (Compression):



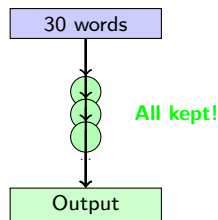
Problem:

- 30 words  $\rightarrow$  1 vector
- Information loss inevitable
- Same context for all outputs

**Key Insight:** Don't throw away information, just focus on what matters!

**Analogy:** Instead of summarizing a book, keep the full book and read relevant pages as needed.

New Way (Selection):



Solution:

- Keep ALL encoder states
- Select relevant ones per output
- Different context each time

# Attention = Weighted Relevance (Zero Jargon)

Breaking down “attention” into simple concepts:

Setup:

- 5 source words: [The, black, cat, sat, on]
- Generating French word “chat” (cat)
- Question: How relevant is each source word?

Intuitive relevance scores:

Word	Relevance	Why
The	5%	Generic article
black	15%	Describes cat
cat	70%	Direct match!
sat	5%	Action, not noun
on	5%	Preposition
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	Must sum to 1

What these percentages do:

Context for “chat” = weighted average:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 0.05 \times h_{\text{The}} \\ &+ 0.15 \times h_{\text{black}} \\ &+ 0.70 \times h_{\text{cat}} \\ &+ 0.05 \times h_{\text{sat}} \\ &+ 0.05 \times h_{\text{on}} \end{aligned}$$

**Result:** Context is *mostly* “cat” info, with a bit of everything else

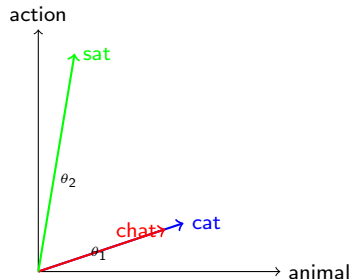
**These percentages ARE the attention weights!**

# Why Dot Product Measures Relevance

**Geometric intuition (building from 2D):**

**Question:** How does the network compute those relevance percentages?

**Vectors as arrows in space:**



**Properties of meaning:**

- “cat” = [0.8 animal, 0.2 action]
- “chat” = [0.7 animal, 0.2 action]
- “sat” = [0.2 animal, 0.9 action]

**Dot product measures alignment:**

**cat · chat:**

$$\begin{aligned} &= (0.8 \times 0.7) + (0.2 \times 0.2) \\ &= 0.56 + 0.04 = 0.60 \end{aligned}$$

**cat · sat:**

$$\begin{aligned} &= (0.8 \times 0.2) + (0.2 \times 0.9) \\ &= 0.16 + 0.18 = 0.34 \end{aligned}$$

**Mathematical property:**

- Aligned vectors → High value
- Perpendicular → Zero
- Opposite → Negative

**Higher dot product = more relevant!**

# The 3-Step Attention Mechanism

Now we can understand the full algorithm:

## Step 1: Score (Measure Relevance)

For each encoder state, compute dot product with decoder state:

$$score_i = h_{\text{decoder}} \cdot h_i^{\text{encoder}}$$

**Why?** Dot product = alignment = relevance (from previous slide)

## Step 2: Normalize (Make Probabilities)

Convert scores to weights that sum to 100%:

$$\alpha_i = \frac{\exp(score_i)}{\sum_j \exp(score_j)}$$

**Why?** Need weights for weighted average

**Tool:** Softmax function (ensures positive, sums to 1)

**Key Property:** Context is *dynamic* - recomputed for each output word with different weights!

## Step 3: Combine (Weighted Average)

Take weighted sum of encoder states:

$$context = \sum_i \alpha_i \cdot h_i^{\text{encoder}}$$

**Why?** Focus mostly on relevant, a bit on others

### Example weights:

- $\alpha_1$  (The) = 0.05
- $\alpha_2$  (black) = 0.15
- $\alpha_3$  (cat) = 0.70
- $\alpha_4$  (sat) = 0.05
- $\alpha_5$  (on) = 0.05

Context is mostly “cat”!

# Attention Calculation: Full Numerical Example

Let's trace generating "chat" with actual numbers:

Given:

- Decoder state:  $h_{\text{dec}} = [0.5, -0.2, 0.8]$
- Encoder states:  $h_1 = [0.1, 0.2, 0.1]$  (The),  $h_2 = [0.8, 0.1, 0.7]$  (cat),  $h_3 = [0.2, 0.3, 0.2]$  (sat)

**Step 1: Compute scores (dot products)**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{score}_1 &= [0.5, -0.2, 0.8] \cdot [0.1, 0.2, 0.1] \\ &= (0.5)(0.1) + (-0.2)(0.2) + (0.8)(0.1) \\ &= 0.05 - 0.04 + 0.08 = 0.09 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{score}_2 &= [0.5, -0.2, 0.8] \cdot [0.8, 0.1, 0.7] \\ &= (0.5)(0.8) + (-0.2)(0.1) + (0.8)(0.7) \\ &= 0.40 - 0.02 + 0.56 = 0.94 \leftarrow \text{Highest!} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{score}_3 &= [0.5, -0.2, 0.8] \cdot [0.2, 0.3, 0.2] \\ &= (0.5)(0.2) + (-0.2)(0.3) + (0.8)(0.2) \\ &= 0.10 - 0.06 + 0.16 = 0.20 \end{aligned}$$

**Step 2: Softmax to weights**

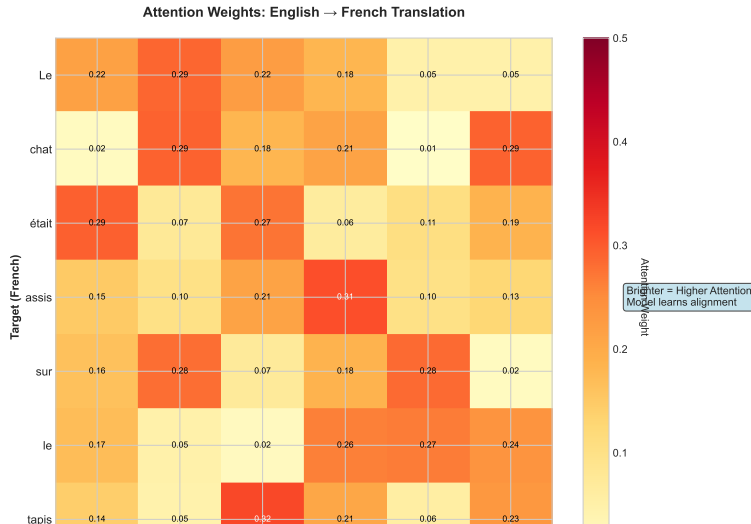
$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_1 &= \frac{e^{0.09}}{e^{0.09} + e^{0.94} + e^{0.20}} \\ &= \frac{1.09}{4.02} = 0.27 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_2 &= \frac{e^{0.94}}{4.02} \\ &= \frac{2.56}{4.02} = 0.63 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_3 &= \frac{e^{0.20}}{4.02} \\ &= \frac{1.22}{4.02} = 0.30 \end{aligned}$$

# Visualizing Attention: The Alignment Matrix

Attention weights reveal what the model is “looking at”:



# Why Attention Solves the Bottleneck

## Information capacity comparison:

### Without Attention:

- 30 words compressed to 256d vector
- Capacity: 256 numbers (fixed)
- 30 words = 3000 numbers needed
- **Overflow: 2744 numbers lost!**
- Same context for all outputs

### Information loss:

- 91% of information discarded
- Only high-level summary kept
- Details necessarily lost

### With Attention:

- Keep all 30 encoder states
- Capacity:  $30 \times 256 = 7680$  numbers
- All information preserved
- **Select relevant subset per output**
- Dynamic context each time

### Information preserved:

- 100% of information available
- Focus on relevant parts
- No forced compression

**The Key Insight:** Dynamic selection beats static compression!

Instead of “compress everything to 256 numbers”, use “keep everything, select as needed”

## Attention Results: The Vindication

Performance comparison validates the hypothesis:

Sentence Length	No Attention	With Attention	Improvement
5-10 words	35.2 BLEU	36.1 BLEU	+2.6%
10-20 words	28.5 BLEU	32.7 BLEU	+14.7%
20-30 words	18.7 BLEU	28.9 BLEU	+54.5%
30-40 words	12.4 BLEU	24.8 BLEU	+100%
40+ words	8.1 BLEU	24.3 BLEU	<b>+200%</b>

The pattern:

- Short sentences: Small improvement (bottleneck wasn't the problem)
- Medium sentences: Moderate improvement (bottleneck starts to matter)
- Long sentences: **Massive improvement** (bottleneck was killing performance)

**Validation:** Attention solves exactly the problem we diagnosed!  
Improvement is largest where bottleneck hurt most (long sentences).

**Historical Impact:** This 2015 paper (Bahdanau et al.) launched the attention revolution in NLP.



# Implementing Attention (Surprisingly Simple)

## The complete mechanism in code:

```
def attention(decoder_state, encoder_states):
    """
    decoder_state: [256] - current decoder hidden state
    encoder_states: [seq_len, 256] - all encoder states
    Returns: context [256], attention_weights [seq_len]
    """
    scores = []

    for enc_state in encoder_states:
        score = dot(decoder_state, enc_state)
        scores.append(score)

    scores = array(scores)

    exp_scores = exp(scores - max(scores))
    attention_weights = exp_scores / sum(exp_scores)

    context = zeros(256)
    for i, enc_state in enumerate(encoder_states):
        context += attention_weights[i] * enc_state

    return context, attention_weights
```

## Three operations:

- 1 **Lines 9-11:** Dot products (relevance scores)
- 2 **Lines 15-16:** Softmax (probabilities)
- 3 **Lines 18-20:** Weighted sum (dynamic context)

## That's it!

Just 3 operations:

- Dot product (similarity)
- Softmax (normalize)
- Weighted sum (combine)

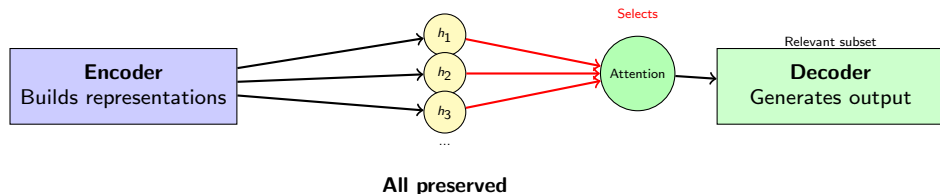
## Key difference:

Context recomputed EVERY step with different weights!

**Checkpoint:** Can you trace what happens when decoder generates “chat” with input “The cat sat”?

# The Three Key Ideas Combined

## Unified architecture diagram:



## The three innovations:

- ❶ **Two-stage architecture:** Separate reading (encoder) from writing (decoder)
  - Handles variable-length input and output
  - Mimics human translation process
- ❷ **Sequence-to-sequence:** No fixed input/output size
  - 3 words in  $\rightarrow$  2 words out (possible!)
  - 100 words in  $\rightarrow$  50 words out (possible!)
- ❸ **Attention mechanism:** Dynamic selection over static compression
  - Solves information bottleneck
  - Provides interpretability
  - Enables long-sentence translation

## Beyond seq2seq - general lessons:

- ❶ **Compression Trade-off:** Information capacity fundamentally limits performance
  - Can't fit arbitrary information into fixed size
  - Longer inputs → worse compression → lost details
  - Quantifiable: compression ratio predicts quality degradation
- ❷ **Selection & Compression:** For complex tasks, keep everything and select
  - Don't throw away information prematurely
  - Dynamic selection more flexible than static summary
  - "Soft" selection (weighted average) enables gradient flow
- ❸ **Learned Alignment:** Network discovers correspondences without supervision
  - Attention weights show word alignments
  - Model learns which source words matter for each output
  - Interpretable - we can visualize reasoning
- ❹ **Differentiable Operations:** All steps trainable via backpropagation
  - Score, softmax, weighted sum all have gradients
  - End-to-end learning of entire system
  - No hand-crafted alignment rules needed

## The attention explosion across AI:

### Language (Original):

- Machine translation (133 languages)
- Text summarization
- Question answering
- Dialogue systems

### Vision:

- Image captioning (attend to regions)
- Visual question answering
- Object detection
- Image generation (DALL-E)

### Historical timeline:

- 2014: Seq2seq (encoder-decoder)
- 2015: Attention mechanism (this lecture!)
- 2017: Transformers (“Attention is All You Need”)
- 2018+: BERT, GPT, current AI revolution

### Speech:

- Speech recognition (attend to audio frames)
- Speech synthesis
- Real-time translation

### Modern AI:

- **Transformers:** Pure attention (Week 5!)
- GPT-4, Claude, Gemini
- Multimodal models (CLIP)
- All modern LLMs use attention

**Attention is the foundation of all modern AI systems!**

# Summary: The Complete Compression Journey

## What you now understand from first principles:

- 1 **Why embeddings:** Computers need numbers, embeddings give numerical meaning
  - Similar words  $\rightarrow$  similar vectors
  - From bytes to meaning
- 2 **Why hidden states:** Capture evolving understanding as we read
  - Accumulates meaning word-by-word
  - Final state = complete sentence understanding
- 3 **Why encoder-decoder:** Separate reading from writing
  - Handles variable lengths
  - Mimics human translation
- 4 **Why context vectors:** Compress meaning, but creates bottleneck
  - Fixed size for any input
  - Information overflow gets lost
- 5 **Why attention:** Solve bottleneck by keeping all states and selecting
  - Dynamic selection beats compression
  - 200% improvement on long sentences
- 6 **Why dot product:** Geometric measure of relevance (vector alignment)
  - Similar directions  $\rightarrow$  high value
  - Differentiable for training

**Next week:** Remove encoder/decoder RNNs, use ONLY attention  $\rightarrow$  Transformers!

## Appendix A: Seq2Seq Mathematics - Complete Equations

### Encoder (RNN Processing):

At each time step  $t = 1, 2, \dots, T_x$ :

#### 1. Embedding lookup:

$$x_t = \text{Embed}(w_t) \in \mathbb{R}^{d_{\text{emb}}}$$

#### 2. Encoder hidden state:

$$h_t^{\text{enc}} = \text{RNN}_{\text{enc}}(x_t, h_{t-1}^{\text{enc}})$$

Explicitly:

$$h_t^{\text{enc}} = \tanh(W_x x_t + W_h h_{t-1}^{\text{enc}} + b_h)$$

where  $h_t^{\text{enc}} \in \mathbb{R}^{d_h}$  (typically 256-512d)

#### 3. Context vector:

$$c = h_{T_x}^{\text{enc}}$$

(Final encoder state = compressed meaning)

### Encoder Dimensions:

- Vocabulary:  $|V| = 10,000$  to  $50,000$
- Embedding:  $d_{\text{emb}} = 128$  to  $512$

(From Meaning to Numbers and Back Again)

### Decoder (Generation):

Initialize:  $s_0 = c$  (context from encoder)

At each generation step  $t = 1, 2, \dots, T_y$ :

#### 1. Decoder hidden state:

$$s_t = \text{RNN}_{\text{dec}}(y_{t-1}, s_{t-1}, c)$$

Explicitly:

$$s_t = \tanh(W_y y_{t-1} + W_s s_{t-1} + W_c c + b_s)$$

#### 2. Output distribution:

$$P(y_t \mid y_{<t}, x) = \text{softmax}(W_o s_t + b_o)$$

#### 3. Teacher forcing (training):

$$y_{t-1} = y_{t-1}^* \quad (\text{use true previous word})$$

#### 4. Loss function:

$$L = - \sum_{t=1}^{T_y} \log P(y_t^* \mid y_{<t}, x)$$

## Appendix B: Attention Mechanism - Mathematical Derivation

### The Attention Computation:

Given encoder hidden states  $\{h_1^{\text{enc}}, \dots, h_{T_x}^{\text{enc}}\}$  and decoder state  $s_t$ :

#### Step 1: Alignment Scores

Compute relevance of each encoder state:

$$e_{t,i} = \text{score}(s_t, h_i^{\text{enc}})$$

#### Common scoring functions:

*Dot product* (Luong attention):

$$e_{t,i} = s_t^T h_i^{\text{enc}}$$

*Additive* (Bahdanau attention):

$$e_{t,i} = v^T \tanh(W_s s_t + W_h h_i^{\text{enc}})$$

#### Step 2: Attention Weights

Normalize scores to probabilities:

$$\alpha_{t,i} = \frac{\exp(e_{t,i})}{\sum_{j=1}^{T_x} \exp(e_{t,j})}$$

### Step 3: Context Vector

Weighted sum of encoder states:

$$c_t = \sum_{i=1}^{T_x} \alpha_{t,i} h_i^{\text{enc}}$$

**Key property:** Context  $c_t$  is DYNAMIC - recomputed at each decoder step with different weights!

### Modified Decoder with Attention:

$$s_t = \text{RNN}_{\text{dec}}(y_{t-1}, s_{t-1}, c_t)$$

### Why Softmax?

- ① **Normalization:** Ensures weights sum to 1
- ② **Differentiability:** Smooth function for backprop
- ③ **Sparsity:** Exponentiation amplifies differences:

$$e_1 = 0.9, e_2 = 0.1 \rightarrow \alpha_1 = 0.64, \alpha_2 = 0.36$$

$$e_1 = 5.0, e_2 = 1.0 \rightarrow \alpha_1 = 0.98, \alpha_2 = 0.02$$

### Computational Complexity: