

ԵՐԵՎԱՆԻ ՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԱԼՍԱՐԱՆ

**ՄԱԹԵՄԱՏԻԿԱՅԻ ԵՎ ՄԵԽԱՆԻԿԱՅԻ
ՖԱԿՈՒԼՏԵՏ**

**ՀԱՎԱՆԱԿԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ՏԵՍՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԵՎ
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**ԱՌԿԱ ՈՒՍՈՒՅՄԱՆ ՄԱԳԻՍՏՐԱՏՈՒՐԱՅԻ
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ՄԱԳԻՍՏՐՈՍԱԿԱՆ ԹԵԶ

ԽՈՍՔԻ ԱՐԱԳՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԳՆԱՀԱՏՈՒՄ

**«Վիճակագրություն» մասնագիտությամբ
Վիճակագրության մագիստրոսի որակավորման
աստիճանի հայցման համար**

Ուսանող՝ _____

ստորագրություն

ազգանուն , անուն

Գիտական ղեկավար՝ _____

ստորագրություն

գիտ. աստիճան, կոչում, ազգանուն, անուն

«Թույլատրել պաշտպանության»

Ամբիոնի վարիչ՝ _____

ստորագրություն

գիտ. աստիճան, կոչում, ազգանուն, անուն

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Թեզի վերնագիրը

Հայերենով՝ Խոսքի արագության գնահատում

Ռուսերենով՝ Оценка скорости речи

Անգլերենով՝ Speaking Rate Estimation

Նպատակն ու ստացված արդյունքներ

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Abstract

Speaking rate is an important attribute of the speech signal which plays a crucial role in the performance of automatic speech processing systems. In this paper we address the problem of speaking rate estimation through two approaches: classification and regression. To tackle this problem, we implement two distinct architectures: BLSTM and MatchBoxNet, a convolution-based architecture. The BLSTM network takes raw waveform as input, while the MatchBoxNet utilises Mel-frequency cepstral coefficients (MFCC) as audio features. Our experimental findings indicated that MatchBoxNet significantly outperforms the traditional BLSTM solution. To train our model we used a dataset which we obtained from LibriSpeech ASR corpus. Additionally, we evaluated the generalizability of our model by testing its performance on the Common Voice corpora across five languages: Armenian, English, Italian, Spanish, and Russian. Our findings demonstrated the robustness and adaptability of our model across diverse linguistic contexts, showcasing its effectiveness in estimating speaking rate in different languages. Furthermore, we conducted a comparative analysis with the ASR-based approach using a small ASR model from NVIDIA's NeMo framework. Our comparison highlights the performance differences between our model and the ASR-based approach, providing insights into the efficacy of different methodologies for speaking rate estimation.

Index Terms: *speaking rate estimation, deep neural networks, convolutional neural network, depth-wise separable convolution, bidirectional long short-term memory network*

Chapter 1

Introduction

A. Significance

Speaking rate estimation is very important for speech understanding and speech recognition. Speaking rate has been shown to be useful in several applications including pronunciation assessment [2, 8], automatic speech recognition (ASR) [1], detection of dysarthria [11, 46], computer-assisted language learning (CALL) [2] and emotion recognition [7]. Apart from these, it has also played a role in problems including perception studies, age estimation etc.

Speaking rate is an important quantity in automatic speech recognition. Morgan et al. used the speech rate to improve the robustness of the Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) system as it gets adversely affected by the variations in speech rate [1]. Speech rate has also been used in the analysis of second language learners' fluency [2]. The speech rate variation helps in speech understanding by providing context information. Honig et al. used speech rate estimation for the appraisal of non-nativeness [3]. In [4], the authors studied the impact of the speech rate on the acoustic correlation of speech rhythm. For speaker recognition, Joseph et al. used speech rate as a distinctive characteristic between speakers [5]. Yannis et al. used the speech rate as one of the suprasegmental properties for speech modification [6]. In the emotion recognition system, speech rate variability is observed as one of the acoustic properties to distinguish between different emotions [7]. In speech therapy applications, speech rate was used to analyse the efficiency of the articulatory movements over time in dysarthric patients [9, 10].

B. General Measurement Methods

There have been two major trends in measuring speech rate. Each has its advantages and limitations.

- The first represents the use of discrete categorization— “fast,” “normal” and “slow”—to describe speech rate [14]. Even though it matches human intuition,

the boundaries between these three categories are fuzzy. Most of the time, human knowledge is required to set the boundaries, and hence it is difficult to devise a completely automated engineering solution.

- In the second approach, speech rate is measured in a quantitative way by counting the number of phonetic elements per second. Words, syllables [15], stressed syllables, and phonemes [16] are all possible candidates. In this paper, we have considered syllables as speech units similar to most of the research works [1, 12, 13].

C. The Two Solution Approaches to Speaking Rate Estimation

Speaking rate is typically estimated in two ways:

1. ASR-based approach [17]

This approach suffers from several limitations:

- the speaking rate can be estimated only when speech with reference transcription is available, which is not typically available for spontaneous speech
- not robust to noise
- computationally expensive

2. Direct acoustic feature-based approach [18, 19]

In the direct acoustic feature-based approach, the speaking rate is estimated using the features derived based on the acoustic properties of the vowels, which, in general, correspond to the syllable nuclei. This approach is computationally less expensive as compared to the ASR-based approach

In this paper, we propose two distinct solutions to address the problem: classification and regression. For our experiments, we use two architectures: BLSTM, which takes raw waveforms as input, and MatchBoxNet, a convolution-based architecture that receives MFCC features as input. In our proposed approaches, the models are designed to estimate the number of syllables in speech. To determine the speaking rate during inference, we calculate it by dividing the syllable count by the length of the audio, resulting in the estimation of speaking rate as syllables per second. After identifying the best-performing model, we assess its generalizability across five languages and

compare its results with those of an ASR-based approach using NVIDIA NeMo's small models. The rest of the paper is organised as follows:

Chapter 2

Previous work

Several works in the past have dealt with the problem of speech rate estimation. Most of these are Hidden Markov Model (HMM)-based and acoustic feature-based methods. The HMM-based methods use an ASR system to obtain the syllable boundaries which are used to compute the speech rate. The HMM-based methods use an ASR system to obtain the syllable boundaries which are used to compute the speech rate. But the HMM-ASR based methods are not robust to noise and they need a reference transcription which is not typically available for spontaneous speech [13]. In such cases, the speech rate is estimated using only the acoustic features of speech data. A Gaussian mixture model-based method was proposed for classification of speech rate into slow, medium and fast classes and these class probabilities were used to determine the speech rate [20].

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Aparna Srinivasan, Diviya Singh, Chiranjeevi Yarra, Aravind Illa, and Prasanta Kumar Ghosh (2021, dec.). A Robust Speaking Rate Estimator Using a CNN-BLSTM Network. *Circuits Systems and Signal Processing*, 40(1).
doi: 10.1007/s00034-021-01754-1

