

## Chapter 7

# Classification: Basic Concepts

Classification is a form of data analysis that extracts models describing important data classes.

Such models, called classifiers, predict categorical (discrete, unordered) class labels. For example, we can build a classification model to categorize bank loan applications as either safe or risky, or identify the early sign of cognitive impairment based on a patient's functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scan, or help a self-driving car automatically recognize various road signs. Such analysis can help provide us with a better understanding of the data at large. Many classification methods have been proposed by researchers in machine learning, pattern recognition, and statistics. Traditional classification algorithms typically assume a small or medium data size. Modern classification techniques have built on such work, developing scalable classification and prediction techniques capable of handling very large amounts of data. Classification belongs to supervised learning and is closely connected to many other data mining tasks. Classification has numerous applications, including fraud detection, target marketing, performance prediction, manufacturing, medical diagnosis, and many more.

We start off by introducing the main ideas of classification in Section 7.1. In the rest of this chapter, you will learn the basic techniques for data classification such as how to build decision tree classifiers (Section 7.2), Bayesian classifiers (Section 7.3), lazy learners (Section 7.4), and linear classifiers (Section 7.5). Section 7.6 discusses how to evaluate and compare different classifiers. Various measures of accuracy are given as well as techniques for obtaining reliable accuracy estimates. Methods for increasing classifier accuracy are presented in Section 7.7, including ensemble methods and class-imbalanced data (i.e., where the main class of interest is rare).

## 7.1 Basic Concepts

We introduce the concept of classification in Section 7.1.1. Section 7.1.2 describes the general approach to classification as a two-step process. In the first step, we build a classification model based on previous data. In the second step, we determine if the model’s accuracy is acceptable, and if so, we use the model to classify new data.

### 7.1.1 What Is Classification?

A bank loans officer needs analysis of her data to learn which loan applicants are “safe” and which are “risky” for the bank, and her colleague from the risk management department wishes to detect fraudulent transactions. A marketing manager at *AllElectronics* needs data analysis to help guess whether a customer with a given profile will buy a new computer, or understand the *sentiment* of social media posts regarding a newly released product, or detect *fake reviews* about a new product from an online review site, or identify a subscribed customer who is likely to switch to a competitive electronics store (i.e., churn prediction). An IT security analyst wants to know if the network system is under attack (intrusion detection) or if a given application is contaminated with malware (malware detection). A teacher wishes to know if a student enrolled in an online course will drop out before she completes the course. A talent recruiter wants to know if an individual is looking for the next career move. A medical researcher wants to analyze breast cancer data to predict which one of three specific treatments a patient should receive, a cardiologist wants to identify the patient who is likely to have a congestive heart failure based on her chronic medical history, a neuroscientist wants to identify the early sign of cognitive impairment (which could lead to, say Alzheimer’s Disease.) based on a patient’s functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scan. An intelligent question-answering system needs to understand what type of question the user is asking (question classification), as the first step to automatically provide a high-quality answer. A self-driving car needs to automatically recognize various road signs (e.g., ‘stop’, ‘detour’, etc.). A physicist needs to identify *high energy event* from massive experiment data, which might lead to new discoveries. Law enforcement wishes to predict the crime hot spot so that the precaution measures can be taken proactively.

In each of these examples, the data analysis task is **classification**, where a model or **classifier** is constructed to predict *class (categorical) labels*, such as “safe” or “risky” for the loan application data; or “positive” or “negative” for sentiment classification; or “yes” or “no” for the marketing data; or “dropout” or “stay” for online course enrollment, or “treatment A” “treatment B” or “treatment C” for the medical data; or various question types for a question-answering system. These categories can be represented by discrete values, where the ordering among values has no meaning. For example, the values 1, 2, and 3 may be used to represent treatments A, B, and C, where there is no ordering implied among this group of treatment regimes.

Suppose that the marketing manager wants to predict how much a given cus-

tomers will spend during a sale at *AllElectronics*; or a realtor might be interested in knowing the average house pricing of the next year in different residential areas; or a career planner wants to forecast the average yearly income of students immediately after graduating from the college in different majors. This kind of data analysis task is examples of **numeric prediction**, where the model constructed predicts a *continuous-valued function*, or *ordered value*, as opposed to a class label. **Regression analysis** is a statistical methodology that is most often used for numeric prediction; hence the two terms tend to be used synonymously, although other methods for numeric prediction exist. **Ranking** is another type of numerical prediction where the model predicts the ordered values (i.e. ranks). For example, a web search engine (e.g., Google) ranks the relevant webpages with respect to a given query, with the higher-ranked webpages being more relevant to the query. Classification and numeric prediction are the two major types of **prediction problems**. This chapter primarily focuses on classification. It is worth pointing out that classification and numerical prediction (e.g., regression) are closely related with each other. Many classification techniques can be modified for the purpose of regression. We will see some examples, including regression trees (Sections 7.2), lazy learners (Section 7.4.1), linear regression (Section 7.5), and gradient tree boosting (Section 7.7.1).

### 7.1.2 General Approach to Classification

“How does classification work?” **Data classification** is a two-step process, consisting of a *learning step* (where a classification model is constructed) and a *classification step* (where the model is used to predict class labels for given data). The process is shown for the loan application data in Figure 7.1. The data are simplified for illustrative purposes. In reality, we may expect many more attributes to be considered.

In the first step, a classifier is built describing a predetermined set of data classes or concepts. This is the **learning step** (also known as the training phase), where a classification algorithm builds the classifier by analyzing or “learning from” a **training set** made up of database tuples and their associated class labels. A tuple,  $\mathbf{X}$ , is represented by an  $n$ -dimensional **attribute vector**,  $\mathbf{X} = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$ , depicting  $n$  measurements made on the tuple from  $n$  database attributes, respectively,  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ .<sup>1</sup> Each tuple,  $\mathbf{X}$ , is assumed to belong to a predefined class as determined by another database attribute called the **class label attribute**. The class label attribute is discrete-valued and unordered. It is *categorical* (or nominal) in that each value serves as a category or class. The individual tuples making up the training set are referred to as **training tuples** and are randomly sampled from the database under analysis. In the context of classification, data tuples can be referred to as *samples*, *examples*, *instances*, *data points*, or *objects*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Each attribute represents a “feature” of  $\mathbf{X}$ . Hence, the pattern recognition literature uses the term *feature vector* rather than *attribute vector*. In our discussion, we use these two terms interchangeably. In our notation, any variable representing a vector is typically shown in bold italic font; measurements depicting the vector are shown in italic font (e.g.,  $\mathbf{X} = (x_1, x_2, x_3)$ ).

<sup>2</sup>In the machine learning literature, training tuples are commonly referred to as *training samples*. Throughout this text, we prefer to use the term *tuples* instead of *samples*.

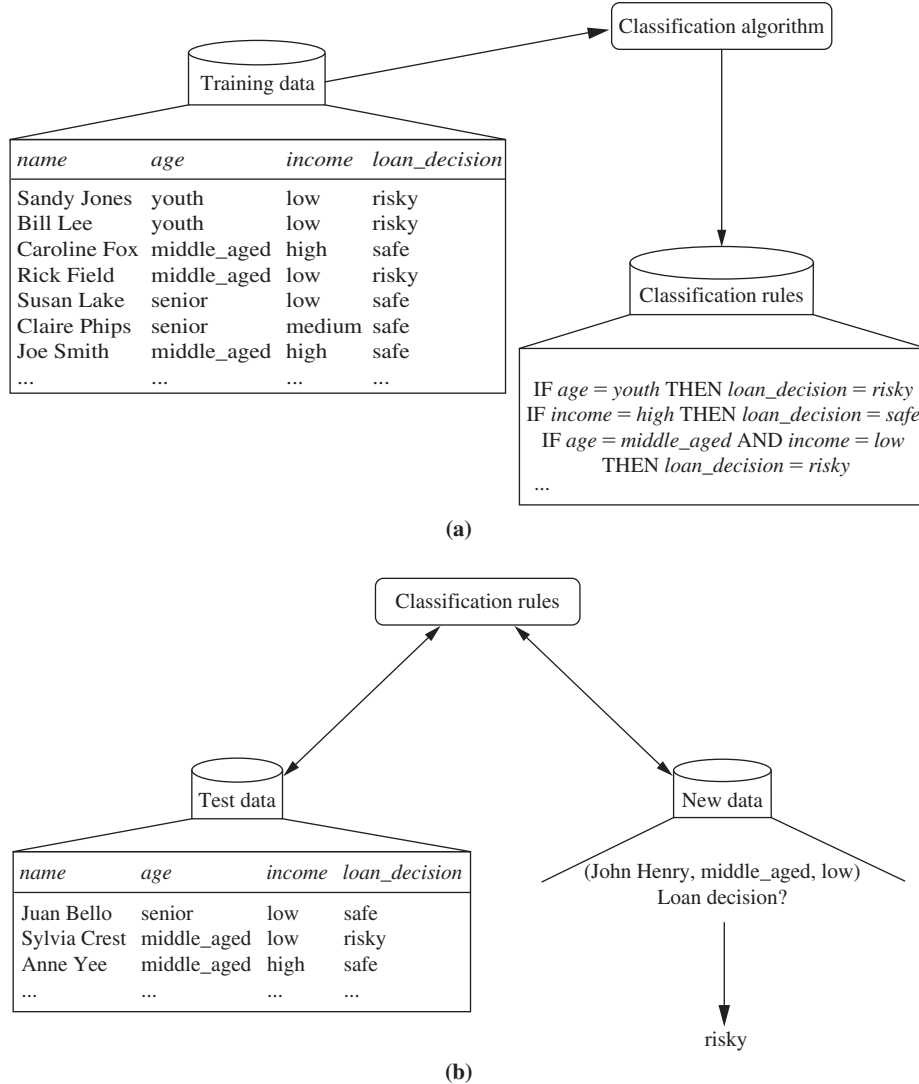


Figure 7.1: The data classification process: (a) *Learning*: Training data are analyzed by a classification algorithm. Here, the class label attribute is *loan\_decision*, and the learned model or classifier is represented in the form of classification rules. (b) *Classification*: Test data are used to estimate the accuracy of the classification rules. If the accuracy is acceptable, the rules can be applied to the classification of new data tuples.

Because the class label of each training tuple *is provided*, this step belongs to **supervised learning** (i.e., the learning of the classifier is “supervised” in that it is told to which class each training tuple belongs). The scope of supervised learning is larger than classification, and it broadly encompasses learning methods for training a numerical prediction model (e.g., regression, ranking) if the true target values of training tuples are known during the learning step. Supervised learning contrasts with **unsupervised learning** (e.g., **clustering**), in which the true target value (e.g., class label) of each training tuple is not known, and the number or set of classes to be learned may not be known in advance. For example, if we did not have the *loan\_decision* data available for the training set, we could use clustering to try to determine “groups of like tuples” which may correspond to risk groups within the loan application data. Likewise, we could use clustering techniques to find social media posts sharing similar topics without knowing their actual class labels. Clustering is the topic of Chapters 9 and 10. The landscape of the prediction problem (e.g., classification, regression, ranking) has gone beyond supervised vs. unsupervised learning. To name a few, in **semi-supervised classification**, it builds a classifier based on a limited number of labelled training tuples (whose true class labels are given during training) and a large number of unlabelled training tuples (whose class labels are unknown during training); in **zero-shot learning**, some class label might appear *after* the classification model has been built. In other words, during the training phase, there is no (i.e., zero) labelled training tuples for such a class label. Both semi-supervised learning and zero-shot learning belong to **weakly supervised learning** in that the supervision information for training the model is weaker than the standard supervised learning. For the classification task, this means that the supervision (i.e., the true class labels of training tuples) is known only for a small fraction of the entire training set in semi-supervised learning; or is absent for certain class label(s) in zero-shot learning. *Classification with weak supervision* will be introduced in Chapter 8.

The first step of the classification process can also be viewed as the learning of a mapping or function,  $y = f(\mathbf{X})$ , that can predict the associated class label  $y$  of a given tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ . In this view, we wish to learn a mapping or function that separates the data classes. Typically, this mapping is represented in the form of classification rules, decision trees, or mathematical formulae. In our example, the mapping is represented as classification rules that identify loan applications as being either safe or risky (Figure 7.1(a)). The rules can be used to categorize future data tuples, as well as provide deeper insight into the data contents. They also provide a compressed data representation.

“*What about classification accuracy?*” In the second step (Figure 7.1(b)), the model is used for classification. First, the predictive accuracy of the classifier is estimated. If we were to use the training set to measure the classifier’s accuracy, this estimate would likely be too optimistic, because the classifier tends to **overfit** the data (i.e., during learning it may incorporate some particular anomalies of the training data that do not represent the general data set.). Therefore, a **test set** is used, made up of **test tuples** and their associated class labels. They are independent of the training tuples, meaning that they were not used to construct the classifier.

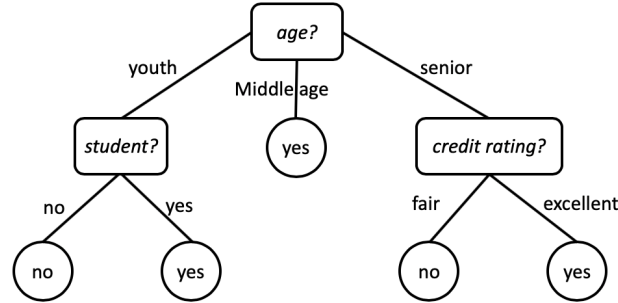


Figure 7.2: A decision tree for the concept *buys\_computer*, indicating whether an *AllElectronics* customer is likely to purchase a computer. Each internal (nonleaf) node represents a test on an attribute. Each leaf node represents a class (either *buys\_computer* = *yes* or *buys\_computer* = *no*).

The **accuracy** of a classifier on a given test set is the percentage of test tuples that are correctly classified by the classifier. The associated class label of each test tuple is compared with the learned classifier’s class prediction for that tuple. Section 7.6 describes several methods for estimating classifier accuracy. If the accuracy of the classifier is considered acceptable, the classifier can be used to classify future data tuples for which the class label is not known. Such data are also referred to in the machine learning literature as “unknown” or “previously unseen” data. For example, the classification rules learned in Figure 7.1(a) from the analysis of data from previous loan applications can be used to approve or reject new or future loan applicants.

## 7.2 Decision Tree Induction

**Decision tree induction** is the learning of decision trees from class-labeled training tuples. A **decision tree** is a flowchart-like tree structure, where each **internal node** (nonleaf node) denotes a test on an attribute, each **branch** represents an outcome of the test, and each **leaf node** (or *terminal node*) holds a class label. The topmost node in a tree is the **root** node. A typical decision tree is shown in Figure 7.2. It represents the concept *buys\_computer*, that is, it predicts whether a customer at *AllElectronics* is likely to purchase a computer. Internal nodes are denoted by rectangles, and leaf nodes are denoted by ovals (or circles). Some decision tree algorithms produce only *binary* trees (where each internal node branches to exactly two other nodes), whereas others can produce nonbinary trees.

“How are decision trees used for classification?” Given a tuple,  $\mathbf{X}$ , for which the associated class label is unknown, the attribute values of the tuple are tested against the decision tree. A path is traced from the root to a leaf node, which holds the class prediction for that tuple. Decision trees can easily be converted to

classification rules.

“*Why are decision tree classifiers so popular?*” The construction of decision tree classifiers does not require any domain knowledge or parameter setting, and therefore is appropriate for exploratory knowledge discovery. Decision trees can handle multidimensional data. Their representation of acquired knowledge in tree form is intuitive and generally easy to assimilate by humans. The learning and classification steps of decision tree induction are simple and fast. In general, decision tree classifiers have good accuracy. However, successful use may depend on the data at hand. Decision tree induction algorithms have been used for classification in many application areas such as medicine, manufacturing and production, financial analysis, astronomy, and molecular biology. Decision trees are the basis of several commercial rule induction systems.

In Section 7.2.1, we describe a basic algorithm for learning decision trees. During tree construction, *attribute selection measures* are used to select the attribute that best partitions the tuples into distinct classes. Popular measures of attribute selection are given in Section 7.2.2. When decision trees are built, many of the branches may reflect noise or outliers in the training data. *Tree pruning* attempts to identify and remove such branches, with the goal of improving classification accuracy on unseen data. Tree pruning is described in Section 7.2.3.

### 7.2.1 Decision Tree Induction

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, J. Ross Quinlan, a researcher in machine learning, developed a decision tree algorithm known as **ID3** (Iterative Dichotomiser). This work expanded on earlier work on *concept learning systems*, described by E. B. Hunt, J. Marin, and P. T. Stone. Quinlan later presented **C4.5** (a successor of ID3), which became a benchmark to which newer supervised learning algorithms are often compared. In 1984, a group of statisticians (L. Breiman, J. Friedman, R. Olshen, and C. Stone) published the book *Classification and Regression Trees (CART)*, which described the generation of binary decision trees. ID3 and CART were invented independent of one another at around the same time, yet follow a similar approach for learning decision trees from training tuples. These two cornerstone algorithms spawned a flurry of work on decision tree induction.

ID3, C4.5, and CART adopt a greedy (i.e., nonbacktracking) approach in which decision trees are constructed in a top-down recursive divide-and-conquer manner. Most algorithms for decision tree induction also follow a top-down approach, which starts with a training set of tuples and their associated class labels. The training set is recursively partitioned into smaller subsets as the tree is being built. A basic decision tree algorithm is summarized in Figure 7.3. At first glance, the algorithm may appear long, but fear not! It is quite straightforward. The strategy is as follows.

- The algorithm is called with three parameters: *D*, *attribute.list*, and *Attribute.selection.method*. *D* is a data partition. Initially, it is the complete set of training tuples and their associated class labels. The parameter *attribute.list* is a list of attributes describing the tuples. *Attribute.selection.method*

**Algorithm: Generate\_decision\_tree.** Generate a decision tree from the training tuples of data partition,  $D$ .

**Input:**

- Data partition,  $D$ , which is a set of training tuples and their associated class labels;
- $attribute\_list$ , the set of candidate attributes;
- $Attribute\_selection\_method$ , a procedure to determine the splitting criterion that “best” partitions the data tuples into individual classes. This criterion consists of a  $splitting\_attribute$  and, possibly, either a  $split\_point$  or  $splitting\_subset$ .

**Output:** A decision tree.

**Method:**

- (1) create a node  $N$ ;
- (2) **if** tuples in  $D$  are all of the same class,  $C$ , **then**
- (3)     return  $N$  as a leaf node labeled with the class  $C$ ;
- (4) **if**  $attribute\_list$  is empty **then**
- (5)     return  $N$  as a leaf node labeled with the majority class in  $D$ ; // majority voting
- (6) apply **Attribute\_selection\_method**( $D$ ,  $attribute\_list$ ) to **find** the “best”  $splitting\_criterion$ ;
- (7) label node  $N$  with  $splitting\_criterion$ ;
- (8) **if**  $splitting\_attribute$  is discrete-valued **and**
- multiway splits allowed **then** // not restricted to binary trees
- (9)      $attribute\_list \leftarrow attribute\_list - splitting\_attribute$ ; // remove  $splitting\_attribute$
- (10) **for each** outcome  $j$  of  $splitting\_criterion$
- // partition the tuples and grow subtrees for each partition
- (11)     let  $D_j$  be the set of data tuples in  $D$  satisfying outcome  $j$ ; // a partition
- (12)     **if**  $D_j$  is empty **then**
- (13)         attach a leaf labeled with the majority class in  $D$  to node  $N$ ;
- (14)     **else** attach the node returned by **Generate\_decision\_tree**( $D_j$ ,  $attribute\_list$ ) to node  $N$ ;
- endfor**
- (15) return  $N$ .

Figure 7.3: Basic algorithm for inducing a decision tree from training tuples.



specifies a heuristic procedure for selecting the attribute that “best” discriminates the given tuples according to class. This procedure employs an attribute selection measure such as information gain or the Gini impurity (We will introduce these measures in the next subsection). Whether the tree is strictly binary is generally driven by the attribute selection measure. Some attribute selection measures, such as the Gini impurity, enforce the resulting tree to be binary. Others, like information gain, do not, therein allowing multiway splits (i.e., two or more branches to be grown from a node).

- The tree starts as a single node,  $N$ , representing the training tuples in  $D$  (step 1).<sup>3</sup>
- If the tuples in  $D$  are all of the same class, then node  $N$  becomes a leaf and is labeled with that class (steps 2 and 3). Note that steps 4 and 5 are terminating conditions. All terminating conditions are explained at the end of the algorithm.
- Otherwise, the algorithm calls *Attribute\_selection\_method* to determine the **splitting criterion**. The splitting criterion tells us which attribute to test at node  $N$  by determining the “best” way to separate or partition the tuples in  $D$  into individual classes (step 6). The splitting criterion also tells us which branches to grow from node  $N$  with respect to the outcomes of the chosen test. More specifically, the splitting criterion indicates the **splitting attribute** and may also indicate either a **split-point** or a **splitting subset**. The splitting criterion is determined so that, ideally, the resulting partitions at each branch are as “pure” as possible. A partition is **pure** if all the tuples in it belong to the same class. In other words, if we split up the tuples in  $D$  according to the mutually exclusive outcomes of the splitting criterion, we hope for the resulting partitions to be as pure as possible.
- The node  $N$  is labeled with the splitting criterion, which serves as a test at the node (step 7). A branch is grown from node  $N$  for each of the outcomes of the splitting criterion. The tuples in  $D$  are partitioned accordingly (steps 10 to 11). There are three possible scenarios, as illustrated in Figure 7.4. Let  $A$  be the splitting attribute.  $A$  has  $v$  distinct values,  $\{a_1, a_2, \dots, a_v\}$ , based on the training data.
  1.  *$A$  is discrete-valued:* In this case, the outcomes of the test at node  $N$  directly correspond to the known values of  $A$ . A branch is created for each known value,  $a_j$ , of  $A$  and labeled with that value (Figure 7.4(a)). Partition  $D_j$  is the subset of class-labeled tuples in  $D$  having value  $a_j$  of  $A$ . Because all the tuples in a given partition have the same value for

---

<sup>3</sup>The partition of class-labeled training tuples at node  $N$  is the set of tuples that follow a path from the root of the tree to node  $N$  when being processed by the tree. This set is sometimes referred to in the literature as the *family* of tuples at node  $N$ . We have referred to this set as the “tuples represented at node  $N$ ,” “the tuples that reach node  $N$ ,” or simply “the tuples at node  $N$ .” Rather than storing the actual tuples at a node, most implementations store pointers to these tuples.

$A$ ,  $A$  does not need to be considered in any future partitioning of the tuples. Therefore, it is removed from *attribute\_list* (steps 8 and 9).

2. *A is continuous-valued*: In this case, the test at node  $N$  has two possible outcomes, corresponding to the conditions  $A \leq \textit{split\_point}$  and  $A > \textit{split\_point}$ , respectively, where *split\_point* is the split-point returned by *Attribute\_selection\_method* as part of the splitting criterion. (In practice, the split-point,  $a$ , is often taken as the midpoint of two known adjacent values of  $A$  and therefore may not actually be a preexisting value of  $A$  from the training data.) Two branches are grown from  $N$  and labeled according to the previous outcomes (Figure 7.4(b)). The tuples are partitioned such that  $D_1$  holds the subset of class-labeled tuples in  $D$  for which  $A \leq \textit{split\_point}$ , while  $D_2$  holds the rest.
3. *A is discrete-valued* and a *binary tree* must be produced (as dictated by the attribute selection measure or algorithm being used): The test at node  $N$  is of the form “ $A \in S_A?$ ,” where  $S_A$  is the splitting subset

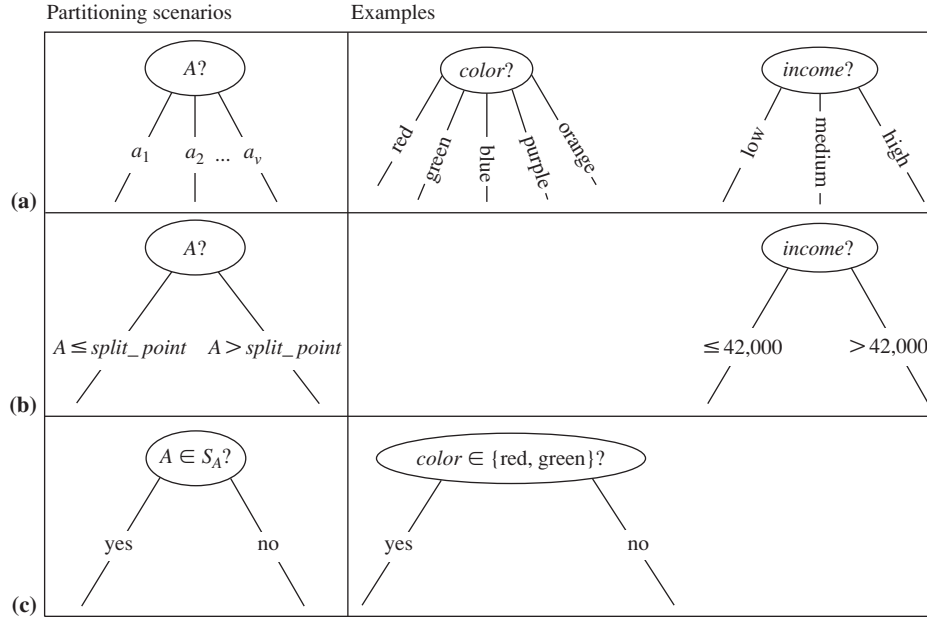


Figure 7.4: This figure shows three possibilities for partitioning tuples based on the splitting criterion, each with examples. Let  $A$  be the splitting attribute. (a) If  $A$  is discrete-valued, then one branch is grown for each known value of  $A$ . (b) If  $A$  is continuous-valued, then two branches are grown, corresponding to  $A \leq \textit{split\_point}$  and  $A > \textit{split\_point}$ . (c) If  $A$  is discrete-valued and a binary tree must be produced, then the test is of the form  $A \in S_A$ , where  $S_A$  is the splitting subset for  $A$ .

for  $A$ , returned by *Attribute\_selection\_method* as part of the splitting criterion. It is a subset of the known values of  $A$ . If a given tuple has value  $a_j$  of  $A$ , and if  $a_j \in S_A$ , then the test at node  $N$  is satisfied. Two branches are grown from  $N$  (Figure 7.4(c)). By convention, the left branch out of  $N$  is labeled *yes* so that  $D_1$  corresponds to the subset of class-labeled tuples in  $D$  that satisfy the test. The right branch out of  $N$  is labeled *no* so that  $D_2$  corresponds to the subset of class-labeled tuples from  $D$  that do not satisfy the test.

- The algorithm uses the same process recursively to form a decision tree for the tuples at each resulting partition,  $D_j$ , of  $D$  (step 14).
- The recursive partitioning stops only when any one of the following terminating conditions is true:
  1. All the tuples in partition  $D$  (represented at node  $N$ ) belong to the same class (steps 2 and 3).
  2. There are no remaining attributes on which the tuples may be further partitioned (step 4). In this case, **majority voting** is employed (step 5). This involves converting node  $N$  into a leaf and labeling it with the most common class in  $D$ . Alternatively, the class distribution of the node tuples may be stored.
  3. There are no tuples for a given branch, that is, a partition  $D_j$  is empty (step 12). In this case, a leaf is created with the majority class in  $D$  (step 13).
- The resulting decision tree is returned (step 15).

The computational complexity of the algorithm given training set  $D$  is  $O(n \times |D| \times \log(|D|))$ , where  $n$  is the number of attributes describing the tuples in  $D$  and  $|D|$  is the number of training tuples in  $D$ . This means that the computational cost of growing a tree grows at most  $n \times |D| \times \log(|D|)$  with  $|D|$  tuples. The proof is left as an exercise for the reader.

**Incremental** versions of decision tree induction have also been proposed. When given new training data, it restructures the decision tree acquired from learning on previous training data, rather than relearning a new tree from scratch.

Differences in decision tree algorithms include how the attributes are selected in creating the tree (Section 7.2.2) and the mechanisms used for pruning (Section 7.2.3).

Decision tree is closely related to another type of tree, called **regression tree**, which is used to predict the continuous output value. A regression tree is very similar to a decision tree in that it also partitions the entire attribute space into multiple sub-regions, each corresponding to a leaf node. The main difference is as follows. In a regression tree, a leaf node holds a *continuous value* instead of a categorical value (i.e., class label) in a decision tree. The continuous value of a leaf node is learned during the training phase, which is set as the average output value

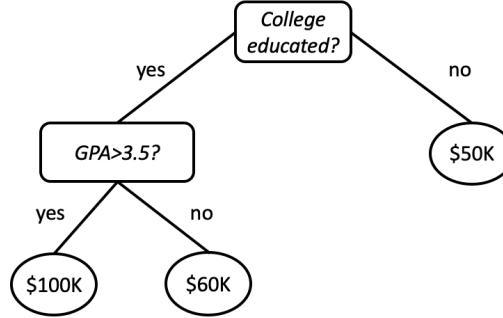


Figure 7.5: A regression tree for predicting the average yearly income based on an individual’s education. The values of the three leaf nodes are calculated as follows. \$50K is the average yearly income of all training individuals who do not have a college degree; \$60K is the average yearly income of all training individuals who have a college degree with a GPA less than or equal to 3.5; and \$100K is the average yearly income of all training individuals who have a college degree with a GPA higher than 3.5. The leaf node values (\$50K, \$60K, and \$100K) are used to predict the yearly income of any test individual who falls into the corresponding leaf nodes.

of all training tuples fallen in the corresponding sub-regions. CART uses **residual sum of squares** (RSS) as the objective function, which is the sum of the squared difference between the actual and predicted output values of training tuples

$$\text{RSS} = \sum_i (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2, \quad (7.1)$$

where  $y_i$  is the actual output value of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  training tuple, and  $\hat{y}_i$  is the predicted output by the regression tree. Choosing the average output of all training tuples in the corresponding sub-region is optimal in that it minimizes the RSS in Eq. (7.1). Each leaf node value is then used to predict the output of a test tuple which falls into it. Figure 7.5 presents an example of a regression tree for predicting the average yearly income based on an individual’s education (e.g., whether or not the individual attended the college, the average GPA at college, etc.).

### 7.2.2 Attribute Selection Measures

An **attribute selection measure** is a heuristic for selecting the splitting criterion that “best” separates a given data partition,  $D$ , of class-labeled training tuples into individual classes. If we were to split  $D$  into smaller partitions according to the outcomes of the splitting criterion, ideally, each partition would be pure (i.e., all the tuples that fall into a given partition would belong to the same class). Conceptually, the “best” splitting criterion is the one that most closely results in such a scenario. Attribute selection measures are also known as **splitting rules** because they determine how the tuples at a given node are to be split.

The attribute selection measure provides a ranking for each attribute describing the given training tuples. The attribute having the best score for the measure<sup>4</sup> is chosen as the *splitting attribute* for the given tuples. If the splitting attribute is continuous-valued or if we are restricted to binary trees, then, respectively, either a *split point* or a *splitting subset* must also be determined as part of the splitting criterion. The tree node created for partition  $D$  is labeled with the splitting criterion, branches are grown for each outcome of the criterion, and the tuples are partitioned accordingly. This section describes three popular attribute selection measures—*information gain*, *gain ratio*, and *Gini impurity*.

The notation used herein is as follows. Let  $D$ , the data partition, be a training set of class-labeled tuples. Suppose the class label attribute has  $m$  distinct values defining  $m$  distinct classes,  $C_i$  (for  $i = 1, \dots, m$ ). Let  $C_{i,D}$  be the set of tuples of class  $C_i$  in  $D$ . Let  $|D|$  and  $|C_{i,D}|$  denote the number of tuples in  $D$  and  $C_{i,D}$ , respectively.

### Information Gain

ID3 uses **information gain** as its attribute selection measure. This measure is based on pioneering work by Claude Shannon on information theory, which studied the value or “information content” of messages. Let node  $N$  represent or hold the tuples of partition  $D$ . The attribute with the highest information gain is chosen as the splitting attribute for node  $N$ . This attribute minimizes the information needed to classify the tuples in the resulting partitions and reflects the least randomness or “impurity” in these partitions. Such an approach minimizes the expected number of tests needed to classify a given tuple and guarantees that a simple (but not necessarily the simplest) tree is found.

The expected information needed to classify a tuple in  $D$  is given by

$$Info(D) = - \sum_{i=1}^m p_i \log_2(p_i), \quad (7.2)$$

where  $p_i$  is the nonzero probability that an arbitrary tuple in  $D$  belongs to class  $C_i$  and is estimated by  $|C_{i,D}|/|D|$ . A log function to the base 2 is used, because the information is encoded in bits.  $Info(D)$  is just the average amount of information needed to identify the class label of a tuple in  $D$ . Note that, at this point, the information we have is based solely on the proportions of tuples of each class.  $Info(D)$  is also known as the **entropy** of  $D$ .

Now, suppose we were to partition the tuples in  $D$  on some attribute  $A$  having  $v$  distinct values,  $\{a_1, a_2, \dots, a_v\}$ , as observed from the training data. If  $A$  is discrete-valued, these values correspond directly to the  $v$  outcomes of a test on  $A$ . Attribute  $A$  can be used to split  $D$  into  $v$  partitions or subsets,  $\{D_1, D_2, \dots, D_v\}$ , where  $D_j$  contains those tuples in  $D$  that have outcome  $a_j$  of  $A$ . These partitions would correspond to the branches grown from node  $N$ . Ideally, we would like this partitioning to produce an exact classification of the tuples. That is, we would like for each partition to be pure. However, it is quite likely that the partitions will be

<sup>4</sup>Depending on the measure, either the highest or lowest score is chosen as the best (i.e., some measures strive to maximize while others strive to minimize).

Table 7.1: Class-Labeled Training Tuples from the *AllElectronics* Customer Database

<i>RID</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>income</i>	<i>student</i>	<i>credit_rating</i>	<i>Class: buys_computer</i>
1	youth	high	no	fair	no
2	youth	high	no	excellent	no
3	middle_aged	high	no	fair	yes
4	senior	medium	no	fair	yes
5	senior	low	yes	fair	yes
6	senior	low	yes	excellent	no
7	middle_aged	low	yes	excellent	yes
8	youth	medium	no	fair	no
9	youth	low	yes	fair	yes
10	senior	medium	yes	fair	yes
11	youth	medium	yes	excellent	yes
12	middle_aged	medium	no	excellent	yes
13	middle_aged	high	yes	fair	yes
14	senior	medium	no	excellent	no

impure (e.g., where a partition may contain a collection of tuples from different classes rather than from a single class).

How much more information would we still need (after the partitioning) to arrive at an exact classification? This amount is measured by

$$Info_A(D) = \sum_{j=1}^v \frac{|D_j|}{|D|} \times Info(D_j). \quad (7.3)$$

The term  $\frac{|D_j|}{|D|}$  acts as the weight of the  $j$ th partition.  $Info_A(D)$  is the expected information required to classify a tuple from  $D$  based on the partitioning by  $A$ . The smaller the expected information (still) required, the greater the purity of the partitions.  $Info_A(D)$  is also known as the conditional entropy of  $D$  (conditioned on the attribute  $A$ ).

Information gain is defined as the difference between the original information requirement (i.e., based on just the proportion of classes) and the new requirement (i.e., obtained after partitioning on  $A$ ). That is,

$$Gain(A) = Info(D) - Info_A(D). \quad (7.4)$$

In other words,  $Gain(A)$  tells us how much would be gained by branching on  $A$ . It is the expected reduction in the information requirement caused by knowing the value of  $A$ . The attribute  $A$  with the highest information gain,  $Gain(A)$ , is chosen as the splitting attribute at node  $N$ . This is equivalent to saying that we want to partition on the attribute  $A$  that would do the “best classification,” so that the amount of information still required to finish classifying the tuples is minimal (i.e., minimum  $Info_A(D)$ ).

**Example 7.2.1 Induction of a decision tree using information gain.** Table 7.1 presents a training set,  $D$ , of class-labeled tuples randomly selected from the *AllElectronics* customer database. (The data are adapted from Quinlan [Qui86]. In this example, each attribute is discrete-valued. Continuous-valued attributes have been generalized.) The class label attribute, *buys\_computer*, has two distinct values (namely,  $\{yes, no\}$ ); therefore, there are two distinct classes (i.e.,  $m = 2$ ). Let class  $C_1$  correspond to *yes* and class  $C_2$  correspond to *no*. There are nine tuples of class *yes* and five tuples of class *no*. A (root) node  $N$  is created for the tuples in  $D$ . To find the splitting criterion for these tuples, we must compute the information gain of each attribute. We first use Eq. (7.2) to compute the expected information needed to classify a tuple in  $D$ :

$$Info(D) = -\frac{9}{14} \log_2 \left( \frac{9}{14} \right) - \frac{5}{14} \log_2 \left( \frac{5}{14} \right) = 0.940 \text{ bits.}$$

Next, we need to compute the expected information requirement for each attribute. Let's start with the attribute *age*. We need to look at the distribution of *yes* and *no* tuples for each category of *age*. For the *age* category "youth" there are two *yes* tuples and three *no* tuples. For the category "middle\_aged" there are four *yes* tuples and zero *no* tuples. For the category "senior" there are three *yes* tuples and two *no* tuples. Using Eq. (7.3), the expected information needed to classify a tuple in  $D$  if the tuples are partitioned according to *age* is

$$\begin{aligned} Info_{age}(D) &= \frac{5}{14} \times \left( -\frac{2}{5} \log_2 \frac{2}{5} - \frac{3}{5} \log_2 \frac{3}{5} \right) \\ &\quad + \frac{4}{14} \times \left( -\frac{4}{4} \log_2 \frac{4}{4} \right) \\ &\quad + \frac{5}{14} \times \left( -\frac{3}{5} \log_2 \frac{3}{5} - \frac{2}{5} \log_2 \frac{2}{5} \right) \\ &= 0.694 \text{ bits.} \end{aligned}$$

Hence, the gain in information from such partitioning would be

$$Gain(age) = Info(D) - Info_{age}(D) = 0.940 - 0.694 = 0.246 \text{ bits.}$$

Similarly, we can compute  $Gain(income) = 0.029$  bits,  $Gain(student) = 0.151$  bits, and  $Gain(credit\_rating) = 0.048$  bits. Because *age* has the highest information gain among the attributes, it is selected as the splitting attribute. Node  $N$  is labeled with *age*, and branches are grown for each of the attribute's values. The tuples are then partitioned accordingly, as shown in Figure 7.6. Notice that the tuples falling into the partition for *age* = *middle\_aged* all belong to the same class. Because they all belong to class "yes", a leaf should therefore be created at the end of this branch and labeled "yes". The final decision tree returned by the algorithm was shown earlier in Figure 7.2.

"But how can we compute the information gain of an attribute that is continuous-valued, unlike in the example?" Suppose, instead, that we have an attribute  $A$  that

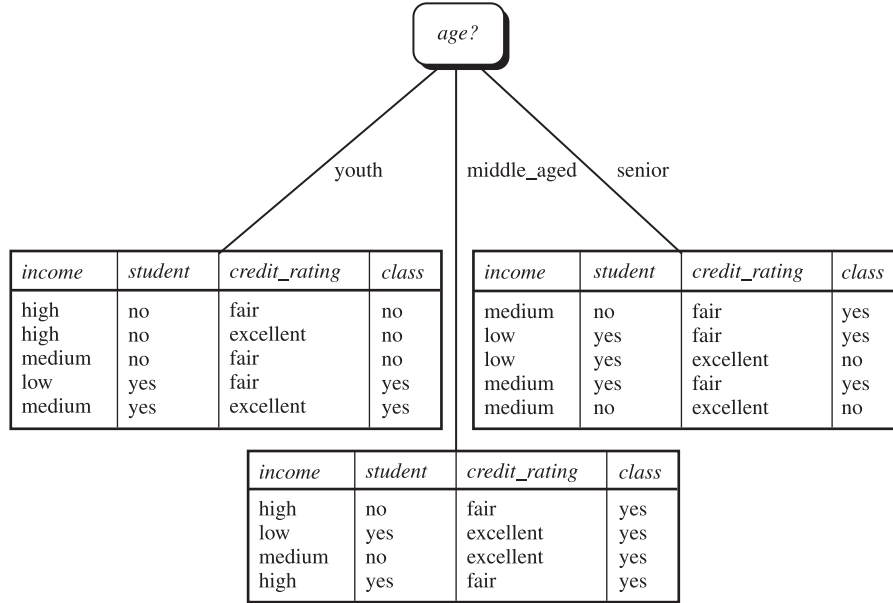


Figure 7.6: The attribute *age* has the highest information gain and therefore becomes the splitting attribute at the root node of the decision tree. Branches are grown for each outcome of *age*. The tuples are shown partitioned accordingly.

is continuous-valued rather than discrete-valued. (For example, suppose that instead of the discretized version of *age* from the example, we have the raw values for this attribute.) For such a scenario, we must determine the “best” **split-point** for *A*, where the split-point is a threshold on *A*.

We first sort the values of *A* in the increasing order. Typically, the midpoint between each pair of adjacent values is considered as a possible split-point. Therefore, given  $v$  values of *A*,  $(v - 1)$  possible splits are evaluated. For example, the midpoint between the values  $a_i$  and  $a_{i+1}$  of *A* is

$$\frac{a_i + a_{i+1}}{2}. \quad (7.5)$$

If the values of *A* are sorted in advance, then determining the best split for *A* requires only one pass through the values. For each possible split-point for *A*, we evaluate  $Info_A(D)$ , where the number of partitions is two, that is,  $v = 2$  (or  $j = 1, 2$ ) in Eq. (7.3). The point with the minimum expected information requirement for *A* is selected as the *split-point* for *A*.  $D_1$  is the set of tuples in *D* satisfying  $A \leq \text{split-point}$ , and  $D_2$  is the set of tuples in *D* satisfying  $A > \text{split-point}$ .

### Gain Ratio

The information gain measure is biased toward tests with many outcomes. That is, it prefers to select attributes having a large number of values. For example,



consider an attribute that acts as a unique identifier, such as *product\_ID*. A split on *product\_ID* would result in a large number of partitions (as many as there are values), each one containing just one tuple. Because each partition is pure, the information required to classify data set  $D$  based on this partitioning would be  $Info_{product\_ID}(D) = 0$ . Therefore, the information gained by partitioning on this attribute is maximal. Clearly, such a partitioning is useless for classification.

C4.5, a successor of ID3, uses an extension to information gain known as *gain ratio*, which attempts to overcome this bias. It applies a kind of normalization to information gain using a “split information” value defined analogously with  $Info(D)$  as

$$SplitInfo_A(D) = - \sum_{j=1}^v \frac{|D_j|}{|D|} \times \log_2 \left( \frac{|D_j|}{|D|} \right). \quad (7.6)$$

This value represents the potential information generated by splitting the training data set,  $D$ , into  $v$  partitions, corresponding to the  $v$  outcomes of a test on attribute  $A$ . Note that, for each outcome, it considers the number of tuples having that outcome with respect to the total number of tuples in  $D$ . It differs from information gain, which measures the information with respect to classification that is acquired based on the same partitioning. The gain ratio is defined as

$$GainRatio(A) = \frac{Gain(A)}{SplitInfo_A(D)}. \quad (7.7)$$

The attribute with the maximum gain ratio is selected as the splitting attribute. Note, however, that as the split information approaches 0, the ratio becomes unstable. A constraint is added to avoid this, whereby the information gain of the test selected must be large—at least as great as the average gain over all tests examined.

**Example 7.2.2 Computation of gain ratio for the attribute *income*.** A test on *income* splits the data of Table 7.1 into three partitions, namely *low*, *medium*, and *high*, containing four, six, and four tuples, respectively. To compute the gain ratio of *income*, we first use Eq. (7.6) to obtain

$$\begin{aligned} SplitInfo_{income}(D) &= -\frac{4}{14} \times \log_2 \left( \frac{4}{14} \right) - \frac{6}{14} \times \log_2 \left( \frac{6}{14} \right) - \frac{4}{14} \times \log_2 \left( \frac{4}{14} \right) \\ &= 1.557. \end{aligned}$$

From Example 7.2.1, we have  $Gain(income) = 0.029$ . Therefore,  $GainRatio(income) = 0.029/1.557 = 0.019$ .

### Gini Impurity

The Gini impurity (or Gini in short) is used in CART. Using the notation previously described, the Gini measures the impurity of  $D$ , a data partition or set of

training tuples, as

$$Gini(D) = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^m p_i^2, \quad (7.8)$$

where  $p_i$  is the probability that a tuple in  $D$  belongs to class  $C_i$  and is estimated by  $|C_{i,D}|/|D|$ . The sum is computed over  $m$  classes.

The Gini impurity considers a binary split for each attribute. Let's first consider the case where  $A$  is a discrete-valued attribute having  $v$  distinct values,  $\{a_1, a_2, \dots, a_v\}$ , occurring in  $D$ . To determine the best binary split on  $A$ , we examine all the possible subsets that can be formed using known values of  $A$ . Each subset,  $S_A$ , can be considered as a binary test for attribute  $A$  of the form " $A \in S_A$ ?" Given a tuple, this test is satisfied if the value of  $A$  for the tuple is among the values listed in  $S_A$ . If  $A$  has  $v$  possible values, then there are  $2^v$  possible subsets. For example, if *income* has three possible values, namely  $\{low, medium, high\}$ , then the possible subsets are  $\{low, medium, high\}$ ,  $\{low, medium\}$ ,  $\{low, high\}$ ,  $\{medium, high\}$ ,  $\{low\}$ ,  $\{medium\}$ ,  $\{high\}$ , and  $\{\}$ . We exclude the power set,  $\{low, medium, high\}$ , and the empty set from consideration since, conceptually, they do not represent a split. Therefore, there are  $(2^v - 2)/2$  possible ways to form two partitions of the data,  $D$ , based on a binary split on  $A$ .

When considering a binary split, we compute a weighted sum of the impurity of each resulting partition. For example, if a binary split on  $A$  partitions  $D$  into  $D_1$  and  $D_2$ , the Gini impurity of  $D$  given that partitioning is

$$Gini_A(D) = \frac{|D_1|}{|D|} Gini(D_1) + \frac{|D_2|}{|D|} Gini(D_2). \quad (7.9)$$

For each attribute, each of the possible binary splits is considered. For a discrete-valued attribute, the subset that gives the minimum Gini impurity for that attribute is selected as its splitting subset.

For continuous-valued attributes, each possible split-point must be considered. The strategy is similar to that described earlier for information gain, where the midpoint between each pair of (sorted) adjacent values is taken as a possible split-point. The point giving the minimum Gini impurity for a given (continuous-valued) attribute is taken as the split-point of that attribute. Recall that for a possible split-point of  $A$ ,  $D_1$  is the set of tuples in  $D$  satisfying  $A \leq \text{split\_point}$ , and  $D_2$  is the set of tuples in  $D$  satisfying  $A > \text{split\_point}$ .

The reduction in impurity that would be incurred by a binary split on a discrete- or continuous-valued attribute  $A$  is

$$\Delta Gini(A) = Gini(D) - Gini_A(D). \quad (7.10)$$

The attribute that maximizes the reduction in impurity (or, equivalently, has the minimum Gini impurity) is selected as the splitting attribute. This attribute and either its splitting subset (for a discrete-valued splitting attribute) or split-point (for a continuous-valued splitting attribute) together form the splitting criterion.

**Example 7.2.3 Induction of a decision tree using the Gini impurity.** Let  $D$  be the training data shown earlier in Table 7.1, where there are nine tuples belonging to the class *buys\_computer* = *yes* and the remaining five tuples belong to

the class *buys\_computer* = *no*. A (root) node *N* is created for the tuples in *D*. We first use Eq. (7.8) for the Gini impurity to compute the impurity of *D*:

$$\text{Gini}(D) = 1 - \left(\frac{9}{14}\right)^2 - \left(\frac{5}{14}\right)^2 = 0.459.$$

To find the splitting criterion for the tuples in *D*, we need to compute the Gini impurity for each attribute. Let's start with the attribute *income* and consider each of the possible splitting subsets. Consider the subset {*low*, *medium*}. This would result in 10 tuples in partition *D*<sub>1</sub> satisfying the condition "*income* ∈ {*low*, *medium*}." The remaining four tuples of *D* would be assigned to partition *D*<sub>2</sub>. The Gini impurity value computed based on this partitioning is

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Gini}_{\text{income} \in \{\text{low}, \text{medium}\}}(D) &= \frac{10}{14} \text{Gini}(D_1) + \frac{4}{14} \text{Gini}(D_2) \\ &= \frac{10}{14} \left(1 - \left(\frac{7}{10}\right)^2 - \left(\frac{3}{10}\right)^2\right) + \frac{4}{14} \left(1 - \left(\frac{2}{4}\right)^2 - \left(\frac{2}{4}\right)^2\right) \\ &= 0.443 \\ &= \text{Gini}_{\text{income} \in \{\text{high}\}}(D). \end{aligned}$$

Similarly, the Gini impurity values for splits on the remaining subsets are 0.458 (for the subsets {*low*, *high*} and {*medium*}) and 0.450 (for the subsets {*medium*, *high*} and {*low*}). Therefore, the best binary split for attribute *income* is on {*low*, *medium*} (or {*high*}) because it minimizes the Gini impurity. Evaluating *age*, we obtain {*youth*, *senior*} (or {*middle\_aged*}) as the best split for *age* with a Gini impurity of 0.375; the attributes *student* and *credit\_rating* are both binary, with Gini impurity values of 0.367 and 0.429, respectively.

The attribute *age* and splitting subset {*youth*, *senior*} therefore give the minimum Gini impurity overall, with a reduction in impurity of  $0.459 - 0.357 = 0.102$ . The binary split "*age* ∈ {*youth*, *senior*}?" results in the maximum reduction in impurity of the tuples in *D* and is returned as the splitting criterion. Node *N* is labeled with the criterion, two branches are grown from it, and the tuples are partitioned accordingly.

"So, what is the relationship between Gini impurity and information gain?" Intuitively, both measures aim to quantify to what extent the impurity will be reduced if we split the current node based on the given attribute. Information gain, rooted in information theory, measures the impurity based on (the change of) the average amount of information needed to identify the class label of a tuple. Gini impurity is related to *mis-classification* in the following way. Based on the class label distribution in the current node, it tells how likely a randomly chosen tuple will be mis-classified if it is assigned to a random class label. Gini impurity is always used for binary split, whereas information gain allows multi-way split. In terms of computation, Gini impurity is slightly more efficient than information gain, since the latter involves the logarithm computation. In practice, however, both measures often lead to very similar decision trees.

Table 7.2: Training data for regression. Given 5 training tuples at a regression tree node, each with a true output value  $y_i$  and a continuous attribute  $x_i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, 5$ ). We want to find the best splitting point for attribute  $x_i$  to split the tree node into two nodes (left node and right node).

attribute $x_i$	1	2	3	4	5
output $y_i$	10	12	8	20	22

Table 7.3: Using RSS to choose the best splitting point for data tuples in Table 7.2.

candidate splitting point $x_i$	1.5	2.5	3.5	4.5
predicted value of left leaf node $y_l$	10	11	10	12.5
predicted value of right leaf node $y_r$	15.5	16.7	21	22
RSS	131	116.67	10	83

### Other Attribute Selection Measures

This section on attribute selection measures was not intended to be exhaustive. We have shown three measures that are commonly used for building decision trees. These measures are not without their biases. Information gain, as we saw, is biased toward multivalued attributes. Although the gain ratio adjusts for this bias, it tends to prefer unbalanced splits in which one partition is much smaller than the others. The Gini impurity is biased toward multivalued attributes and has difficulty when the number of classes is large. It also tends to favor tests that result in equal-size partitions and purity in both partitions. Although biased, these measures give reasonably good results in practice.

Many other attribute selection measures have been proposed. CHAID, a decision tree algorithm that is popular in marketing, uses an attribute selection measure that is based on the statistical  $\chi^2$  test for independence. Other measures include C-SEP (which performs better than information gain and Gini impurity in certain cases) and G-statistic (an information theoretic measure that is a close approximation to  $\chi^2$  distribution).

For regression tree, it is natural to use RSS (Eq. (7.1)) as the splitting criteria. That is, the best splitting point for a given attribute is the one that leads the smallest RSS. We choose the attribute with the minimum RSS to split the tree node into two nodes, including left leaf node and right leaf node.

**Example 7.2.4** Let us look at an example in Table 7.2 on how to use RSS to find the best splitting point. Suppose there are 5 training tuples at a regression tree node, and each training tuple has a true output value  $y_i$  and a continuous attribute  $x_i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, 5$ ). We want to find the best splitting point for attribute  $x_i$  to split the tree node into two leaf nodes. More specifically, all the tuples whose  $x_i$  is less than or equal to the split point will go to the left leaf node, and the remaining training tuples will go to the right leaf node.

Since  $x_i$  is a continuous attribute with five possible values, there are 4 candidate splitting points, including  $x_i = 1.5$ ,  $x_i = 2.5$ ,  $x_i = 3.5$  and  $x_i = 4.5$ . For each

candidate splitting point, we partition the current tree node into two leaf nodes. The average output value  $y_l$  of the training tuples in the left leaf node is used to predict the output of all tuples residing in the left leaf node. Likewise, the average output value  $y_r$  of the training tuples in the right leaf node is used to predict the output of all tuples residing in the right leaf node. For example, if the split point  $x_i = 1.5$ , only the first training tuple goes to the left leaf node, and we have that  $y_l = y_1 = 10$ ; and  $y_r = (y_2 + y_3 + y_4 + y_5)/4 = (12 + 8 + 20 + 22)/4 = 15.5$ . Using the predicted output values for all five training tuples ( $y_l$  or  $y_r$ ), we can use Eq. (7.1) to calculate RSS. Again, if the split point  $x_i = 1.5$ , we have that  $\text{RSS} = \sum_{i=1}^5 (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2 = (y_1 - y_l)^2 + (y_2 - y_r)^2 + (y_3 - y_r)^2 + (y_4 - y_r)^2 + (y_5 - y_r)^2 = 122.25$ . The computation results for all four possible splitting points are summarized in Table 7.3. Since  $x_i = 3.5$  has the smallest RSS, it is chosen as the splitting point.

Attribute selection measures based on the **Minimum Description Length (MDL)** principle have the least bias toward multivalued attributes. MDL-based measures use encoding techniques to define the “best” decision tree as the one that requires the fewest number of bits to both (1) encode the tree and (2) encode the exceptions to the tree (i.e., cases that are not correctly classified by the tree). Its main idea is that the simplest solution is preferred. The philosophy underlying the MDL principle is **Occam’s razor**, also known as *law of parsimony*. In data mining and machine learning, Occam’s razor is often translated into a design principle that one should favor a model with shorter description (hence minimum description length) for the data over a lengthier model, provided that everything else is equal (e.g., both shorter and lengthier models share the same training set errors).

Other attribute selection measures consider **multivariate splits** (i.e., where the partitioning of tuples is based on a *combination* of attributes, rather than on a single attribute). The CART system, for example, can find multivariate splits based on a linear combination of attributes. Multivariate splits are a form of **attribute** (or feature) **construction**, where new attributes are created based on the existing ones. (Attribute construction was also discussed in Chapter 3 as a form of data transformation.) These other measures mentioned here are beyond the scope of this book. Additional references are given in the bibliographic notes at the end of this chapter (Section 7.10).

“Which attribute selection measure is the best?” All measures have some bias. It has been shown that the time complexity of decision tree induction generally increases exponentially with tree height. Hence, measures that tend to produce shallower trees (e.g., with multiway rather than binary splits, and that favor more balanced splits) may be preferred. However, some studies have found that shallow trees tend to have a large number of leaves and higher error rates. Despite several comparative studies, no single attribute selection measure has been found to be significantly superior to others. Most measures give quite good results.

### 7.2.3 Tree Pruning

When a decision tree is built, many of the branches will reflect anomalies in the training data due to noise or outliers. Tree pruning methods address this problem of *overfitting* the data. Such methods typically use statistical measures to remove

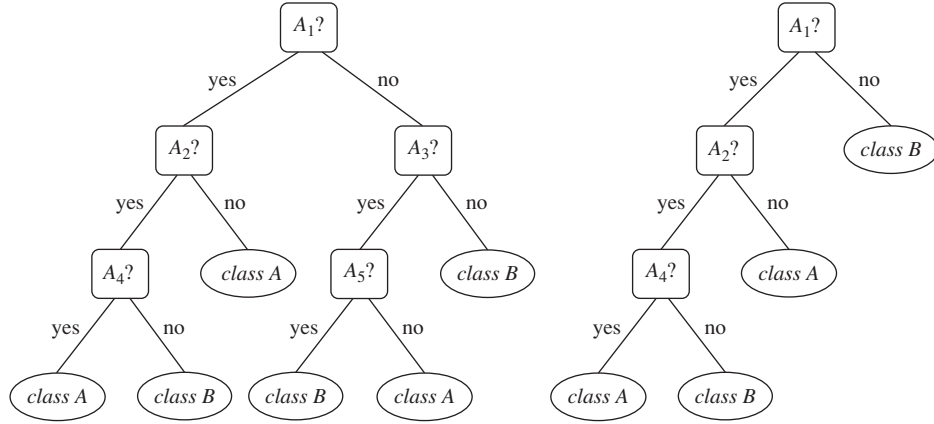


Figure 7.7: An unpruned decision tree (left) and a pruned version of it (right).

the least-reliable branches. An unpruned tree and a pruned version of it are shown in Figure 7.7. Pruned trees tend to be smaller and less complex and, thus, easier to comprehend. They are usually faster and better at correctly classifying independent test data (i.e., of previously unseen tuples) than unpruned trees.

*“How does tree pruning work?”* There are two common approaches to tree pruning: *prepruning* and *postpruning*.

In the **prepruning** approach, a tree is “pruned” by halting its construction early (e.g., by deciding not to further split or partition the subset of training tuples at a given node). Upon halting, the node becomes a leaf. The leaf may hold the most frequent class label among the subset tuples or the probability distribution of the class labels of those tuples.

When constructing a tree, measures such as statistical significance, information gain, Gini impurity, and so on, can be used to assess the goodness of a split. If partitioning the tuples at a node would result in a split that falls below a pre-specified threshold, then further partitioning of the given subset is halted. There are difficulties, however, in choosing an appropriate threshold. High thresholds could result in oversimplified trees, whereas low thresholds could result in very little simplification.

The second and more common approach is **postpruning**, which removes subtrees from a “fully grown” tree. A subtree at a given node is pruned by removing its branches and replacing it with a leaf. The leaf is labeled with the most frequent class label among the subtree being replaced. For example, notice the subtree at node “ $A_3?$ ” in the unpruned tree of Figure 7.7. Suppose that the most common class within this subtree is “class B.” In the pruned version of the tree, the subtree in question is pruned by replacing it with the leaf “class B.”

The **cost complexity** pruning algorithm used in CART is an example of the postpruning approach. This approach considers the cost complexity of a tree to be a function of the number of leaves in the tree and the error rate of the tree (where the **error rate** is the percentage of tuples misclassified by the tree). It starts from

the bottom of the tree. For each internal node,  $N$ , it computes the cost complexity of the subtree at  $N$ , and the cost complexity of the subtree at  $N$  if it were to be pruned (i.e., replaced by a leaf node). The two values are compared. If pruning the subtree at node  $N$  would result in a smaller cost complexity, then the subtree is pruned; otherwise, it is kept.

A **pruning set** of class-labeled tuples is used to estimate the cost complexity. This set is independent (1) of the training set used to build the unpruned tree and (2) of any test set used for accuracy estimation. The algorithm generates a set of progressively pruned trees. In general, the smallest decision tree that minimizes the cost complexity is preferred.

C4.5 uses a method called **pessimistic pruning**, which is similar to the cost complexity method in that it also uses error rate estimates to make decisions regarding subtree pruning. Pessimistic pruning, however, does not require the use of a pruning set. Instead, it uses the training set to estimate error rates. Recall that an estimate of accuracy or error based on the training set is overly optimistic and, therefore, strongly biased. The pessimistic pruning method, therefore, adjusts the error rates obtained from the training set by adding a penalty, so as to counter the bias incurred.

Rather than pruning trees based on estimated error rates, we can prune trees based on the number of bits required to encode them. The “best” pruned tree is the one that minimizes the number of encoding bits. This method adopts the MDL principle, which was briefly introduced in Section 7.2.2. The basic idea is that the simplest solution is preferred. Unlike cost complexity pruning, it does not require an independent set of tuples (i.e., the pruning set).

Alternatively, prepruning and postpruning may be interleaved for a combined approach. Postpruning requires more computation than prepruning, yet generally leads to a more reliable tree. No single pruning method has been found to be superior over all others. Although some pruning methods do depend on the availability of additional data for pruning, this is usually not a concern when dealing with large databases.

Although pruned trees tend to be more compact than their unpruned counterparts, they may still be rather large and complex. Decision trees can suffer from *repetition* and *replication* (Figure 7.8), making them overwhelming to interpret. **Repetition** occurs when an attribute is repeatedly tested along a given branch of the tree (e.g., “*age* < 60?”, followed by “*age* < 45?”, and so on). In **replication**, duplicate subtrees exist within the tree. These situations can impede the accuracy and comprehensibility of a decision tree. The use of multivariate splits (splits based on a combination of attributes) can prevent these problems. Another approach is to use a different form of knowledge representation, such as rules, instead of decision trees. This is described in Chapter 8, which shows how a *rule-based classifier* can be constructed by extracting IF-THEN rules from a decision tree.

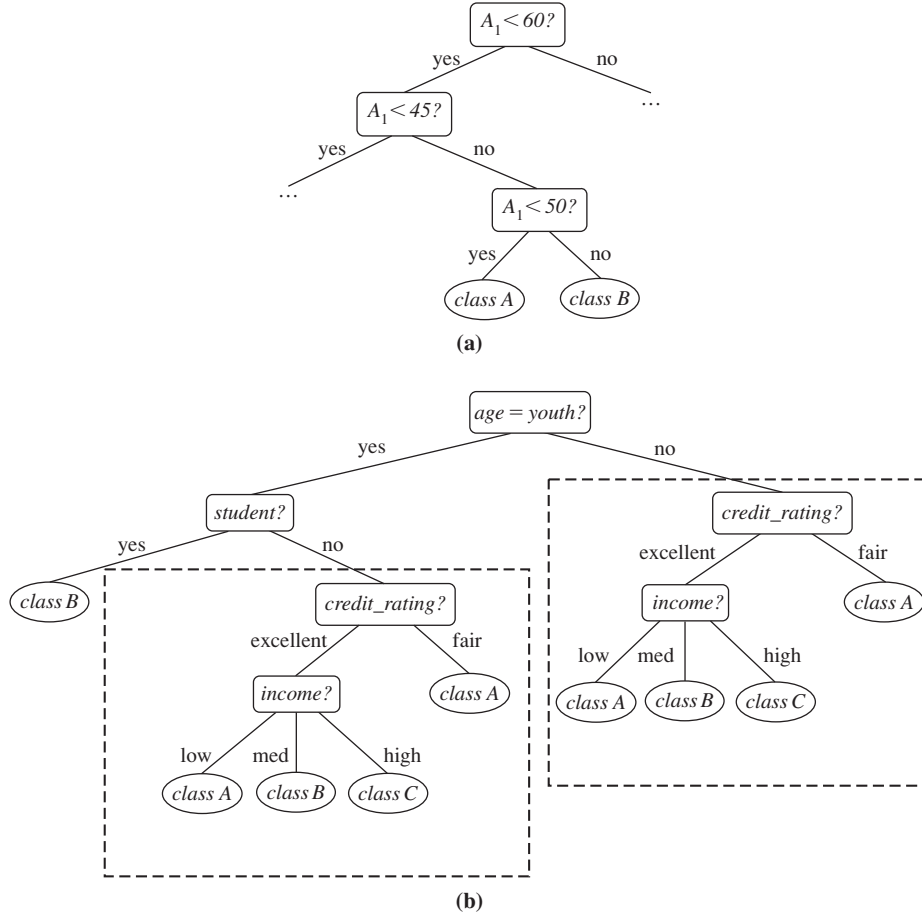


Figure 7.8: An example of (a) subtree **repetition**, where an attribute is repeatedly tested along a given branch of the tree (e.g., *age*) and (b) subtree **replication**, where duplicate subtrees exist within a tree (e.g., the subtree headed by the node “*credit\_rating?*”).

### 7.3 Bayes Classification Methods

“What are Bayesian classifiers?” Bayesian classifiers are statistical classifiers. They can predict class membership probabilities, such as the probability that a given tuple belongs to a particular class.

Bayesian classification is based on Bayes’ theorem, described next. Studies comparing classification algorithms have found a simple Bayesian classifier known as the *naïve Bayesian classifier* to be comparable in performance with decision tree and selected neural network classifiers. Bayesian classifiers have also exhibited high accuracy and speed when applied to large databases.



Naïve Bayesian classifiers assume that the effect of an attribute value on a given class is independent of the values of the other attributes. This assumption is called *class-conditional independence*. It is made to simplify the computations involved and, in this sense, is considered “naïve”.

Section 7.3.1 reviews basic probability notation and Bayes’ theorem. In Section 7.3.2, you will learn how to do naïve Bayesian classification.

### 7.3.1 Bayes’ Theorem

Bayes’ theorem is named after Thomas Bayes, a nonconformist English clergyman who did early work in probability and decision theory during the 18th century. Let  $\mathbf{X}$  be a data tuple. In Bayesian terms,  $\mathbf{X}$  is considered “evidence”. As usual, it is described by measurements made on a set of  $n$  attributes. Let  $H$  be some hypothesis such as that the data tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  belongs to a specified class  $C$ . For classification problems, we want to determine  $P(H|\mathbf{X})$ , the probability that the hypothesis  $H$  holds given the “evidence” or observed data tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ . In other words, we are looking for the probability that tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  belongs to class  $C$ , given that we know the attribute description of  $\mathbf{X}$ .

$P(H|\mathbf{X})$  is the **posterior probability**, or *a posteriori probability*, of  $H$  conditioned on  $\mathbf{X}$ . For example, suppose our world of data tuples is confined to customers described by the attributes *age* and *income*, respectively, and that  $\mathbf{X}$  is a 35-year-old customer with an income of \$40,000. Suppose that  $H$  is the hypothesis that our customer will buy a computer. Then  $P(H|\mathbf{X})$  reflects the probability that customer  $\mathbf{X}$  will buy a computer given that we know the customer’s age and income.

In contrast,  $P(H)$  is the **prior probability**, or *a priori probability*, of  $H$ . For our example, this is the probability that any given customer will buy a computer, regardless of age, income, or any other information, for that matter. The posterior probability,  $P(H|\mathbf{X})$ , is based on more information (e.g., customer information) than the prior probability,  $P(H)$ , which is independent of  $\mathbf{X}$ .

Similarly,  $P(\mathbf{X}|H)$  is the conditional probability of  $\mathbf{X}$  conditioned on  $H$ . That is, it is the probability that a customer,  $\mathbf{X}$ , is 35 years old and earns \$40,000, given that we know the customer will buy a computer. In classification,  $P(\mathbf{X}|H)$  is also often referred to as *likelihood*.

$P(\mathbf{X})$  is the prior probability of  $\mathbf{X}$ . Using our example, it is the probability that a person from our set of customers is 35 years old and earns \$40,000. In classification,  $P(\mathbf{X})$  is also often referred to as *marginal probability*.

“How are these probabilities estimated?”  $P(H)$ ,  $P(\mathbf{X}|H)$ , and  $P(\mathbf{X})$  may be estimated from the given data, as we shall see next. **Bayes’ theorem** is useful in that it provides a way of calculating the posterior probability,  $P(H|\mathbf{X})$ , from  $P(H)$ ,  $P(\mathbf{X}|H)$ , and  $P(\mathbf{X})$ . Bayes’ theorem is

$$P(H|\mathbf{X}) = \frac{P(\mathbf{X}|H)P(H)}{P(\mathbf{X})}. \quad (7.11)$$

“What does Bayes classifier look like?” Suppose that there are  $m$  classes,  $C_1, C_2, \dots, C_m$ . Given a tuple,  $\mathbf{X}$ , we want to predict which class it belongs to. In Bayes

classifier, it first calculates the posterior probabilities for each of the  $m$  classes,  $P(C_i|\mathbf{X})$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ), and then predicts that tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  belongs to the class with the highest posterior probability. In the above example, given a customer,  $\mathbf{X}$ , of 35 years old and earning \$40,000, we want to predict if the customer will buy a computer. So, in this task, there are two possible classes (buy computer vs. not buy computer). Suppose  $P(\text{buy computer}|\mathbf{X}) = 0.8$  and  $P(\text{not buy computer}|\mathbf{X}) = 0.2$ . Bayes classifier will predict that the customer  $\mathbf{X}$  will buy a computer.

“So, how good is Bayes classifier?” In theory, Bayes classifier is *optimal* in the sense that it has the smallest classification error rate compared to *all* other classifiers. Since Bayes classifier is a probabilistic method, it could make a wrong prediction for any given tuple. In the above example, Bayes classifier predicts the customer will buy a computer. Since  $P(\text{not buy computer}|\mathbf{X}) = 0.2$ , there is 20% chance that the prediction the Bayes classifier makes is incorrect. But since Bayes classifier always predicts the class with the maximum posterior probability, the probability that its prediction is wrong for a given tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  (which is often called *risk*) is the lowest in comparison to all other classifiers. In our example, the risk for the given customer is 0.2. In other words, there are 20% probability that the prediction by Bayes classifier is wrong. Therefore, the overall classification error of Bayes classifier, which is the expectation (i.e., the weighted average) of the risk of all possible tuples, is the lowest in all possible classifiers. Given its theoretic optimality, Bayes classifier plays a foundational role in the statistical machine learning community. For example, many classifiers (e.g., naïve Bayesian classifier,  $k$ -Nearest-Neighbor classifier, logistic regression, Bayesian network, etc.) can be viewed as approximated Bayes classifiers. Bayes classifier is also useful in that it provides a theoretical justification for other classifiers that do not explicitly use Bayes’ theorem. For example, under certain assumptions, it can be shown that many neural network and curve-fitting algorithms output the *maximum posteriori* hypothesis, as does the Bayes classifier.

“Then, why do not we just use Bayes classifier?” According to Bayes’ theorem (Eq. (7.11)), in order to calculate the posterior probabilities  $P(C_i|\mathbf{X})$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ), we need to know the conditional probabilities  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ), the priors  $P(C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ) and the marginal probability  $P(\mathbf{X})$ . In Bayes classifier, we only need to know which class has the highest posterior probability and for a given tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ , its marginal probability is independent of different classes. In other words, different posterior probabilities  $P(C_i|\mathbf{X})$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ) share the same marginal probability  $P(\mathbf{X})$ . Therefore, for the purpose of predicting which class a given tuple belongs to, we only need to estimate the conditional probabilities  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ), and the priors  $P(C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ).<sup>5</sup>

It is relatively easy to estimate the priors  $P(C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ) from the training data set (the details will be introduced in the next section). On the other hand, it is usually very challenging to directly estimate the conditional probabilities  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ). To see this, let us assume there are  $n$  binary attributes

<sup>5</sup>The marginal probability  $P(\mathbf{X})$  itself can be calculated based on the conditional probabilities  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ), and the priors  $P(C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ) based on the law of total probability, that is,  $P(\mathbf{X}) = \sum_{i=1}^m P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i)$ . It is necessary to calculate the marginal probability in some scenarios (e.g., to estimate the risk of Bayes classifier).

$A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ . Then, the  $n$ -dimensional attribute vector  $\mathbf{X}$  has  $2^n$  possible values and we need to estimate the conditional probability of each possible value of the attribute vector with respect to each class label.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the attribute value space is exponential! It is very difficult to estimate such a large number of parameters for the conditional probabilities.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the main difficulty for Bayes classifier lies in how to efficiently estimate the conditional probabilities, often with some approximation. Many solutions have been developed. One of such efforts, probably the simplest yet quite effective solution, is the naïve Bayesian classifier, which we introduce next.

### 7.3.2 Naïve Bayesian Classification

The **naïve Bayesian** classifier, or **simple Bayesian** classifier, follows the same procedure as Bayes classifier, except the way it estimates the conditional probabilities. In details, it works as follows:

1. Let  $D$  be a training set of tuples and their associated class labels. As usual, each tuple is represented by an  $n$ -dimensional attribute vector,  $\mathbf{X} = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$ , depicting  $n$  measurements made on the tuple from  $n$  attributes, respectively,  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ .
2. Suppose that there are  $m$  classes,  $C_1, C_2, \dots, C_m$ . Given a tuple,  $\mathbf{X}$ , the classifier will predict that  $\mathbf{X}$  belongs to the class having the highest posterior probability, conditioned on  $\mathbf{X}$ . That is, the naïve Bayesian classifier predicts that tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  belongs to the class  $C_i$  if and only if

$$P(C_i|\mathbf{X}) > P(C_j|\mathbf{X}) \quad \text{for } 1 \leq j \leq m, j \neq i.$$

Thus, we maximize  $P(C_i|\mathbf{X})$ . The class  $C_i$  for which  $P(C_i|\mathbf{X})$  is maximized is called the *maximum posteriori hypothesis*. By Bayes' theorem (Eq. (7.11)),

$$P(C_i|\mathbf{X}) = \frac{P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i)}{P(\mathbf{X})}. \quad (7.12)$$

3. As  $P(\mathbf{X})$  is constant for all classes, we only need to find out which class maximizes  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i)$ . If the class prior probabilities are not known, then it is commonly assumed that the classes are equally likely, that is,  $P(C_1) = P(C_2) = \dots = P(C_m)$ , and we would therefore maximize  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$ . Otherwise, we maximize  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i)$ . Note that the class prior probabilities may be estimated by  $P(C_i) = |C_{i,D}|/|D|$ , where  $|C_{i,D}|$  is the number of training tuples of class  $C_i$  in  $D$ .
4. Given a data set with many attributes, it would be extremely computationally expensive to compute  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$  for the aforementioned reasons. To reduce computation in evaluating  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$ , the naïve assumption of **class-conditional independence** is made. This presumes that the attributes'

<sup>6</sup>The total number of the parameters we need to estimate for conditional probabilities in this case is  $m(2^n - 1)$ . The details are left as an exercise.

<sup>7</sup>In statistics, it means that the estimation results bear high variance, which are not reliable.

values are conditionally independent of one another, given the class label of the tuple (i.e., there are no dependence relationships among the attributes, *if* we know which class the tuple belongs to.). Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} P(\mathbf{X}|C_i) &= \prod_{k=1}^n P(x_k|C_i) \\ &= P(x_1|C_i) \times P(x_2|C_i) \times \cdots \times P(x_n|C_i). \end{aligned} \quad (7.13)$$

We can easily estimate the probabilities  $P(x_1|C_i)$ ,  $P(x_2|C_i)$ ,  $\dots$ ,  $P(x_n|C_i)$  from the training tuples. Recall that here  $x_k$  refers to the value of attribute  $A_k$  for tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ . For each attribute, we look at whether the attribute is categorical or continuous-valued. For instance, to compute  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$ , we consider the following:

- (a) If  $A_k$  is categorical, then  $P(x_k|C_i)$  is the number of tuples of class  $C_i$  in  $D$  having the value  $x_k$  for  $A_k$ , divided by  $|C_{i,D}|$ , the number of tuples of class  $C_i$  in  $D$ .<sup>8</sup>
- (b) If  $A_k$  is continuous-valued, then we need to do a bit more work, but the calculation is pretty straightforward. A continuous-valued attribute is typically assumed to have a Gaussian distribution with a mean  $\mu$  and standard deviation  $\sigma$ , defined by

$$g(x, \mu, \sigma) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma} e^{-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}, \quad (7.14)$$

so that

$$P(x_k|C_i) = g(x_k, \mu_{C_i}, \sigma_{C_i}). \quad (7.15)$$

These equations may appear daunting, but hold on! We need to compute  $\mu_{C_i}$  and  $\sigma_{C_i}$ , which are the mean (i.e., average) and standard deviation, respectively, of the values of attribute  $A_k$  for training tuples of class  $C_i$ . We then plug these two quantities into Eq. (7.14), together with  $x_k$ , to estimate  $P(x_k|C_i)$ .

For example, let  $\mathbf{X} = (35, \$40,000)$ , where  $A_1$  and  $A_2$  are the attributes *age* and *income*, respectively. Let the class label attribute be *buys\_computer*. The associated class label for  $\mathbf{X}$  is *yes* (i.e., *buys\_computer* = *yes*). Let's suppose that *age* has not been discretized and therefore exists as a continuous-valued attribute. Suppose that from the training set, we find that customers in  $D$  who buy a computer are  $38 \pm 12$  years of age. In other words, for attribute *age* and this class (i.e., *buys\_computer* = *yes*), we have  $\mu = 38$  years and  $\sigma = 12$ . We can plug these quantities, along with  $x_1 = 35$  for our tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ , into Eq. (7.14) to estimate  $P(\text{age} = 35 | \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes})$ . For a quick review of mean and standard deviation calculations, please see Section 2.2.

---

<sup>8</sup>In statistics, this is the classic maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) method.

5. To predict the class label of  $\mathbf{X}$ ,  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i)$  is evaluated for each class  $C_i$ . The classifier predicts that the class label of tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  is the class  $C_i$  if and only if

$$P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i) > P(\mathbf{X}|C_j)P(C_j) \quad \text{for } 1 \leq j \leq m, j \neq i. \quad (7.16)$$

In other words, the predicted class label is the class  $C_i$  for which  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i)$  is the maximum.

*“How effective is naïve Bayesian classifier?”* Notice that the only difference between naïve Bayesian classifier and Bayes classifier is the class-conditional independence assumption. Therefore, if such an assumption indeed holds, naïve Bayesian classifier would be optimal with the smallest possible classification error. However, in practice this is not always the case, owing to inaccuracies in the assumptions made for its use, such as class-conditional independence, and the lack of available probability data. Nonetheless, various empirical studies of this classifier in comparison to decision tree and selected neural network classifiers have found it to be comparable in some domains. Another advantage of naïve Bayesian classifier is that it can naturally handle the missing attribute(s).

**Example 7.3.1 Predicting a class label using naïve Bayesian classification.**

We wish to predict the class label of a tuple using naïve Bayesian classification, given the same training data as in Example 7.2.3 for decision tree induction. The training data were shown earlier in Table 7.1. The data tuples are described by the attributes *age*, *income*, *student*, and *credit\_rating*. The class label attribute, *buys\_computer*, has two distinct values (namely, {*yes*, *no*}). Let  $C_1$  correspond to the class *buys\_computer* = *yes* and  $C_2$  correspond to *buys\_computer* = *no*. The tuple we wish to classify is

$$\mathbf{X} = (\text{age} = \text{youth}, \text{income} = \text{medium}, \text{student} = \text{yes}, \text{credit\_rating} = \text{fair})$$

We need to find out which class maximizes  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)P(C_i)$ , for  $i = 1, 2$ .  $P(C_i)$ , the prior probability of each class, can be computed based on the training tuples:

$$\begin{aligned} P(\text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) &= 9/14 = 0.643 \\ P(\text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) &= 5/14 = 0.357 \end{aligned}$$

To compute  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$ , for  $i = 1, 2$ , we compute the following conditional probabilities:

$$\begin{aligned} P(\text{age} = \text{youth} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) &= 2/9 = 0.222 \\ P(\text{age} = \text{youth} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) &= 3/5 = 0.600 \\ P(\text{income} = \text{medium} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) &= 4/9 = 0.444 \\ P(\text{income} = \text{medium} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) &= 2/5 = 0.400 \\ P(\text{student} = \text{yes} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) &= 6/9 = 0.667 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
P(\text{student} = \text{yes} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) &= 1/5 = 0.200 \\
P(\text{credit\_rating} = \text{fair} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) &= 6/9 = 0.667 \\
P(\text{credit\_rating} = \text{fair} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) &= 2/5 = 0.400
\end{aligned}$$

Using these probabilities, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned}
P(\mathbf{X} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) &= P(\text{age} = \text{youth} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) \\
&\quad \times P(\text{income} = \text{medium} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) \\
&\quad \times P(\text{student} = \text{yes} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) \\
&\quad \times P(\text{credit\_rating} = \text{fair} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) \\
&= 0.222 \times 0.444 \times 0.667 \times 0.667 = 0.044.
\end{aligned}$$

Similarly,

$$P(\mathbf{X} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) = 0.600 \times 0.400 \times 0.200 \times 0.400 = 0.019.$$

To find the class,  $C_i$ , that maximizes  $P(\mathbf{X} \mid C_i)P(C_i)$ , we compute

$$\begin{aligned}
P(\mathbf{X} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes})P(\text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}) &= 0.044 \times 0.643 = 0.028 \\
P(\mathbf{X} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no})P(\text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) &= 0.019 \times 0.357 = 0.007
\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the naïve Bayesian classifier predicts  $\text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}$  for tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ .

“What if I encounter probability values of zero?” Recall that in Eq. (7.13), we estimate  $P(\mathbf{X} \mid C_i)$  as the product of the probabilities  $P(x_1 \mid C_i)$ ,  $P(x_2 \mid C_i)$ ,  $\dots$ ,  $P(x_n \mid C_i)$ , based on the assumption of class-conditional independence. These probabilities can be estimated from the training tuples (step 4). We need to compute  $P(\mathbf{X} \mid C_i)$  for *each* class ( $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$ ) to find the class  $C_i$  for which  $P(\mathbf{X} \mid C_i)P(C_i)$  is the maximum (step 5). Let’s consider this calculation. For each attribute–value pair (i.e.,  $A_k = x_k$ , for  $k = 1, 2, \dots, n$ ) in tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ , we need to count the number of tuples having that attribute–value pair, per class (i.e., per  $C_i$ , for  $i = 1, \dots, m$ ). In Example 7.3.1, we have two classes ( $m = 2$ ), namely  $\text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}$  and  $\text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}$ . Therefore, for the attribute–value pair  $\text{student} = \text{yes}$  of  $\mathbf{X}$ , say, we need two counts—the number of customers who are students and for which  $\text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes}$  (which contributes to  $P(\mathbf{X} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{yes})$ ) and the number of customers who are students and for which  $\text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}$  (which contributes to  $P(\mathbf{X} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no})$ ).

But what if, say, there are no training tuples representing students for the class  $\text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}$ , resulting in  $P(\text{student} = \text{yes} \mid \text{buys\_computer} = \text{no}) = 0$ ? In other words, what happens if we should end up with a probability value of zero for some  $P(x_k \mid C_i)$ ? Plugging this zero value into Eq. (7.13) would return a zero probability for  $P(\mathbf{X} \mid C_i)$ , even though, without the zero probability, we may have ended up with a high probability, suggesting that  $\mathbf{X}$  belonged to class  $C_i$ ! A zero probability cancels the effects of all the other (posteriori) probabilities (on  $C_i$ ) involved in the product.

There is a simple trick to avoid this problem. We can assume that our training database,  $D$ , is so large that adding one to each count that we need would only make a negligible difference in the estimated probability value yet would conveniently avoid the case of probability values of zero. This technique for probability

estimation is known as the **Laplacian correction** or **Laplace estimator**, named after Pierre Laplace, a French mathematician who lived from 1749 to 1827.<sup>9</sup> If we have, say,  $q$  counts to which we each add one, then we must remember to add  $q$  to the corresponding denominator used in the probability calculation. We illustrate this technique in Example 7.3.2.

**Example 7.3.2 Using the Laplacian correction to avoid computing probability values of zero.** Suppose that for the class *buys\_computer = yes* in some training database,  $D$ , containing 1000 tuples, we have 0 tuples with *income = low*, 990 tuples with *income = medium*, and 10 tuples with *income = high*. The probabilities of these events, without the Laplacian correction, are 0, 0.990 (from 990/1000), and 0.010 (from 10/1000), respectively. Using the Laplacian correction for the three quantities, we pretend that we have 1 more tuple for each income-value pair. In this way, we instead obtain the following probabilities (rounded up to three decimal places):

$$\frac{1}{1003} = 0.001, \frac{991}{1003} = 0.988, \text{ and } \frac{11}{1003} = 0.011,$$

respectively. The “corrected” probability estimates are close to their “uncorrected” counterparts, yet the zero probability value is avoided.

The main idea of naïve Bayesian classifier lies in the class-conditional independence assumption, which significantly simplifies the estimation of the conditional probabilities  $P(\mathbf{X}|C_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, m$ ). But this (class-conditional independence assumption) is also one major limitation of naïve Bayesian classifier, since it might not be true for some applications. To address this issue, we need more sophisticated ways to approximate the conditional probabilities, such as Bayesian networks, which will be introduced in the next chapter.

## 7.4 Lazy Learners (or Learning from Your Neighbors)

The classification methods discussed so far in this book—decision tree induction and Bayesian classification—are both examples of *eager learners*. **Eager learners**, when given a set of training tuples, will construct a generalization (i.e., classification) model before receiving new (e.g., test) tuples to classify. We can think of the learned model as being ready and eager to classify previously unseen tuples.

Imagine a contrasting lazy approach, in which the learner instead waits until the last minute before doing any model construction to classify a given test tuple. That is, when given a training tuple, a **lazy learner** simply stores it (or does only a little minor processing) and waits until it is given a test tuple. Only when it sees

---

<sup>9</sup>In statistics, this belongs to the Maximum a Posteriori (MAP) method. This can also be viewed as a smoothing technique (i.e., to “smooth” the zero probabilities). In practice, we can also replace 1 by a small integer  $k$ . The intuition is that we have  $k$  (instead of 1) more tuples for each attribute-value pair.

the test tuple does it perform generalization to classify the tuple based on its similarity to the stored training tuples. Unlike eager learning methods, lazy learners do less work when a training tuple is presented and more work when making a classification or numeric prediction. Because lazy learners store the training tuples or “instances”, they are also referred to as **instance-based learners**, even though all learning is essentially based on instances.

When making a classification or numeric prediction, lazy learners can be computationally expensive. They require efficient storage techniques and are well suited to implementation on parallel hardware. They offer little explanation or insight into the data’s structure. Lazy learners, however, naturally support incremental learning. They are able to model complex decision spaces having hyperpolygonal shapes that may not be as easily describable by other learning algorithms (such as hyperrectangular shapes modeled by decision trees). In this section, we look at two examples of lazy learners: *k-nearest-neighbor classifiers* (Section 7.4.1) and *case-based reasoning classifiers* (Section 7.4.2).

### 7.4.1 *k*-Nearest-Neighbor Classifiers

The *k*-nearest-neighbor method was first described in the early 1950s. The method is labor-intensive when given a large training set, and did not gain popularity until the 1960s when increased computing power became available. It has since been widely used in the area of pattern recognition.

Suppose you want to make a decision on whether or not you should buy a computer. What would you do? One possible way to make such a decision is to find out your friends’ decision on this (whether or not to buy a computer). If most of your close friends buy a computer, maybe you will decide to buy a computer as well. Nearest-neighbor classifiers follow a very similar idea of learning by analogy, that is, by comparing a given test tuple with training tuples that are similar to it. The training tuples are described by  $n$  attributes. Each tuple represents a point in an  $n$ -dimensional space. In this way, all the training tuples are stored in an  $n$ -dimensional attribute space. When given an unknown tuple, a ***k*-nearest-neighbor classifier** searches the attribute space for the  $k$  training tuples that are closest to the unknown tuple (i.e., to find your close friends in the above example). These  $k$  training tuples are the  $k$  “nearest neighbors” of the unknown tuple. Then *k-nearest-neighbor classifier* chooses the most common class label among the  $k$  nearest neighbors as the predicted class label of the unknown tuple (i.e., to follow the majority decision of your friends in the above example).

“Closeness” is defined in terms of a distance metric, such as Euclidean distance. The Euclidean distance between two points or tuples, say,  $\mathbf{X}_1 = (x_{11}, x_{12}, \dots, x_{1n})$  and  $\mathbf{X}_2 = (x_{21}, x_{22}, \dots, x_{2n})$ , is

$$\text{dist}(\mathbf{X}_1, \mathbf{X}_2) = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_{1i} - x_{2i})^2}. \quad (7.17)$$

In other words, for each numeric attribute, we take the difference between the corresponding values of that attribute in tuple  $\mathbf{X}_1$  and in tuple  $\mathbf{X}_2$ , square this



difference, and accumulate it. The square root is taken of the total accumulated distance count. Typically, we normalize the values of each attribute before using Eq. (7.17). This helps prevent attributes with initially large ranges (e.g., *income*) from outweighing attributes with initially smaller ranges (e.g., binary attributes). Min-max normalization, for example, can be used to transform a value  $v$  of a numeric attribute  $A$  to  $v'$  in the range  $[0, 1]$  by computing

$$v' = \frac{v - \min_A}{\max_A - \min_A}, \quad (7.18)$$

where  $\min_A$  and  $\max_A$  are the minimum and maximum values of attribute  $A$ . Chapter 3 describes other methods for data normalization as a form of data transformation.

For  $k$ -nearest-neighbor classification, the unknown tuple is assigned the most common class label among its  $k$ -nearest neighbors. When  $k = 1$ , the unknown tuple is assigned the class of the training tuple that is closest to it in the attribute space. When  $k > 1$ , we can take a (weighted) majority voting on the class labels among its  $k$ -nearest neighbors. Nearest-neighbor classifiers can also be used for numeric prediction, that is, to return a real-valued prediction for a given unknown tuple. In this case, the classifier returns the (weighted) average value of the real-valued labels associated with the  $k$ -nearest neighbors of the unknown tuple.

*“But how can distance be computed for attributes that are not numeric, but nominal (or categorical) such as color?”* The previous discussion assumes that the attributes used to describe the tuples are all numeric. For nominal attributes, a simple method is to compare the corresponding value of the attribute in tuple  $\mathbf{X}_1$  with that in tuple  $\mathbf{X}_2$ . If the two are identical (e.g., tuples  $\mathbf{X}_1$  and  $\mathbf{X}_2$  both have the color blue), then the difference between the two is taken as 0. If the two are different (e.g., tuple  $\mathbf{X}_1$  is blue but tuple  $\mathbf{X}_2$  is red), then the difference is considered to be 1. Other methods may incorporate more sophisticated schemes for differential grading (e.g., where a larger difference score is assigned, say, for blue and white than for blue and black).

*“What about missing values?”* In general, if the value of a given attribute  $A$  is missing in tuple  $\mathbf{X}_1$  or in tuple  $\mathbf{X}_2$ , we assume the maximum possible difference. Suppose that each of the attributes has been mapped to the range  $[0, 1]$ . For nominal attributes, we take the difference value to be 1 if either one or both of the corresponding values of  $A$  are missing. If  $A$  is numeric and missing from both tuples  $\mathbf{X}_1$  and  $\mathbf{X}_2$ , then the difference is also taken to be 1. If only one value is missing and the other (which we will call  $v'$ ) is present and normalized, then we can take the difference to be either  $|1 - v'|$  or  $|0 - v'|$  (i.e.,  $1 - v'$  or  $v'$ ), whichever is greater.

*“How can I determine a good value for  $k$ , the number of neighbors?”* This can be determined experimentally. Starting with  $k = 1$ , we use a test set to estimate the error rate of the classifier. This process can be repeated each time by incrementing  $k$  to allow for one more neighbor. The  $k$  value that gives the minimum error rate may be selected. In general, the larger the number of training tuples, the larger the value of  $k$  will be (so that classification and numeric prediction decisions can be based on a larger portion of the stored tuples). As the number of training tuples approaches infinity and  $k = 1$ , the error rate can be no worse than twice the Bayes

error rate (the latter being the theoretical minimum). In other words, 1-nearest-neighbor classifier is asymptotically near-optimal. If  $k$  approaches infinity, the error rate approaches the Bayes error rate.

Nearest-neighbor classifiers use distance-based comparisons that intrinsically assign equal weight to each attribute. They, therefore, can suffer from poor accuracy when given noisy or irrelevant attributes. The method, however, has been modified to incorporate attribute weighting and the pruning of noisy data tuples. The choice of a distance metric can be critical. The Manhattan (city block) distance (Section 2.4.4), or other distance measurements, may also be used. Figure 7.9 presents an illustrative example in terms of the impact of distance metrics on the decision boundary of  $k$ -nearest-neighbor classifier.

Nearest-neighbor classifiers can be extremely slow when classifying test tuples. If  $D$  is a training database of  $|D|$  tuples and  $k = 1$ , then  $O(|D|)$  comparisons are required to classify a given test tuple. By presorting and arranging the stored tuples into search trees, the number of comparisons can be reduced to  $O(\log(|D|))$ . Parallel implementation can reduce the running time to a constant, that is,  $O(1)$ , which is independent of  $|D|$ .

Other techniques to speed up classification time include the use of *partial distance* calculations and *editing* the stored tuples. In the **partial distance** method, we compute the distance based on a subset of the  $n$  attributes. If this distance exceeds a threshold, then further computation for the given stored tuple is halted, and the process moves on to the next stored tuple. The **editing** method removes training tuples that are proven useless. This method is also referred to as **pruning** or **condensing** because it reduces the total number of tuples stored. Another technique to speed up nearest-neighbor search is via **locality-sensitive hashing** (LSH). The key idea is to hash the similar tuples into the same bucket with a high probability via *locality-preserving hash functions*. Then, given a test tuple, we first identify which bucket it belongs to, and then we only search the training tuples in the same bucket to identify its nearest neighbors.

## 7.4.2 Case-Based Reasoning

**Case-based reasoning** (CBR) classifiers use a database of problem solutions to solve new problems. Unlike  $k$ -nearest-neighbor classifiers, which store training tuples as points in Euclidean space, CBR stores the tuples or “cases” for problem solving as complex symbolic descriptions. Business applications of CBR include problem resolution for customer service help desks, where cases describe product-related diagnostic problems. CBR has also been applied to areas, such as engineering and law, where cases are either technical designs or legal rulings in the common law system, respectively. Medical education is another area for CBR, where patient case histories and treatments are used to help diagnose and treat new patients.

When given a new case to classify, a case-based reasoner will first check if an identical training case exists. If one is found, then the accompanying solution to that case is returned. If no identical case is found, then the case-based reasoner will search for training cases having components that are similar to those of the

new case. Conceptually, these training cases may be considered as neighbors of the new case. If cases are represented as graphs, this involves searching for subgraphs that are similar to subgraphs within the new case. The case-based reasoner tries to combine the solutions of the neighboring training cases to propose a solution for the new case. If incompatibilities arise with the individual solutions, then backtracking to search for other solutions may be necessary. The case-based reasoner may employ background knowledge and problem-solving strategies to propose a feasible combined solution.

Key challenges in case-based reasoning include finding a good similarity metric (e.g., for matching subgraphs) and suitable methods for combining solutions. Other challenges include the selection of salient features for indexing training cases and the development of efficient indexing techniques. A trade-off between accuracy and efficiency evolves as the number of stored cases becomes very large. As this number increases, the case-based reasoner becomes more intelligent. After a certain point, however, the system's efficiency will suffer as the time required to search for and process relevant cases increases. As with nearest-neighbor classifiers, one solution is to edit the training database. Cases that are redundant or those that have not proved useful may be discarded for the sake of improved performance. These decisions, however, are not clear-cut, and their automation remains an active area of research.

## 7.5 Linear Classifiers

So far, we have learned a few classifiers which are capable of generating complex decision boundaries. For example, a decision tree classifier might output a hyperrectangular-shaped decision boundary (Figure 7.10(a)), and a  $k$ -nearest-neighbor classifier might output a hyperpolygonal-shaped decision boundary (Figure 7.10(b)). But how about a simple, linear decision boundary? For the example in Figure 7.10, intuitively, a linear decision boundary (the straight line in Figure 7.10(c)) is (almost) as good as decision tree classifiers and  $k$ -nearest-neighbor classifier in separating the positive training tuples from the negative training ones. Yet, such a linear decision boundary might offer additional advantages, such as efficient computation for training the classifier, better generalization performance, and better interpretability.

In this section, we introduce basic techniques to learn such linear classifiers. We will start with **linear regression**, which forms the basis for linear classifiers. Then, we will introduce two linear classifiers, including (1) **perception**, which is one of the earliest linear classifiers, and (2) **logistic regression** which is one of the most widely used linear classifiers. Additional linear classifiers will be introduced in Chapter 8, such as linear support vector machines.

### 7.5.1 Linear Regression

Linear regression is a statistical technique that predicts a continuous value based on one or more independent attributes. For example, we might want to predict

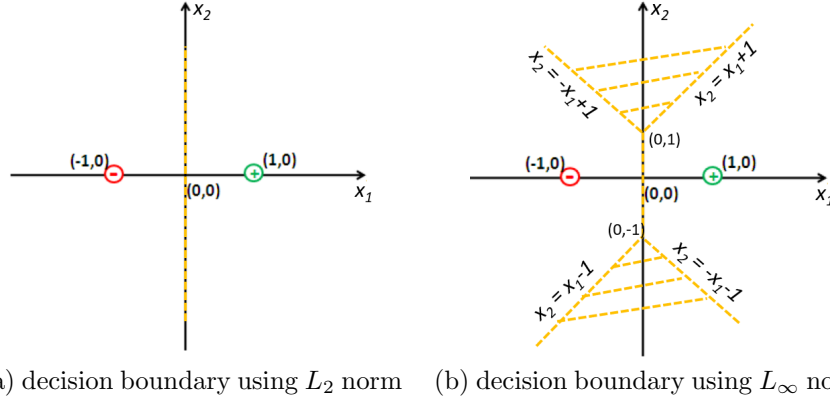


Figure 7.9: The impact of distance metrics on 1-nearest-neighbor classifier. Given two training examples, including a positive example at  $(1, 0)$  and a negative example at  $(-1, 0)$ . The decision boundaries of 1-nearest-neighbor classifier using different distance metrics are quite different from each other. Using  $L_2$  norm (on the left), the decision boundary is a vertical line at  $x_2 = 0$ . Using  $L_\infty$  norm (on the right), the decision boundary includes a line segment between  $(0, -1)$  and  $(0, 1)$  and two shaded areas.

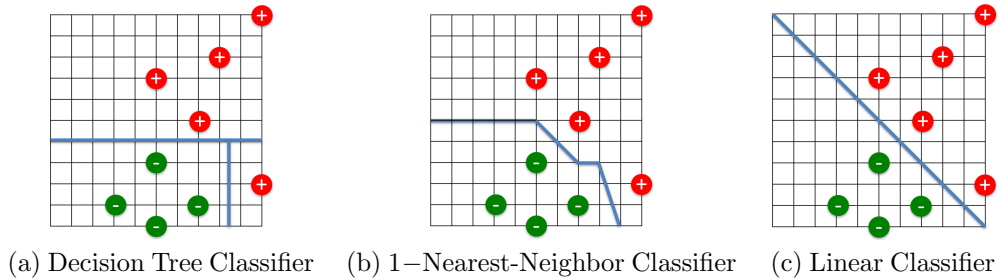


Figure 7.10: Decision boundaries by different classifiers. Note that this example is *linearly separable*, meaning that a linear classifier (c) can perfectly separate all the positive training tuples from all the negative training tuples. If the training set is *linearly inseparable*, we could still use a linear classifier, at the expense that some training tuples are on the ‘wrong’ side of the decision boundary. In Chapter 8, we will introduce techniques (e.g., support vector machines) to handle linearly inseparable case.

the housing price based on the living area, or to predict the future income of a student based on which college she attended, in which major and the overall GPA, etc. Since linear regression aims to predict a *continuous* value, it cannot be directly applied to the classification task, where the output is a categorical variable. Nonetheless, the core techniques in linear regression form the basis of linear classifiers. Therefore, let us first briefly introduce linear regression.

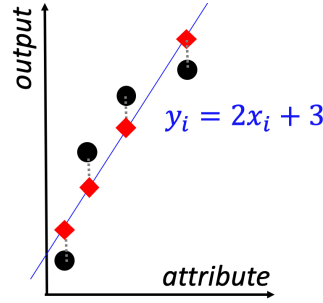
Suppose we have  $n$  tuples, each of which is represented by  $p$  attributes  $x_i = (x_{i,1}, \dots, x_{i,p})^T$  and a continuous output value  $y_i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, n$ ). In linear regression, we want to learn a linear function that maps the  $p$  input attributes  $x_i$  to the output variable  $y_i$ , that is,  $\hat{y}_i = w^T x_i + b = \sum_{j=1}^p w_j x_{i,j} + b$ , where  $\hat{y}_i$  is the predicted output value for the  $i^{th}$  tuple,  $w = (w_1, \dots, w_p)^T$  is a  $p$ -dimensional weight vector and  $b$  is the bias scalar. In other words, linear regression assumes that the output value is a linear weighted summation of the  $p$  input attribute values, offset by the bias scalar  $b$ . The entries in the weight vector  $w_j$  ( $j = 1, \dots, p$ ) tell how important the corresponding attribute  $x_{i,j}$  is in predicting the output variable  $\hat{y}_i$ . In the aforementioned examples, a linear regression model would assume that the housing prices are linearly correlated with the living area; the future income of a student can be predicted by a linear weighted combination of the college she attended, the major, and the overall GPA (plus a bias scalar  $b$ ). If we know the weight vector  $w$  and the bias scalar  $b$ , we can make a prediction of the output value based on its  $p$  input attribute values.

“So, how can we determine the weight vector  $w$  and the bias scalar  $b$ ?” Intuitively, we want to learn the ‘best’ weight vector  $w$  and the ‘best’ bias scalar  $b$  from the training data, so that the linear regression model can make the ‘best’ prediction. That is, the predicted value  $\hat{y}_i = w^T x_i + b$  is as close as possible to the actual observed value  $y_i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, n$ ). One of the most common linear regression methods is called **least square regression**, which aims to minimize the following loss function  $L(w, b) = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - (w^T x_i + b))^2$ . Therefore, the best weight vector  $w$  and the bias scalar  $b$  are the ones that minimize the loss function  $L(w, b)$ , which measures the sum of the squared difference between the predicted output value  $\hat{y}_i$  and the actual observed value  $y_i$ . For example, if there is only one input attribute (i.e.,  $p = 1$ ), the optimal weight  $w = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i (y_i - \bar{y})}{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 - \frac{1}{n} (\sum_{i=1}^n x_i)^2}$  and the optimal bias scalar  $b = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - w x_i)$ , where  $\bar{y} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n y_i$  is the average observed output value among all  $n$  training tuples.

**Example 7.5.1** Let us look at an example of least square regression in Figure 7.11. There are four training tuples, each represented by a single-dimensional attribute  $x_i$  and an output variable  $y_i$  ( $i = 1, 2, 3, 4$ ). We want to find least square regression model  $y = wx + b$  that predicts the output  $y$  based on the input attribute  $x$ . We use the two equations mentioned above to find the optimal weight  $w$  and the optimal bias scalar  $b$ . We first find the optimal weight  $w$  as follows. The average output of four training tuples is  $\bar{y} = (y_1 + y_2 + y_3 + y_4)/4 = (4 + 10 + 14 + 16)/4 = 11$ . Therefore, we have that  $\sum_{i=1}^4 x_i (y_i - \bar{y}) = 1(4 - 11) + 3(10 - 11) + 5(14 - 11) + 7(16 - 11) = 40$ . In the meanwhile, we have that  $\sum_{i=1}^4 x_i^2 = 1^2 + 3^2 + 5^2 + 7^2 = 84$  and  $1/4(\sum_{i=1}^4 x_i)^2 = (1 + 3 + 5 + 7)^2/4 = 64$ . Therefore, the optimal weight

Index ( $i$ )	1	2	3	4
Attribute ( $x_i$ )	1	3	5	7
Output ( $y_i$ )	4	10	14	16

(a) Training tuples



(b) Least square regression

Figure 7.11: An example of least square regression. (a) 4 training tuples. (b) the scatter-plot of the training tuples (black dots) and least square regression model (the blue line). Red diamonds are the predicted output  $\hat{y}_i$  ( $i = 1, 2, 3, 4$ ) and dashed lines indicate the prediction errors ( $|y_i - \hat{y}_i|$ ) of the corresponding training tuples.

$$w = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 - \frac{1}{n}(\sum_{i=1}^n x_i)^2} = \frac{40}{84 - 64} = 2. \text{ Based on the optimal weight } w, \text{ the}$$

$$\text{optimal bias scalar } b = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^4 (y_i - wx_i)}{4} = \frac{(4-2 \times 1) + (10-2 \times 3) + (14-2 \times 5) + (16-2 \times 7)}{4} = 3.$$

“But, what if there are multiple  $p$  ( $p > 1$ ) attributes?” In this case (which is called **multi-linear regression**), let us first change our notation a little bit. We assume there is an additional ‘dummy’ attribute which always takes the value of 1 for any tuple. Let the weight for this dummy attribute be  $w_0$ . Then the overall weight vector  $w = (w_0, w_1, \dots, w_p)$  and the new input attribute vector  $x_i = (1, x_{i,1}, \dots, x_{i,p})$  are both  $(p+1)$ -dimensional vectors. The multi-linear regression model can be re-written as  $\hat{y}_i = w^T x_i = w_0 + w_1 x_{i,1} + \dots + w_p x_{i,p}$ . We use the same loss function as before, that is,  $L(w) = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - (w^T x_i))^2$ . It turns out the optimal weight vector  $w$  can be computed as  $w = (XX^T)^{-1}Xy$ , where  $X = [x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n]$  is a  $(p+1) \times n$  matrix, and  $y = [y_1, \dots, y_n]^T$  is an  $n \times 1$  vector. (How to derive the closed form solutions for single linear regression as well as multi-linear regression are left as exercises.)

In least square regression, we measure the ‘goodness’ of the learned regression model by the sum of the squared difference between predicted and actual output values. The squared loss might be sensitive to the outliers in the training set. In *robust regression*, it uses alternative loss functions that are less sensitive to such outliers. For example, the Huber method in robust regression uses the following loss:  $L(w) = \sum_{i=1}^n l_H(y_i - \hat{y}_i)$ , where  $l_H(y_i - \hat{y}_i) = (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2$  if  $|y_i - \hat{y}_i| < \theta$ ,

$l_H(y_i - \hat{y}_i) = 2\theta|y_i - \hat{y}_i| - \theta^2$  otherwise, and  $\theta > 0$  is a user-specified parameter. Notice that the optimal weight vector  $w$  for multi-linear regression involves a matrix inverse (i.e.,  $(X X^T)^{-1}$ ). In case  $p > n$  (i.e., the number of attributes is more than the number of training tuples), such a matrix inverse does not exist. An effective way to address this issue is to introduce a *regularization term* regarding the norm of the weight vector  $w$ . For example, if we use  $l_2$  norm of the weight vector  $w$ , the corresponding regression model is called Ridge regression; if we use  $l_1$  norm of the weight vector  $w$  instead, the corresponding regression model is called Lasso regression which often learns a *sparse* weight vector. This means that some entries of the learned weight vector  $w$  are zeros, which indicates that those attributes are not used in the regression model. In Chapter 8.1, we will use Lasso regression for feature selection.

### 7.5.2 Perceptron: Turning Linear Regression to Classification

*“How can we modify a linear regression model to perform classification task?”* Suppose we have a binary classification task.<sup>10</sup> The output value  $y_i$  for a given tuple is a binary variable:  $y_i = +1$  indicates the  $i^{\text{th}}$  tuple is a positive tuple (e.g., *buy computer*) and  $y_i = 0$  indicates the  $i^{\text{th}}$  tuple is a negative one (e.g., *not buy computer*). One way to modify the linear regression model for such a binary classification task is to use the *sign* of the output of the linear regression model as the predicted class label, that is,  $\hat{y}_i = \text{sign}(w^T x_i)$ , where  $\hat{y}_i$  is the predicted class label for  $i^{\text{th}}$  tuple,  $\text{sign}(z) = 1$  if  $z > 0$  and  $\text{sign}(z) = 0$  otherwise. Notice that we use the same notation as multi-linear regression where we have introduced a ‘dummy’ attribute which always takes the value of 1 for any tuple. Therefore, if we know the weight vector  $w$ , we can use it to predict the class label of a given tuple as follows. We compute a linear combination of the attribute values of the given tuple, weighted by the corresponding entries of the weight vector  $w$ . If the resulting value of such a linear combination is positive, we predict that the given tuple is a positive tuple. Otherwise, we predict that it is a negative one.

*“How can we find the optimal weight vector  $w$  from a set of training tuples?”* The classic learning algorithm to train a perceptron is as follows. We start with an initial guess of the weight vector  $w$  (e.g., we can simply set  $w = 0$ ). Then, the learning algorithm will iterate until it converges, or the maximum iteration number or some other pre-set stopping criteria is met. In each iteration, we do the following for each training tuple  $x_i$ . We try to predict the class label of  $x_i$  using the current weight vector  $w$ , that is,  $\hat{y}_i = \text{sign}(w^T x_i)$ . If the prediction is correct (i.e.,  $\hat{y}_i = y_i$ ), we do nothing about the weight vector. However, if the prediction is incorrect (i.e.,  $\hat{y}_i \neq y_i$ ), we update the current weight vector in one of the following two ways. If  $y_i = +1$  (i.e., the  $i^{\text{th}}$  tuple is a positive tuple, but the current classifier predicts it is a negative tuple), we update weight vector as  $w \leftarrow w + \eta x_i$ . If  $y_i = 0$  (i.e., the  $i^{\text{th}}$  tuple is a negative tuple, which is wrongly

<sup>10</sup>For both perceptron and logistic regression classifiers that we will introduce next, we focus on binary classification task. But the techniques we introduce can be generalized to handle multi-class classification task for both classifiers.

predicted by the current classifier as a positive tuple), we update weight vector as  $w \leftarrow w - \eta x_i$ , where  $\eta > 0$  is the user-specified learning rate. So, the intuition is that in each iteration of the training process, the algorithm will focus on those wrongly predicted training tuples by the current weight vector  $w$ . If the wrongly predicted training tuple  $x_i$  is a positive tuple, we update the weight vector  $w$  by moving it *towards* the attribute vector  $x_i$  of this training tuple (i.e.,  $w \leftarrow w + \eta x_i$ ). On the other hand, if the wrongly predicted training tuple  $x_i$  is a negative tuple, we update the weight vector  $w$  by moving it *away from* the attribute vector  $x_i$  of this training tuple (i.e.,  $w \leftarrow w - \eta x_i$ ).

**Example 7.5.1** Let us look at an example in Figure 7.12 for training a perceptron classifier. In Figure 7.12, we assume the bias  $w_0 = 0$  for illustration clarity. Figure 7.12(a) (Left) shows the current decision boundary and the weight vector  $w$ , where two training tuples are wrongly classified, including a positive tuple  $x_1$  and a negative tuple  $x_8$ . Therefore, only these two tuples are used to update the weight vector in the current iteration, that is,  $w \leftarrow w + \eta x_1 - \eta x_8$ . The updated weight vector  $w$  and the corresponding decision boundary are shown in Figure 7.12(b) (Right), where all training tuples are correctly classified.

“How effective is the perceptron learning algorithm?” If the training tuples are linearly separable (e.g., the example in Figure 7.12), the perceptron algorithm is guaranteed to find a weight vector (i.e., a hyperplane decision boundary) that perfectly separates all the positive training tuples from all the negative training tuples. However, if the training tuples are not linearly separable, this algorithm will fail to converge.

Perceptron, one of the earliest linear classifiers, was first invented back in 1958. It can also be used as a building block (called a ‘neuron’) in deep neural networks that will be introduced in Chapter 11.

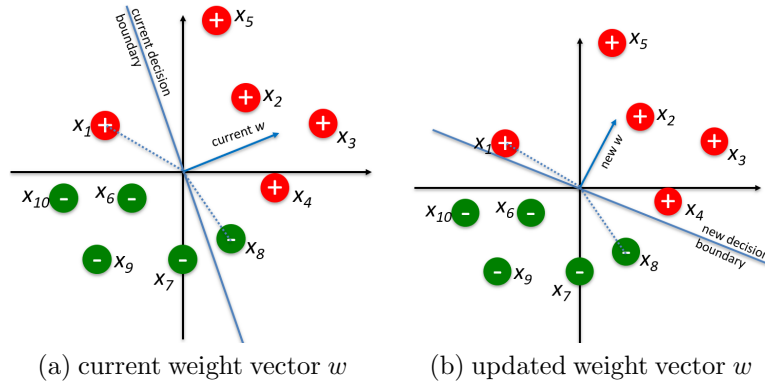


Figure 7.12: Training a perceptron classifier.



### 7.5.3 Logistic Regression

Perceptron that we have just introduced in the previous section is capable of predicting the binary class label of a given tuple. But, can we also tell how confident such a prediction is? Again, let us consider a binary classification task, and we assume that there are two possible class labels, that is,  $y = 1$  for a positive tuple and  $y = 0$  for a negative tuple. Recall that in (Naïve) Bayes classifier, we can estimate the posterior probability  $P(y_i = 1|x_i)$ , which can be directly used to indicate how confident the predicted classification result is. For example, if  $P(y_i = 1|x_i)$  is close to 1, the classifier is highly confident that the tuple  $x_i$  is a positive example.

*How can we make a linear classifier not only predict which class label a tuple has, but also tell how confident it is in making such a prediction?* An effective way to this end is via **logistic regression** classifier. Let us first introduce an important function called sigmoid function, which is defined as  $\sigma(z) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-z}} = \frac{e^z}{1+e^z}$ . From Figure 7.13, we can see that the sigmoid function maps a real number in  $(-\infty, +\infty)$  (i.e., the x-axis of Figure 7.13) to an output value in the range of  $(0, 1)$  (i.e., the y-axis of Figure 7.13). Therefore, if we leverage the sigmoid function to map the output of a linear regression model to a number between 0 and 1, we can interpret the mapping result as the posterior probability of observing a positive class label. This is exactly what logistic regression classifier tries to do!

Formally, we have  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w) = \sigma(w^T x_i) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-w^T x_i}}$ , where  $\hat{y}_i$  is the predicted class label for the tuple with attributes  $x_i$ , and  $w$  is the weight vector. Notice that we have absorbed the bias term  $b$  into the weight vector  $w$  by introducing a dummy attribute to simplify the notation, as we did in the multi-linear regression model as well as in perceptron. Naturally, if  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w) > 0.5$ , the classifier predicts that the tuple  $x_i$  is a positive tuple (i.e.,  $\hat{y}_i = 1$ ), otherwise, it predicts a negative tuple (i.e.,  $\hat{y}_i = 0$ ). This (details are left as an exercise) is equivalent to the following linear classifier: predict  $\hat{y}_i = 1$  (i.e., positive tuple) if  $w^T x_i > 0$ , and predict  $\hat{y}_i = 0$  (i.e., negative tuple) if  $w^T x_i < 0$ . Therefore, if we know the weight vector  $w$ , the classification task for a given tuple is quite simple. That is, we only need to multiply the attribute vector  $x_i$  of the given tuple with the weight vector  $w$ , and then make a prediction based on the sign of  $w^T x_i$ . If  $w^T x_i$  is a positive number, we predict that the given tuple is a positive tuple. Otherwise, we predict that it is a negative tuple.

*“How can we determine the optimal weight vector  $w$  from a set of training tuples?”* The classic method to train a logistic regression classifier (i.e., to determine the best weight vector  $w$  from the training set) is via *maximum likelihood estimation* (MLE). Again, let us assume there are  $n$  training tuples  $(x_i, y_i)$  ( $i = 1, \dots, n$ ). Since we have a binary classification task, we can view the predicted class label  $\hat{y}_i$  as a Bernoulli random variable, which can only take two possible values, including  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w) = p_i$  and  $P(\hat{y}_i = 0|x_i, w) = 1 - p_i$ , where  $p_i = \sigma(w^T x_i) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-w^T x_i}}$  is determined by the sigmoid function and it describes the probability of observing a positive outcome for the predicted class label (i.e.,  $\hat{y}_i = 1$ ). Notice that the true class label  $y_i$  for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  tuple is a binary variable. Therefore, we have that  $P(\hat{y}_i = y_i) = p_i^{y_i} (1 - p_i)^{1-y_i}$ . The maximum likelihood estimation method aims to solve the following optimization problem, which says that we should choose the

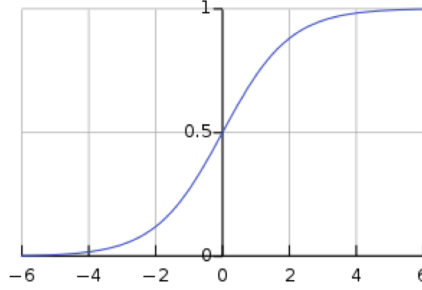


Figure 7.13: Illustration of sigmoid function. The sigmoid function ‘squashes’ an input from a larger range  $(-\infty, +\infty)$  to a smaller range  $(0, 1)$ . For this reason, sigmoid function is also called *squash function*. In Chapter 11, we will see other types of squash functions, which are called activation functions in the deep learning terminology.

best weight vector  $w$  that maximizes the likelihood of the training set. The intuition is that we want to find the optimal model parameter (i.e., the weight vector  $w$ ) so that there is the highest ‘chance’ (i.e., the likelihood or the probability) of observing the entire training set.

$$w^* = \operatorname{argmax}_w L(w) = \prod_{i=1}^n p_i^{y_i} (1-p_i)^{1-y_i} = \prod_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{e^{w^T x_i}}{1 + e^{w^T x_i}} \right)^{y_i} \left( \frac{1}{1 + e^{w^T x_i}} \right)^{1-y_i} \quad (7.19)$$

“But, how can we develop an algorithm to solve this optimization problem to find the optimal weight vector  $w$ ?” First, we notice that the likelihood function  $L(w)$  has many non-negative terms that are multiplied with each other. In practice, it is often more convenient to work with the logarithm of such a complicated function. Thus, we have the following equivalent optimization problem, where  $l(w)$  is called the log likelihood

$$w^* = \operatorname{argmax}_w l(w) = \sum_{i=1}^n y_i x_i^T w - \log(1 + e^{w^T x_i}) \quad (7.20)$$

From the optimization perspective, the good news is that the log likelihood function in Eq. (7.20) is a concave function and therefore its maximum (the optimal solution) uniquely exists. However, the bad news is that the closed-form solution for the above optimization problem does not exist. In this case, a common strategy is to find the optimal solution  $w^*$  iteratively as follows. In each iteration, we try to improve the current weight vector  $w$  so that the objective function we wish to maximize (the log likelihood function  $l(w)$ ) is improved most. In order to increase the current objective function  $l(w)$  most, it turns out the best direction to update the current estimation of the weight vector  $w$  is to follow its *gradient*. This leads to the following algorithm to learn the optimal weight vec-

tor  $w^*$  from the training set. We start with an initial guess of the weight vector  $w$  (e.g., we can simply set  $w = 0$ ). Then, the learning algorithm will iterate until it converges, or the maximum iteration number or some other pre-set stopping criteria is met. In each iteration, it updates the weight vector  $w$  as follows  $w \leftarrow w + \eta \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w))x_i$ , where  $\eta > 0$  is the user-specified learning rate.

“So, what is the intuition of the above algorithm?” Let us analyze the impact of each training tuple  $(x_i, y_i)$  on updating the estimation of the weight vector  $w$ . We consider two situations depending on whether it is a positive tuple (i.e.,  $y_i = 1$ ) or a negative tuple (i.e.,  $y_i = 0$ ). For the former, the impact of the given tuple on updating the weight vector  $w$  can be calculated as  $w \leftarrow w + \eta(1 - P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w))x_i$ . The intuition is that we want update the current weight vector  $w$  *towards* the direction of the attribute vector  $x_i$  of this positive tuple. For the latter case (i.e.,  $y_i = 0$ ), the impact of the given tuple on updating the weight vector  $w$  can be calculated as  $w \leftarrow w - \eta P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w)x_i$ . The intuition is that we want update the current weight vector  $w$  *away from* the direction of the attribute vector  $x_i$  of this negative tuple. From this perspective, the learning algorithm for training a logistic regression classifier bears some similarities to the perceptron algorithm. That is, both algorithms try to update the current weight vector  $w$  so that is (1) more aligned with the attribute vectors of positive tuples and (2) more mis-aligned with (i.e., towards the opposite direction of) the attribute vectors of negative tuples.

However, the two algorithms (perceptron vs. logistic regression) differ regarding to what extent the algorithms update the weight vector  $w$ . In perceptron, it uses a *fixed* learning rate  $\eta$  for all wrongly predicted tuples by the current weight vector  $w$ . On the other hand, in logistic regression, it depends on the learning rate  $\eta$  as well as  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w)$  (i.e., the probability that the given tuple belongs to the positive class based on the current weight vector  $w$ ). This makes the logistic regression algorithm *adaptive* in the following sense. For example, if  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w)$  is high for a positive tuple, it means that the prediction by the current weight vector  $w$  for this positive tuple is not only correct (i.e.,  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w) > 0.5$ ), but also quite confident (i.e.,  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w)$  is close to 1). Then, the impact of this positive tuple (i.e.,  $\eta(1 - P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w))$ ) on updating the weight vector is relatively small. On the other hand, if  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w)$  is high for a negative tuple, it means that the prediction by the current weight vector  $w$  for this negative tuple is either wrong (i.e.,  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w) > 0.5$ ), or correct but with low confidence (i.e.,  $P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w)$  is barely below 0.5). Then, the impact of this negative tuple (i.e.,  $\eta P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w)$ ) on updating the weight vector will be relatively large. In other words, the logistic regression learning algorithm pays more attention to those ‘hard’ training tuples, which are either wrongly predicted or correctly predicted with a low confidence by the current weight vector  $w$ . Recall that for the example in Figure 7.12(a), perceptron only uses  $x_1$  and  $x_8$  to update the current weight vector  $w$  since these two tuples are wrongly classified by the current  $w$ . In contrast, logistic regression uses *all* training tuples to update the weight vector  $w$ . Among them,  $x_1$  and  $x_8$  have the highest impact on updating  $w$  since they are both wrongly classified by the current classifier;  $x_2, x_3, x_5, x_9$  and  $x_{10}$  have the least impact since they are all correctly classified by the current weight vector  $w$ .

with a high confidence;  $x_4$ ,  $x_6$  and  $x_7$  have the moderate impact since they are correctly classified but with a relatively low confidence.

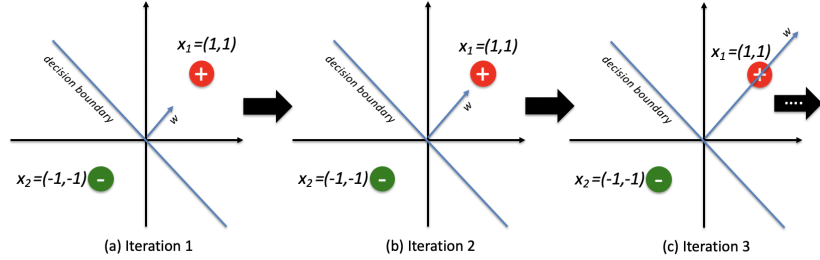


Figure 7.14: Illustration of the infinitely large weight vector of logistic regression in linearly separable case. There are two training tuples in 2d space, with one positive training tuple  $x_1 = (1, 1)$  and one negative training tuple  $x_2 = (-1, -1)$ . For simplicity, we let the bias scalar  $b = 0$  and the learning rate  $\eta = 1$ . Suppose that at iteration 1, the weight vector  $w = (1, 1)$ . Then, logistic regression algorithm introduced above will update the weight vector as  $w_{\text{new}} = w_{\text{old}} + (1 - P(\hat{y}_1 = 1|x_1, w_{\text{old}}))x_1 - P(\hat{y}_2 = 1|x_2, w_{\text{old}})x_2 = (0.5, 0.5) + a(1, 1) = (1 + 2a)w_{\text{old}}$ , where  $a = 1 - P(\hat{y}_1 = 1|x_1, w_{\text{old}}) + P(\hat{y}_2 = 1|x_2, w_{\text{old}}) > 0$ . As such, the new weight vector  $w_{\text{new}}$  shares the same direction as the old  $w_{\text{old}}$ . Therefore, the decision boundary remains the same, but new weight vector  $w_{\text{new}}$  grows in the magnitude by a factor of  $(1 + 2a)$ . This trend will continue as the logistic regression algorithm progresses, leading to a weight vector with an infinitely large magnitude.

“How good is the logistic regression algorithm? What are the potential limitations and how to mitigate?” Since the log likelihood function  $l(w)$  is a concave function, the algorithm for training a logistic regression classifier described above is guaranteed to converge to its optimal solution. However, if the training set is linearly separable, the algorithm might converge to a weight vector  $w$  with an infinitely large norm. (See an illustrative example in Figure 7.14.) A ‘large’ weight vector  $w$  could make the trained classifier prone to the noise of certain attributes of a given tuple. This will, in turn, lead to a poor generalization performance of the learned logistic regression classifier. In other words, the learned logistic regression classifier *overfits* the training set. An effective way to mitigate the overfitting is to introduce a regularization term  $\|w\|_2^2$  into the objective function  $l(w)$  to prevent the learned weight vector from becoming ‘too large’.<sup>11</sup> The second potential limitation is the *independence* assumption behind logistic regression. Recall that when we calculate the likelihood  $L(w)$  of the training set, we simply multiply the likelihood of each training tuple together (Eq. (7.19)). This means that we have implicitly assumed that different training tuples are independent of each

<sup>11</sup> From the statistical parameter estimation perspective, we are switching from the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) to maximum a posterior estimation (MAP). Adding a regularization term  $\|w\|_2^2$  into  $l(w)$  is equivalent to imposing a Gaussian prior with the mean vector at the origin for the weight vector  $w$ .

other. However, this assumption might be violated in some applications (e.g., users on a social network are inter-connected with each other). The graph-based classification might provide a natural remedy for this issue. The third potential limitation lies in the computational challenge. Notice that in the updating rule  $w \leftarrow w + \eta \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w))x_i$  described above, we need to calculate the gradients  $(y_i - P(\hat{y}_i = 1|x_i, w))$  for *all* training tuples and then sum them up to update the weight vector  $w$ . If there are millions of training tuples, it is computationally very expensive to perform such computation. An efficient way to address this issue is to use *stochastic gradient descent* method to train a logistic regression classifier. That is, at each iteration, we will randomly sample a small subset of training tuples (this is often referred to as a *minibatch*) and *only* use the sampled tuples (instead of all training tuples) to update the weight vector. It is worth pointing out that the stochastic gradient descent is extensively used in many other data mining algorithms, such as deep learning methods, which will be introduced in Chapter 11.

## 7.6 Model Evaluation and Selection

Now that you may have built a classification model, there may be many questions going through your mind. For example, suppose you have used data from previous sales to build a classifier to predict customer purchasing behavior. You would like an estimate of how accurately the classifier can predict the purchasing behavior of future customers, that is, future customer data on which the classifier has not been trained. You may even have tried different methods to build more than one classifier and now wish to compare their accuracy. But what is accuracy? How can we estimate it? Are some measures of a classifier's accuracy more appropriate than others? How can we obtain a *reliable* accuracy estimate? These questions are addressed in this section.

Section 7.6.1 describes various evaluation metrics for the predictive accuracy of a classifier. Based on randomly sampled partitions of the given data, hold-out and random subsampling (Section 7.6.2), cross-validation (Section 7.6.3), and bootstrap methods (Section 7.6.4) are common techniques for assessing accuracy. What if we have more than one classifier and want to choose the “best” one? This is referred to as **model selection** (i.e., choosing one classifier over another). The last two sections address this issue. Section 7.6.5 discusses how to use tests of statistical significance to assess whether the difference in accuracy between two classifiers is due to chance. Section 7.6.6 presents how to compare classifiers based on cost-benefit and receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves.

### 7.6.1 Metrics for Evaluating Classifier Performance

This section presents measures for assessing how good or how “accurate” your classifier is at predicting the class label of tuples. We will consider the case where the class tuples are more or less evenly distributed, as well as the case where classes are unbalanced (e.g., where an important class of interest is rare such as in medical tests). The classifier evaluation measures presented in this section are summarized

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Formula</i>
accuracy, recognition rate	$\frac{TP + TN}{P + N}$
error rate, misclassification rate	$\frac{FP + FN}{P + N}$
sensitivity, true positive rate, recall	$\frac{TP}{P}$
specificity, true negative rate	$\frac{TN}{N}$
precision	$\frac{TP}{TP + FP}$
$F$ , $F_1$ , $F$ -score, harmonic mean of precision and recall	$\frac{2 \times \text{precision} \times \text{recall}}{\text{precision} + \text{recall}}$
$F_\beta$ , where $\beta$ is a non-negative real number	$\frac{(1 + \beta^2) \times \text{precision} \times \text{recall}}{\beta^2 \times \text{precision} + \text{recall}}$

Figure 7.15: Evaluation measures. Note that some measures are known by more than one name.  $TP, TN, FP, P, N$  refer to the number of true positive, true negative, false positive, positive, and negative samples, respectively (see text).

in Figure 7.15. They include accuracy (also known as recognition rate), sensitivity (or recall), specificity, precision,  $F_1$ , and  $F_\beta$ . Note that although accuracy is a specific measure, the word “accuracy” is also used as a general term to refer to a classifier’s predictive abilities.

Using training data to derive a classifier and then estimate the accuracy of the learned model can result in misleading overoptimistic estimates due to over-specialization of the learning algorithm to the data. (We will say more on this in a moment!) Instead, it is better to measure the classifier’s accuracy on a *test set* consisting of class-labeled tuples that were not used to train the model.

Before we discuss the various measures, we need to become comfortable with some terminology. Recall that we can talk in terms of **positive tuples** (tuples of the main class of interest) and **negative tuples** (all other tuples).<sup>12</sup> Given two classes, for example, the positive tuples may be *buys\_computer = yes* while the negative tuples are *buys\_computer = no*. Suppose we use our classifier on a test set of labeled tuples.  $P$  is the number of positive tuples, and  $N$  is the number of negative tuples. For each tuple, we compare the classifier’s class label prediction with the tuple’s known class label.

There are four additional terms we need to know that are the “building blocks” used in computing various evaluation measures. Understanding them will make it easy to grasp the meaning of the various measures.

- **True positives ( $TP$ ):** These refer to the positive tuples that were correctly labeled by the classifier. Let  $TP$  be the number of true positives.

<sup>12</sup>In the machine learning and pattern recognition literature, these are referred to as *positive samples* and *negative samples*, respectively.

		Predicted class		
Actual class		<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	Total
	<i>yes</i>	<i>TP</i>	<i>FN</i>	<i>P</i>
	<i>no</i>	<i>FP</i>	<i>TN</i>	<i>N</i>
	Total	<i>P'</i>	<i>N'</i>	<i>P + N</i>

Figure 7.16: Confusion matrix, shown with totals for positive and negative tuples.

- **True negatives** (*TN*): These are the negative tuples that were correctly labeled by the classifier. Let *TN* be the number of true negatives.
- **False positives** (*FP*): These are the negative tuples that were incorrectly labeled as positive (e.g., tuples of class *buys\_computer = no* for which the classifier predicted *buys\_computer = yes*). Let *FP* be the number of false positives.
- **False negatives** (*FN*): These are the positive tuples that were mislabeled as negative (e.g., tuples of class *buys\_computer = yes* for which the classifier predicted *buys\_computer = no*). Let *FN* be the number of false negatives.

These terms are summarized in the **confusion matrix** of Figure 7.16.

A confusion matrix is a useful tool for analyzing how well your classifier can recognize tuples of different classes. *TP* and *TN* tell us when the classifier is getting things right, while *FP* and *FN* tell us when the classifier is getting things wrong (i.e., mislabeling). Given  $m$  classes (where  $m \geq 2$ ), a **confusion matrix** is a table of at least size  $m$  by  $m$ . An entry,  $CM_{ij}$  at the  $i^{\text{th}}$  row and the  $j^{\text{th}}$  column indicates the number of tuples of class  $i$  that were labeled by the classifier as class  $j$ . For a classifier to have good accuracy, ideally most of the tuples would be represented along the diagonal of the confusion matrix, from entry  $CM_{1,1}$  to entry  $CM_{m,m}$ , with the rest of the entries being zero or close to zero. That is, ideally, *FP* and *FN* are around zero.

The table may have additional rows or columns to provide totals. For example, in the confusion matrix of Figure 7.16, *P* and *N* are shown. In addition, *P'* is the number of tuples that were labeled as positive ( $TP + FP$ ) and *N'* is the number of tuples that were labeled as negative ( $TN + FN$ ). The total number of tuples is  $TP + TN + FP + FN$ , or  $P + N$ , or  $P' + N'$ . Note that although the confusion matrix shown is for a binary classification problem, confusion matrices can be easily drawn for multiple classes in a similar manner.

Now let's look at the evaluation measures, starting with accuracy. The **accuracy** of a classifier on a given test set is the percentage of test set tuples that are correctly classified by the classifier. That is,

$$accuracy = \frac{TP + TN}{P + N}. \quad (7.21)$$

In the pattern recognition literature, this is also referred to as the overall **recognition rate** of the classifier, that is, it reflects how well the classifier recognizes

Classes	<i>buys_computer</i> = <i>yes</i>	<i>buys_computer</i> = <i>no</i>	Total	Recognition (%)
<i>buys_computer</i> = <i>yes</i>	<b>6954</b>	<b>46</b>	7000	99.34
<i>buys_computer</i> = <i>no</i>	<b>412</b>	<b>2588</b>	3000	86.27
Total	7366	2634	10,000	95.42

Figure 7.17: Confusion matrix for the classes *buys\_computer* = *yes* and *buys\_computer* = *no*, where an entry in row *i* and column *j* shows the number of tuples of class *i* that were labeled by the classifier as class *j*. Ideally, the nondiagonal entries should be zero or close to zero.

tuples of the various classes. An example of a confusion matrix for the two classes *buys\_computer* = *yes* (positive) and *buys\_computer* = *no* (negative) is given in Figure 7.17. Totals are shown, as well as the recognition rates per class and overall. By glancing at a confusion matrix, it is easy to see if the corresponding classifier is confusing two classes.

For example, we see that it mislabeled 412 “no” tuples as “yes.” Accuracy is most effective when the class distribution is relatively balanced.

We can also speak of the **error rate** or **misclassification rate** of a classifier, *M*, which is simply  $1 - \text{accuracy}(M)$ , where  $\text{accuracy}(M)$  is the accuracy of *M*. This also can be computed as

$$\text{error rate} = \frac{FP + FN}{P + N}. \quad (7.22)$$

If we were to use the training set (instead of a test set) to estimate the error rate of a model, this quantity is known as the **resubstitution error**.<sup>13</sup> This error estimate is optimistic of the true error rate (and similarly, the corresponding accuracy estimate is optimistic) because the model is not tested on any samples that it has not already seen.

We now consider the **class imbalance problem**, where the main class of interest is rare. That is, the data set distribution reflects a significant majority of the negative class and a minority positive class. For example, in fraud detection applications, the class of interest (or positive class) is “*fraud*,” which occurs much less frequently than the negative “*nonfraudulent*” class. In medical data, there may be a rare class, such as “*cancer*”. Suppose that you have trained a classifier to classify medical data tuples, where the class label attribute is “*cancer*” and the possible class values are “*yes*” and “*no*”. An accuracy rate of, say, 97% may make the classifier seem quite accurate, but what if only, say, 3% of the training tuples are actually cancer? Clearly, an accuracy rate of 97% may not be acceptable—the classifier could be correctly labeling only the noncancer tuples, for instance, and misclassifying all the cancer tuples. Instead, we need other measures, which assess how well the classifier can recognize the positive tuples (*cancer* = *yes*) and how well it can recognize the negative tuples (*cancer* = *no*).

The **sensitivity** and **specificity** measures can be used, respectively, for this purpose. Sensitivity is also referred to as the *true positive (recognition) rate* (i.e.,

<sup>13</sup>In machine learning literature, it is often referred to as the training error.



Classes	yes	no	Total	Recognition (%)
yes	<b>90</b>	<b>210</b>	300	30.00
no	<b>140</b>	<b>9560</b>	9700	98.56
Total	230	9770	10,000	96.40

Figure 7.18: Confusion matrix for the classes *cancer* = *yes* and *cancer* = *no*.

the proportion of positive tuples that are correctly identified), while specificity is the *true negative rate* (i.e., the proportion of negative tuples that are correctly identified). These measures are defined as

$$sensitivity = \frac{TP}{P} \quad (7.23)$$

$$specificity = \frac{TN}{N}. \quad (7.24)$$

It can be shown that accuracy is a function of sensitivity and specificity:

$$accuracy = sensitivity \frac{P}{(P + N)} + specificity \frac{N}{(P + N)}. \quad (7.25)$$

**Example 7.6.1 Sensitivity and specificity.** Figure 7.18 shows a confusion matrix for medical data where the class values are *yes* and *no* for a class label attribute, *cancer*. The sensitivity of the classifier is  $\frac{90}{300} = 30.00\%$ . The specificity is  $\frac{9560}{9700} = 98.56\%$ . The classifier's overall accuracy is  $\frac{9650}{10,000} = 96.50\%$ . Thus, we note that although the classifier has a high accuracy, its ability to correctly label the positive (rare) class is poor given its low sensitivity. It has high specificity, meaning that it can accurately recognize negative tuples. Techniques for handling class-imbalanced data are given in Section 7.7.5.

The *precision* and *recall* measures are also widely used in classification. **Precision** can be thought of as a measure of *exactness* (i.e., what percentage of tuples labeled as positive are actually such), whereas **recall** is a measure of *completeness* (what percentage of positive tuples are labeled as such). If recall seems familiar, that's because it is the same as sensitivity (or the *true positive rate*). These measures can be computed as

$$precision = \frac{TP}{TP + FP} \quad (7.26)$$

$$recall = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} = \frac{TP}{P}. \quad (7.27)$$

**Example 7.6.2 Precision and recall.** The precision of the classifier in Figure 7.18 for the *yes* class is  $\frac{90}{230} = 39.13\%$ . The recall is  $\frac{90}{300} = 30.00\%$ , which is the same calculation for sensitivity in Example 7.6.1.

A perfect precision score of 1.0 for a class  $C$  means that every tuple that the classifier labeled as belonging to class  $C$  does indeed belong to class  $C$ . However, it does not tell us anything about the number of class  $C$  tuples that the classifier mislabeled. A perfect recall score of 1.0 for  $C$  means that every item from class  $C$  was labeled as such, but it does not tell us how many other tuples were incorrectly labeled as belonging to class  $C$ . There tends to be an inverse relationship between precision and recall, where it is possible to increase one at the cost of reducing the other. For example, our medical classifier may achieve high precision by labeling all cancer tuples that present a certain way as *cancer* but may have low recall if it mislabels many other instances of *cancer* tuples. Precision and recall scores are typically used together, where precision values are compared for a fixed value of recall, or vice versa. For example, we may compare precision values at a recall value of, say, 0.75.

An alternative way to use precision and recall is to combine them into a single measure. This is the approach of the  $F$  measure (also known as the  $F_1$  score or  $F$ -score) and the  $F_\beta$  measure. They are defined as

$$F = \frac{2 \times \text{precision} \times \text{recall}}{\text{precision} + \text{recall}} \quad (7.28)$$

$$F_\beta = \frac{(1 + \beta^2) \times \text{precision} \times \text{recall}}{\beta^2 \times \text{precision} + \text{recall}}, \quad (7.29)$$

where  $\beta$  is a non-negative real number. The  $F$  measure is the *harmonic mean* of precision and recall (the proof of which is left as an exercise). It gives equal weights to precision and recall. The  $F_\beta$  measure is a weighted measure of precision and recall. It assigns  $\beta$  times as much weight to recall as to precision. Commonly used  $F_\beta$  measures are  $F_2$  (which weights recall twice as much as precision) and  $F_{0.5}$  (which weights precision twice as much as recall).

“Are there other cases where accuracy may not be appropriate?” In classification problems, it is commonly assumed that all tuples are uniquely classifiable, that is, each training tuple can belong to only one class. Yet, owing to the wide diversity of data in large databases, it is not always reasonable to assume that all tuples are uniquely classifiable. Rather, it is more probable to assume that each tuple may belong to more than one class. How then can the accuracy of classifiers on large databases be measured? The accuracy measure is not appropriate, because it does not take into account the possibility of tuples belonging to more than one class.

Rather than returning a class label, it is useful to return a class probability distribution. Accuracy measures may then use a **second guess** heuristic, whereby a class prediction is judged as correct if it agrees with the first or second most probable class. Although this does take into consideration, to some degree, the nonunique classification of tuples, it is not a complete solution.

In addition to accuracy-based measures, classifiers can also be compared with respect to the following additional aspects:

- **Speed:** This refers to the computational cost involved in generating and using the given classifier.

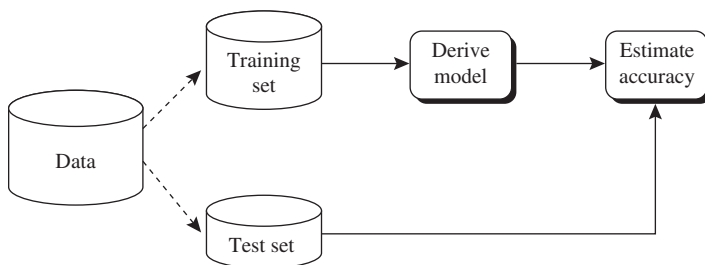


Figure 7.19: Estimating accuracy with the holdout method.

- **Robustness:** This is the ability of the classifier to make correct predictions given noisy data or data with missing values. Robustness is typically assessed with a series of synthetic data sets representing increasing degrees of noise and missing values.
- **Scalability:** This refers to the ability to construct the classifier efficiently given large amounts of data. Scalability is typically assessed with a series of data sets of increasing size.
- **Interpretability:** This refers to the level of understanding and insight that is provided by the classifier or predictor. Interpretability could be subjective and, therefore, more difficult to assess. Decision trees and classification rules can be easy to interpret, yet their interpretability may diminish the more they become complex. We will introduce some basic techniques to improve the interpretability of classification models in Chapter 8.

In summary, we have presented several evaluation measures. The accuracy measure works best when the data classes are fairly evenly distributed. Other measures, such as sensitivity (or recall), specificity, precision,  $F$ , and  $F_\beta$ , are better suited to the class imbalance problem, where the main class of interest is rare. The remaining subsections focus on obtaining reliable classifier accuracy estimates.

### 7.6.2 Holdout Method and Random Subsampling

The **holdout** method is what we have alluded to so far in our discussions about accuracy. In this method, the given data are randomly partitioned into two independent sets, a *training set* and a *test set*. Typically, two-thirds of the data are allocated to the training set, and the remaining one-third is allocated to the test set. The training set is used to derive the model. The model's accuracy is then estimated with the test set (Figure 7.19). The estimate is pessimistic because only a portion of the initial data is used to derive the model.

**Random subsampling** is a variation of the holdout method in which the holdout method is repeated  $k$  times. The overall accuracy estimate is taken as the average of the accuracies obtained from each iteration.

### 7.6.3 Cross-Validation

In ***k*-fold cross-validation**, the initial data are randomly partitioned into  $k$  mutually exclusive subsets or “folds”  $D_1, D_2, \dots, D_k$ , each of approximately equal size. Training and testing are performed  $k$  times. In iteration  $i$ , partition  $D_i$  is reserved as the test set, and the remaining partitions are collectively used to train the model. That is, in the first iteration, subsets  $D_2, \dots, D_k$  collectively serve as the training set to obtain the first model, which is tested on  $D_1$ ; the second iteration is trained on subsets  $D_1, D_3, \dots, D_k$  and tested on  $D_2$ ; and so on. Unlike the holdout and random subsampling methods, here each sample is used the same number of times for training and once for testing. For classification, the accuracy estimate is the overall number of correct classifications from the  $k$  iterations, divided by the total number of tuples in the initial data.

**Leave-one-out-cross-validation** is a special case of  $k$ -fold cross-validation where  $k$  is set to the number of initial tuples. That is, only one sample is “left out” at a time for the test set. Leave-one-out-cross-validation is often used when the initial dataset is small. In **stratified cross-validation**, the folds are stratified so that the class distribution of the tuples in each fold is approximately the same as that in the initial data.

In practice, stratified 10-fold cross-validation is recommended for estimating accuracy (even if computation power allows using more folds) due to its relatively low bias and variance.

### 7.6.4 Bootstrap

Unlike the accuracy estimation methods just mentioned, the **bootstrap method** samples the given training tuples uniformly *with replacement*. That is, each time a tuple is selected, it is equally likely to be selected again and re-added to the training set. For instance, imagine a machine that randomly selects tuples for our training set. In *sampling with replacement*, the machine is allowed to select the same tuple more than once.

There are several bootstrap methods. A commonly used one is the **.632 bootstrap**, which works as follows. Suppose we are given a data set of  $d$  tuples. The data set is sampled  $d$  times, with replacement, resulting in a *bootstrap sample* or training set of  $d$  samples. Some of the original data tuples will likely occur more than once in this sample. The data tuples that did not make it into the training set end up forming the test set. Suppose we were to try this out several times. As it turns out, on average, 63.2% of the original data tuples will end up in the bootstrap sample, and the remaining 36.8% will form the test set (hence, the name, .632 bootstrap).

“Where does the figure, 63.2%, come from?” Each tuple has a probability of  $1/d$  of being selected, so the probability of not being chosen is  $(1 - 1/d)$ . We have to select  $d$  times, so the probability that a tuple will not be chosen during this whole time is  $(1 - 1/d)^d$ . If  $d$  is large, the probability approaches  $e^{-1} = 0.368$ .<sup>14</sup> Thus,

<sup>14</sup> $e$  is the base of natural logarithms, that is,  $e = 2.718$ .

36.8% of tuples will not be selected for training and thereby end up in the test set, and the remaining 63.2% will form the training set.

We can repeat the sampling procedure  $k$  times, where in each iteration, we use the current test set to obtain an estimated accuracy of the model obtained from the current bootstrap sample. The overall accuracy of the model,  $M$ , is then estimated as

$$Acc(M) = \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k (0.632 \times Acc(M_i)_{test\_set} + 0.368 \times Acc(M_i)_{train\_set}), \quad (7.30)$$

where  $Acc(M_i)_{test\_set}$  is the accuracy of the model obtained with bootstrap sample  $i$  when it is applied to test set  $i$ .  $Acc(M_i)_{train\_set}$  is the accuracy of the model obtained with bootstrap sample  $i$  when it is applied to the original set of data tuples. Bootstrapping tends to be overly optimistic. It works best with small data sets.

### 7.6.5 Model Selection Using Statistical Tests of Significance

Suppose that we have generated two classification models,  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ , from our data. We have performed 10-fold cross-validation to obtain a mean error rate<sup>15</sup> for each. How can we determine which model is best? It may seem intuitive to select the model with the lowest error rate; however, the mean error rates are just *estimates* of the error on the true population of future data cases. There can be considerable variance between error rates within any given 10-fold cross-validation experiment. Although the mean error rates obtained for  $M_1$  and  $M_2$  may appear different, that difference may not be statistically significant. What if any difference between the two may just be attributed to chance? This section addresses these questions.

To determine if there is any “real” difference in the mean error rates of two models, we need to employ a *test of statistical significance*. In addition, we want to obtain some confidence limits for our mean error rates so that we can make statements like, “Any observed mean will not vary by  $\pm$  two standard errors 95% of the time for future samples” or “One model is better than the other by a margin of error of  $\pm 4\%$ .”

What do we need to perform the statistical test? Suppose that for each model, we did 10-fold cross-validation, say, 10 times, each time using a different 10-fold data partitioning. Each partitioning is independently drawn. We can average the 10 error rates obtained each for  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ , respectively, to obtain the mean error rate for each model. For a given model, the individual error rates calculated in the cross-validations may be considered different, independent samples from a probability distribution. In general, they follow a *t-distribution with  $k - 1$  degrees of freedom* where, here,  $k = 10$ . (This distribution looks very similar to a normal, or Gaussian, distribution even though the functions defining the two are quite different. Both are unimodal, symmetric, and bell-shaped.) This allows us to do hypothesis testing where the significance test used is the **t-test**, or **Student’s t-test**.

<sup>15</sup>Recall that the error rate of a model,  $M$ , is  $1 - accuracy(M)$ .

Our hypothesis is that the two models are the same, or in other words, that the difference in mean error rate between the two is zero. If we can reject this hypothesis (referred to as the *null hypothesis*), then we can conclude that the difference between the two models is statistically significant, in which case we can select the model with the lower error rate.

In data mining practice, we may often employ a single test set, that is, the same test set can be used for both  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ . In such cases, we do a **pairwise comparison** of the two models *for each* 10-fold cross-validation round. That is, for the  $i$ th round of 10-fold cross-validation, the same cross-validation partitioning is used to obtain an error rate for  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ . Let  $err(M_1)_i$  (or  $err(M_2)_i$ ) be the error rate of model  $M_1$  (or  $M_2$ ) on round  $i$ . The error rates for  $M_1$  are averaged to obtain a mean error rate for  $M_1$ , denoted  $\overline{err}(M_1)$ . Similarly, we can obtain  $\overline{err}(M_2)$ . The variance of the difference between the two models is denoted  $var(M_1 - M_2)$ . The  $t$ -test computes the  $t$ -statistic with  $k - 1$  degrees of freedom for  $k$  samples. In our example, we have  $k = 10$  since, here, the  $k$  samples are our error rates obtained from ten 10-fold cross-validations for each model. The  $t$ -statistic for pairwise comparison is computed as follows:

$$t = \frac{\overline{err}(M_1) - \overline{err}(M_2)}{\sqrt{var(M_1 - M_2)/k}}, \quad (7.31)$$

where

$$var(M_1 - M_2) = \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^k [err(M_1)_i - err(M_2)_i - (\overline{err}(M_1) - \overline{err}(M_2))]^2. \quad (7.32)$$

To determine whether  $M_1$  and  $M_2$  are significantly different, we compute  $t$  and select a **significance level**, *sig*. In practice, a significance level of 5% or 1% is typically used. We then consult a table for the  $t$ -distribution, available in standard textbooks on statistics. This table is usually shown arranged by degrees of freedom as rows and significance levels as columns. Suppose we want to ascertain whether the difference between  $M_1$  and  $M_2$  is significantly different for 95% of the population, that is, *sig* = 5% or 0.05. We need to find the  $t$ -distribution value corresponding to  $k - 1$  degrees of freedom (or 9 degrees of freedom for our example) from the table. However, because the  $t$ -distribution is symmetric, typically only the upper percentage points of the distribution are shown. Therefore, we look up the table value for  $z = sig/2$ , which, in this case, is 0.025, where  $z$  is also referred to as a **confidence limit**. If  $t > z$  or  $t < -z$ , then our value of  $t$  lies in the rejection region, within the distribution's tails. This means that we can reject the null hypothesis that the means of  $M_1$  and  $M_2$  are the same and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the two models. Otherwise, if we cannot reject the null hypothesis, we conclude that any difference between  $M_1$  and  $M_2$  can be attributed to chance.

If two test sets are available instead of a single test set, then a nonpaired version of the  $t$ -test is used, where the variance between the means of the two models is estimated as

$$var(M_1 - M_2) = \frac{var(M_1)}{k_1} + \frac{var(M_2)}{k_2}, \quad (7.33)$$

and  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  are the number of cross-validation samples (in our case, 10-fold cross-validation rounds) used for  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ , respectively. This is also known as the **two sample  $t$ -test**.<sup>16</sup> When consulting the table of  $t$ -distribution, the number of degrees of freedom used is taken as the minimum number of degrees of the two models.

### 7.6.6 Comparing Classifiers Based on Cost–Benefit and ROC Curves

The true positives, true negatives, false positives, and false negatives are also useful in assessing the **costs and benefits** (or risks and gains) associated with a classification model. The cost associated with a false negative (such as incorrectly predicting that a cancerous patient is not cancerous) is far greater than those of a false positive (incorrectly yet conservatively labeling a noncancerous patient as cancerous). In such cases, we can outweigh one type of error over another by assigning a different cost to each. These costs may consider the danger to the patient, financial costs of resulting therapies, and other hospital costs. Similarly, the benefits associated with a true positive decision may be different from those of a true negative. Up to now, to compute the classifier’s accuracy, we have assumed equal costs and essentially divided the sum of true positives and true negatives by the total number of test tuples.

Alternatively, we can incorporate costs and benefits by computing the average cost (or benefit) per decision. Other applications involving cost–benefit analysis include loan application decisions and target marketing mailouts. For example, the cost of loaning to a defaulter greatly exceeds that of the lost business incurred by denying a loan to a nondefaulter. Similarly, in an application that tries to identify households that are likely to respond to mailouts of certain promotional material, the cost of mailouts to numerous households that do not respond may outweigh the cost of lost business from not mailing to households that would have responded. Other costs to consider in the overall analysis include the costs to collect the data and to develop the classification tools.

**Receiver operating characteristic curves** are a useful visual tool for comparing two classification models. ROC curves come from signal detection theory that was developed during World War II for the analysis of radar images. A ROC curve for a given model shows the trade-off between the *true positive rate* ( $TPR$ ) and the *false positive rate* ( $FPR$ ).<sup>17</sup> Given a test set and a model,  $TPR$  is the proportion of positive (or “yes”) tuples that are correctly labeled by the model;  $FPR$  is the proportion of negative (or “no”) tuples that are mislabeled as positive. Given that  $TP$ ,  $FP$ ,  $P$ , and  $N$  are the number of true positive, false positive, positive, and negative tuples, respectively, from Section 7.6.1 we know that  $TPR = \frac{TP}{P}$ , which is sensitivity. Furthermore,  $FPR = \frac{FP}{N}$ , which is  $1 - \text{specificity}$ .

For a two-class problem, a ROC curve allows us to visualize the trade-off between the rate at which the model can accurately recognize positive cases versus

<sup>16</sup>This test was used in sampling cubes for OLAP-based mining in Chapter 5.

<sup>17</sup> $TPR$  and  $FPR$  are the two operating characteristics being compared.

the rate at which it mistakenly identifies negative cases as positive for different portions of the test set. Any increase in  $TPR$  occurs at the cost of an increase in  $FPR$ . The area under the ROC curve is a measure of the accuracy of the model.

To plot a ROC curve for a given classification model,  $M$ , the model must be able to return a probability of the predicted class for each test tuple. With this information, we rank and sort the tuples so that the tuple that is most likely to belong to the positive or “yes” class appears at the top of the list, and the tuple that is least likely to belong to the positive class lands at the bottom of the list. Naïve Bayesian (Section 7.3) and logistic regression (Section 7.5) classifiers return a class probability distribution for each prediction and, therefore, are appropriate, although other classifiers, such as decision tree classifiers (Section 7.2), can easily be modified to return class probability predictions. Let the value that a probabilistic classifier returns for a given tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  be  $f(\mathbf{X}) \rightarrow [0, 1]$ . For a binary problem, a threshold  $t$  is typically selected so that tuples where  $f(\mathbf{X}) \geq t$  are considered positive and all the other tuples are considered negative. Note that the number of true positives and the number of false positives are both functions of  $t$ , so that we could write  $TP(t)$  and  $FP(t)$ . Both are monotonic non-increasing functions.

We first describe the general idea behind plotting a ROC curve and then follow up with an example. The vertical axis of a ROC curve represents  $TPR$ . The horizontal axis represents  $FPR$ . To plot a ROC curve for  $M$ , we begin as follows. Starting at the bottom left corner (where  $TPR = FPR = 0$ ), we check the tuple’s actual class label at the top of the list. If we have a true positive (i.e., a positive tuple that was correctly classified), then  $TP$  and thus  $TPR$  increase. On the graph, we move up and plot a point. If, instead, the model classifies a negative tuple as positive, we have a false positive, and so both  $FP$  and  $FPR$  increase. On the graph, we move right and plot a point. This process is repeated for each of the test tuples in ranked order, each time moving up on the graph for a true positive or toward the right for a false positive.

**Example 7.6.1 Plotting a ROC curve.** Figure 7.20 shows the probability value

<i>Tuple #</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Prob.</i>	<i>TP</i>	<i>FP</i>	<i>TN</i>	<i>FN</i>	<i>TPR</i>	<i>FPR</i>
1	<i>P</i>	0.90	1	0	5	4	0.2	0
2	<i>P</i>	0.80	2	0	5	3	0.4	0
3	<i>N</i>	0.70	2	1	4	3	0.4	0.2
4	<i>P</i>	0.60	3	1	4	2	0.6	0.2
5	<i>P</i>	0.55	4	1	4	1	0.8	0.2
6	<i>N</i>	0.54	4	2	3	1	0.8	0.4
7	<i>N</i>	0.53	4	3	2	1	0.8	0.6
8	<i>N</i>	0.51	4	4	1	1	0.8	0.8
9	<i>P</i>	0.50	5	4	1	0	1.0	0.8
10	<i>N</i>	0.40	5	5	0	0	1.0	1.0

Figure 7.20: Tuples sorted by decreasing score, where the score is the value returned by a probabilistic classifier.



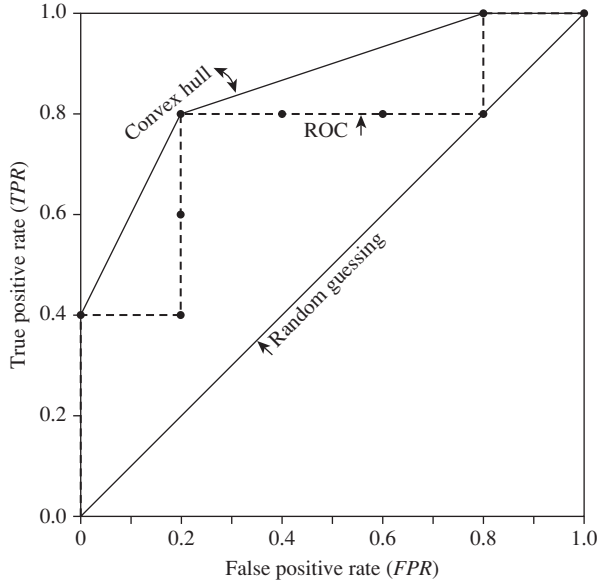


Figure 7.21: ROC curve for the data in Figure 7.20.

(column 3) returned by a probabilistic classifier for each of the 10 tuples in a test set, sorted in the decreasing probability order. Column 1 is merely a tuple identification number, which aids in our explanation. Column 2 is the actual class label of the tuple. There are five positive tuples and five negative tuples, thus  $P = 5$  and  $N = 5$ . As we examine the known class label of each tuple, we can determine the values of the remaining columns,  $TP$ ,  $FP$ ,  $TN$ ,  $FN$ ,  $TPR$ , and  $FPR$ . We start with tuple 1, which has the highest probability score, and take that score as our threshold, that is,  $t = 0.9$ . Thus, the classifier considers tuple 1 to be positive, and all the other tuples are considered negative. Since the actual class label of tuple 1 is positive, we have a true positive, hence  $TP = 1$  and  $FP = 0$ . Among the remaining nine tuples, which are all classified as negative, five actually are negative (thus,  $TN = 5$ ). The remaining four are all actually positive, thus,  $FN = 4$ . We can therefore compute  $TPR = \frac{TP}{P} = \frac{1}{5} = 0.2$ , while  $FPR = 0$ . Thus, we have the point  $(0.2, 0)$  for the ROC curve.

Next, threshold  $t$  is set to 0.8, the probability value for tuple 2, so this tuple is now also considered positive, while tuples 3 through 10 are considered negative. The actual class label of tuple 2 is positive, thus now  $TP = 2$ . The rest of the row can easily be computed, resulting in the point  $(0.4, 0)$ . Next, we examine the class label of tuple 3 and let  $t$  be 0.7, the probability value returned by the classifier for that tuple. Thus, tuple 3 is considered positive, yet its actual label is negative, and so it is a false positive. Thus,  $TP$  stays the same and  $FP$  increments so that  $FP = 1$ . The rest of the values in the row can also be easily computed, yielding the point  $(0.4, 0.2)$ . The resulting ROC graph, from examining each tuple, is the jagged line shown in Figure 7.21.

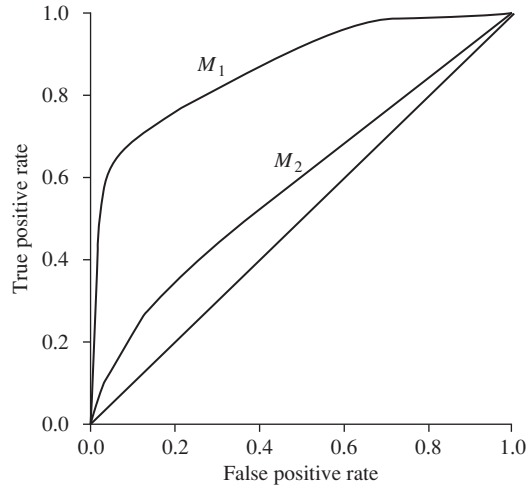


Figure 7.22: ROC curves of two classification models,  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ . The diagonal shows where, for every true positive, we are equally likely to encounter a false positive. The closer an ROC curve is to the diagonal line, the less accurate the model is. Thus,  $M_1$  is more accurate here.

There are many methods to obtain a curve out of these points, the most common of which is to use a convex hull. The plot also shows a diagonal line where for every true positive of such a model, we are just as likely to encounter a false positive. For comparison, this line represents random guessing.

Figure 7.22 shows the ROC curves of two classification models. The diagonal line representing random guessing is also shown. Thus, the closer the ROC curve of a model is to the diagonal line, the less accurate the model. If the model is really good, initially we are more likely to encounter true positives as we move down the ranked list. Thus, the curve moves steeply up from zero. Later, as we start to encounter fewer and fewer true positives, and more and more false positives, the curve eases off and becomes more horizontal.

To assess the accuracy of a model, we can measure the area under the curve (AUC). Several software packages are able to perform such calculation. The closer the area is to 0.5, the less accurate the corresponding model is. A model with perfect accuracy will have an area under the curve (AUC) of 1.0.

## 7.7 Techniques to Improve Classification Accuracy

In this section, you will learn some tricks for increasing classification accuracy. We focus on *ensemble methods*. An ensemble for classification is a composite model, made up of a combination of classifiers. The individual classifiers vote, and a class label prediction is returned by the ensemble based on the collection of votes. Ensembles tend to be more accurate than their component classifiers. We start

off in Section 7.7.1 by introducing ensemble methods in general. Bagging (Section 7.7.2), boosting (Section 7.7.3), and random forests (Section 7.7.4) are popular ensemble methods.

Traditional learning models assume that the data classes are well distributed. In many real-world data domains, however, the data are class-imbalanced, where the main class of interest is represented by only a few tuples. This is known as the *class imbalance problem*. We also study techniques for improving the classification accuracy of class-imbalanced data. These are presented in Section 7.7.5.

### 7.7.1 Introducing Ensemble Methods

*Bagging*, *boosting*, and *random forests* are examples of **ensemble methods** (Figure 7.23). An ensemble combines a series of  $k$  learned models (or *base classifiers*),  $M_1, M_2, \dots, M_k$ , with the aim of creating an improved composite classification model,  $M^*$ . A given data set,  $D$ , is used to create  $k$  training sets,  $D_1, D_2, \dots, D_k$ , where  $D_i$  ( $1 \leq i \leq k$ ) is used to generate classifier  $M_i$ . Given a new data tuple to classify, the base classifiers each vote by returning a class prediction. The ensemble returns a class prediction based on the votes of the base classifiers.

An ensemble tends to be more accurate than its base classifiers. For example, consider an ensemble that performs majority voting. That is, given a tuple  $\mathbf{X}$  to classify, it collects the class label predictions returned from the base classifiers and outputs the class in the majority. The base classifiers may make mistakes, but the ensemble will misclassify  $\mathbf{X}$  only if over half of the base classifiers are in error. Ensembles yield better results when there is significant diversity among the models. That is, ideally, there is little correlation among classifiers. The base classifiers should also perform better than random guessing. Each base classifier can be allocated to a different CPU and so ensemble methods are parallelizable.

To help illustrate the power of an ensemble, consider a simple two-class prob-

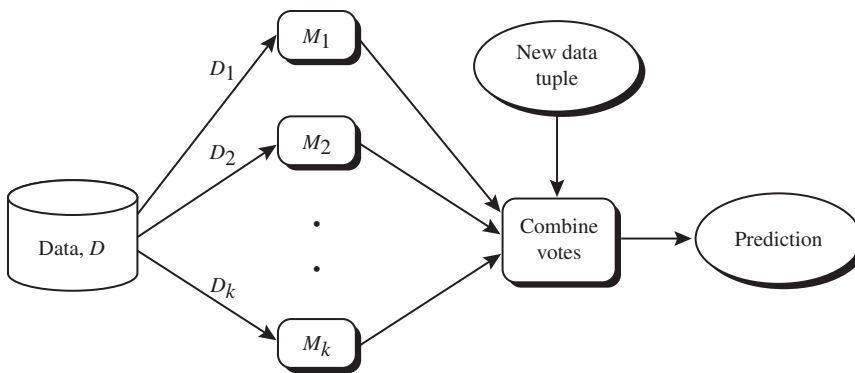


Figure 7.23: Increasing classifier accuracy. Ensemble methods generate a set of classification models,  $M_1, M_2, \dots, M_k$ . Given a new data tuple to classify, each classifier “votes” for the class label of that tuple. The ensemble combines the votes to return a class prediction.

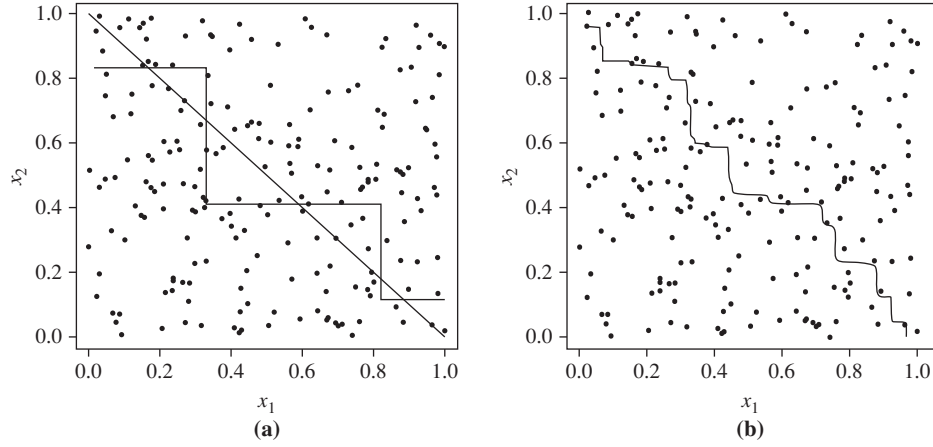


Figure 7.24: Decision boundary by (a) a single decision tree and (b) an ensemble of decision trees for a linearly separable problem (i.e., where the actual decision boundary is a straight line). The decision tree struggles with approximating a linear boundary. The decision boundary of the ensemble is closer to the true boundary. *Source:* From Seni and Elder [SE10]. © 2010 Morgan & Claypool Publishers; used with permission.

lem described by two attributes,  $x_1$  and  $x_2$ . The problem has a linear decision boundary. Figure 7.24(a) shows the decision boundary of a decision tree classifier on the problem. Figure 7.24(b) shows the decision boundary of an ensemble of decision tree classifiers on the same problem. Although the ensemble's decision boundary is still piecewise constant, it has a finer resolution and is better than that of a single tree.

### 7.7.2 Bagging

We now take an intuitive look at how bagging works as a method of increasing accuracy. Suppose that you are a patient and would like to have a diagnosis made based on your symptoms. Instead of asking one doctor, you may choose to ask several. If a certain diagnosis occurs more than any other, you may choose this as the final or best diagnosis. That is, the final diagnosis is made based on a majority vote, where each doctor gets an equal vote. Now replace each doctor by a classifier, and you have the basic idea behind bagging. Intuitively, a majority vote made by a large group of doctors may be more reliable than a majority vote made by a small group.

Given a set,  $D$ , of  $d$  tuples, **bagging** works as follows. For iteration  $i$  ( $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ ), a training set,  $D_i$ , of  $d$  tuples is sampled with replacement from the original set of tuples,  $D$ . Note that the term *bagging* stands for *bootstrap aggregation*. Each training set is a bootstrap sample, as described in Section 7.6.4. Because sampling with replacement is used, some of the original tuples of  $D$  may not be included in  $D_i$ , whereas others may occur more than once. A classifier model,

**Algorithm: Bagging.** The bagging algorithm—create an ensemble of classification models for a learning scheme where each model gives an equally weighted prediction.

**Input:**

- $D$ , a set of  $d$  training tuples;
- $k$ , the number of models in the ensemble;
- a classification learning scheme (e.g., decision tree algorithm, naïve Bayesian, etc.).

**Output:** The ensemble—a composite model,  $M^*$ .

**Method:**

- (1) **for**  $i = 1$  to  $k$  **do** // create  $k$  models:
- (2)     create bootstrap sample,  $D_i$ , by sampling  $D$  with replacement;
- (3)     use  $D_i$  and the learning scheme to derive a model,  $M_i$ .
- (4) **endfor**

**To use the ensemble to classify a tuple,  $X$ :**

let each of the  $k$  models classify  $X$  and return the majority vote;

Figure 7.25: Bagging.

$M_i$ , is learned for each training set,  $D_i$ . To classify an unknown tuple,  $X$ , each classifier,  $M_i$ , returns its class prediction, which counts as one vote. The bagged classifier,  $M^*$ , counts the votes and assigns the class with the most votes to  $X$ . Bagging can be applied to the prediction of continuous values by taking the average value of each prediction for a given test tuple. The algorithm is summarized in Figure 7.25.

The bagged classifier often has significantly greater accuracy than a single classifier derived from  $D$ , the original training data. It is often more robust to the effects of noisy data and overfitting. The increased accuracy occurs because the composite model reduces the variance of the individual classifiers.

### 7.7.3 Boosting

We now look at the ensemble method of boosting. As in the previous section, suppose that as a patient, you have certain symptoms. Instead of consulting one doctor, you choose to consult several. Suppose you assign weights to the value or worth of each doctor's diagnosis based on the accuracies of previous diagnoses they have made. The final diagnosis is then a combination of the weighted diagnoses. This is the essence behind boosting.

In **boosting**, weights are also assigned to each training tuple. A series of  $k$  classifiers is iteratively learned. After a classifier,  $M_i$ , is learned, the weights are updated to allow the subsequent classifier,  $M_{i+1}$ , to “pay more attention” to the training tuples that were misclassified by  $M_i$ . The final boosted classifier,  $M^*$ ,

combines the votes of each individual classifier, where the weight of each classifier's vote is a function of its accuracy.

**AdaBoost** (short for Adaptive Boosting) is a popular boosting algorithm. Suppose we want to boost the accuracy of a learning method. We are given  $D$ , a data set of  $d$  class-labeled tuples,  $(\mathbf{X}_1, y_1), (\mathbf{X}_2, y_2), \dots, (\mathbf{X}_d, y_d)$ , where  $y_i$  is the class label of tuple  $\mathbf{X}_i$ . Initially, AdaBoost assigns each training tuple an equal weight of  $1/d$ . Generating  $k$  classifiers for the ensemble requires  $k$  rounds through the rest of the algorithm. We can sample to form any sized training set, not necessarily of size  $d$ . Sampling with replacement is used—the same tuple may be selected more than once. Each tuple's chance of being selected is based on its weight. A classifier model,  $M_i$ , is derived from the training tuples of  $D_i$ . Its error is then calculated using  $D$  as the test set. The weights of the tuples are then adjusted according to how they were classified.

If a tuple was incorrectly classified, its weight is increased. If a tuple was correctly classified, its weight is decreased. A tuple's weight reflects how difficult it is to classify—the higher the weight, the more often it has been misclassified. These weights will be used to generate the training samples for the classifier of the next round. The basic idea is that when we build a classifier, we want it to focus more on the misclassified tuples of the previous round. Some classifiers may be better at classifying some “difficult” tuples than others. In this way, we build a series of classifiers that complement each other. The algorithm is summarized in Figure 7.26.

Now, let's look at some of the math that's involved in the algorithm. To compute the error rate of model  $M_i$ , we sum the weights of each of the tuples in  $D$  that  $M_i$  misclassified. That is,

$$\text{error}(M_i) = \sum_{j=1}^d w_j \times \text{err}(\mathbf{X}_j), \quad (7.34)$$

where  $\text{err}(\mathbf{X}_j)$  is the misclassification error of tuple  $\mathbf{X}_j$ : If the tuple was misclassified, then  $\text{err}(\mathbf{X}_j)$  is 1; otherwise, it is 0. If the performance of classifier  $M_i$  is so poor that its error exceeds 0.5, then we abandon it. Instead, we try again by generating a new  $D_i$  training set, from which we derive a new  $M_i$ .

The error rate of  $M_i$  affects how the weights of the training tuples are updated. If a tuple in the round  $i$  was correctly classified, its weight is multiplied by  $\text{error}(M_i)/(1 - \text{error}(M_i))$ . Once the weights of all the correctly classified tuples are updated, the weights for all tuples (including the misclassified ones) are normalized so that their sum remains the same as it was before. To normalize a weight, we multiply it by the sum of the old weights, divided by the sum of the new weights. As a result, the weights of misclassified tuples are increased, and the weights of correctly classified tuples are decreased, as described before.

*“Once boosting is complete, how is the ensemble of classifiers used to predict the class label of a tuple,  $\mathbf{X}$ ?”* Unlike bagging, where each classifier was assigned an equal vote, boosting assigns a weight to each classifier's vote, based on how well the classifier performed. The lower a classifier's error rate, the more accurate it is, and therefore, the higher its weight for voting should be. The weight of classifier

**Algorithm: AdaBoost.** A boosting algorithm—create an ensemble of classifiers.  
Each one gives a weighted vote.

**Input:**

- $D$ , a set of  $d$  class-labeled training tuples;
- $k$ , the number of rounds (one classifier is generated per round);
- a classification learning scheme.

**Output:** A composite model.

**Method:**

- (1) initialize the weight of each tuple in  $D$  to  $1/d$ ;
- (2) **for**  $i = 1$  to  $k$  **do** // for each round:
  - (3) sample  $D$  with replacement according to the tuple weights to obtain  $D_i$ ;
  - (4) use training set  $D_i$  to derive a model,  $M_i$ ;
  - (5) compute  $error(M_i)$ , the error rate of  $M_i$  (Eq. (7.34))
  - (6) **if**  $error(M_i) > 0.5$  **then**
    - (7) abort the loop;
  - (8) **endif**
  - (9) **for** each tuple in  $D$  that was correctly classified **do**
    - (10) multiply the weight of the tuple by  $error(M_i)/(1 - error(M_i))$ ; // update weights
  - (11) normalize the weight of each tuple.
- (12) **endfor**

**To use the ensemble to classify tuple,  $X$ :**

- (1) initialize weight of each class to 0;
- (2) **for**  $i = 1$  to  $k$  **do** // for each classifier:
  - (3)  $w_i = \log \frac{1 - error(M_i)}{error(M_i)}$ ; // weight of the classifier's vote
  - (4)  $c = M_i(X)$ ; // get class prediction for  $X$  from  $M_i$
  - (5) add  $w_i$  to weight for class  $c$
- (6) **endfor**
- (7) return the class with the largest weight.

Figure 7.26: AdaBoost, a boosting algorithm.

**Algorithm: Gradient Tree Boosting for Regression.****Input:**

- $D$ , a set of  $n$  training tuples  $\{(x_1, y_1), \dots, (x_n, y_n)\}$ , where  $x_i$  is the attribute vector of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  training tuple and  $y_i$  is its true target output value;
- $k$ , the number of rounds (one base regression model is generated per round);
- a differential loss function  $\text{Loss} = \sum_{i=1}^n L(y_i, F(x_i))$ .

**Output:** A composite regression model  $F(x)$ .**Method:**

- (1) initialize the regression model  $F(x) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n y_i}{n}$ ;
- (2) **for**  $t = 1$  to  $k$  **do** // construct a new weak learner  $M_t(x)$  for each round:
  - (3)     **for**  $i = 1$  to  $n$  //each training tuple:
    - (4)         calculate  $\hat{y}_i = F(x_i)$ ; //predicted value by the current model  $F(x)$
    - (5)         calculate the negative gradient  $r_i = -\frac{\partial L(y_i, \hat{y}_i)}{\partial \hat{y}_i}$ ;
  - (6)     **endfor**
  - (7)     fit a regression tree model  $M_t(x)$  for the training set  $\{(x_1, r_1), \dots, (x_n, r_n)\}$ ;
  - (8)     update the composite regression model  $F(x) \leftarrow F(x) + M_t(x)$ .
- (9) **endfor**

Figure 7.27: Gradient Tree Boosting for Regression.

$M_i$ 's vote is

$$\log \frac{1 - \text{error}(M_i)}{\text{error}(M_i)}. \quad (7.35)$$

For each class,  $c$ , we sum the weights of each classifier that assigned class  $c$  to  $\mathbf{X}$ . The class with the highest sum is the “winner” and is returned as the class prediction for tuple  $\mathbf{X}$ .

**Gradient boosting** is another powerful boosting technique, which can be used for classification, regression as well as ranking. If we use a tree (e.g., decision tree for classification, regression tree for regression) as the base model (i.e., the weak learner), it is called **gradient tree boosting**, or **gradient boosted tree**. Figure 7.27 presents the gradient tree boosting algorithm for the regression task. It works as follows.

Gradient tree boosting algorithm starts with a simple regression model  $F(x)$  (line 1), which outputs a constant (i.e., the average output of all training tuples). Then, similar to Adaboost, it tries to find a new base model (i.e., weak learner)  $M_t(x)$  at each round (line 3). The newly constructed base model  $M_t(x)$  is added to the regression model  $F(x)$  (line 8). In other words, the composite regression model  $F(x)$  consists of  $k$  *additive* base models  $M_t(x)$  ( $t = 1, \dots, k$ ). When we search for a new base model  $M_t(x)$ , all the previously constructed base models (i.e.,  $M_1(x), \dots, M_{t-1}(x)$ ) are kept unchanged.



In order to construct a new base model  $M_t(x)$ , we first compute the predicted output  $\hat{y}_i$  of each training tuple by the current regression model  $F(x)$  (line 4) and calculate the **negative gradient**  $r_i$  of the loss function with respect to the predicted output  $\hat{y}_i$  (line 5). Then, we fit a regression tree model for the training set  $\{(x_1, r_1), \dots, (x_n, r_n)\}$ , where the negative gradient  $r_i$  is treated as the targeted output value of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  training tuple. Since the negative gradient  $r_i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, n$ ) changes in different rounds, we end up with different base models  $M_t(x)$  ( $t = 1, \dots, k$ ).

*“But, why do we use the negative gradients to construct the new base model?”*

Suppose the loss function  $L(y_i, F(x_i)) = \frac{1}{2}(y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2$  (Recall that we have used the similar loss function for the regression tree as well as the least square linear regression model). Then, we can show that the negative gradient  $r_i = y_i - \hat{y}_i$ , which is the difference between the actual output value and predicted output value by the current regression model  $F(x)$  (i.e., the residual). In other words, the negative gradient  $r_i$  reveals the “shortcoming” of the current regression model  $F(x)$  (i.e., how far away the predicted output is from its actual output value). If we use other loss functions (e.g., the Huber loss in robust regression), the negative gradient is no longer equal to the residual  $y_i - \hat{y}_i$ , but still provides a good indicator in terms of the prediction quality of the current regression model  $F(x)$  on the  $i^{\text{th}}$  training tuple. For this reason, the negative gradients are also referred to as *pseudo residuals*. By fitting a regression tree model with respect to the negative gradients (i.e., where the “shortcoming” of the current regression model  $F(x)$  is), the newly constructed base model,  $M_t(x)$ , is expected to dramatically improve the composite regression model  $F(x)$ .

In addition to the algorithm in Figure 7.27, several alternative design choices for gradient tree boosting exist. For example, similar to Adaboost, we can learn a weight for each base model  $M_t(x)$ , and then the composite regression model  $F(x)$  becomes the *weighted sum* of the  $k$  base models. In practice, it was found that shrinking the newly constructed base model helps improve the generalization performance of the composite model  $F(x)$  (i.e.  $F(x) \leftarrow F(x) + \eta M_t(x)$  in line 8, where  $0 < \eta < 1$  is the shrinkage constant.). The number of leaf nodes  $T$  of the regression tree  $M_t(x)$  plays an important role in the learning performance of the composite model  $F(x)$ . That is,  $F(x)$  might underfit the training set if  $T$  is too small, but could overfit the training set with a large  $T$ . The typical choice for  $T$  is between 4 and 8. At a given round  $t$ , we could use a subsample of the entire training set to construct the base model  $M_t(x)$ . Gradient tree boosting equipped with such a subsampling strategy is referred to as *stochastic gradient (tree) boosting* and it was found to significantly improve the accuracy of the composite model  $F(x)$ . A highly scalable end-to-end gradient tree boosting system is called **XGBoost**, which is capable to handle a billion-scale training set. XGBoost has made a number of innovations for training gradient tree boosting, including a new tree construction algorithm designed for sparse data, feature subsampling (as opposed to training tuple subsampling in stochastic gradient boosting), and a highly efficient cache-aware block structure. XGBoost has been successfully used by data scientists in many data mining challenges, often leading to top competitive results.

*“How does boosting compare with bagging?”* Because of the way boosting fo-

cuses on the misclassified tuples, it risks overfitting the resulting composite model to such data. Therefore, sometimes the resulting “boosted” model may be less accurate than a single model derived from the same data. Bagging is less susceptible to model overfitting. While both can significantly improve accuracy in comparison to a single model, boosting tends to achieve greater accuracy.

#### 7.7.4 Random Forests

We now present another ensemble method called **random forests**. Imagine that each of the classifiers in the ensemble is a *decision tree* classifier so that the collection of classifiers is a “forest”. The individual decision trees are generated using a random selection of attributes at each node to determine the split. More formally, each tree depends on the values of a random vector sampled independently and with the same distribution for all trees in the forest. During classification, each tree votes, and the most popular class is returned.

Random forests can be built using bagging (Section 7.7.2) in tandem with random attribute selection. A training set,  $D$ , of  $d$  tuples is given. The general procedure to generate  $k$  decision trees for the ensemble is as follows. For each iteration,  $i$  ( $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ ), a training set,  $D_i$ , of  $d$  tuples is sampled with replacement from  $D$ . That is, each  $D_i$  is a bootstrap sample of  $D$  (Section 7.6.4), so that some tuples may occur more than once in  $D_i$ , while others may be excluded. Let  $F$  be the number of attributes to be used to determine the split at each node, where  $F$  is much smaller than the number of available attributes. To construct a decision tree classifier,  $M_i$ , randomly select, at each node,  $F$  attributes as candidates for the split at the node. The CART methodology is used to grow the trees. The trees are grown to maximum size and are not pruned. Random forests formed this way, with *random input selection*, are called Forest-RI.

Another form of random forest, called Forest-RC, uses *random linear combinations* of the input attributes. Instead of randomly selecting a subset of the attributes, it creates new attributes (or features) that are a linear combination of the existing attributes. That is, an attribute is generated by specifying  $L$ , the number of original attributes to be combined. At a given node,  $L$  attributes are randomly selected and added together with coefficients that are uniform random numbers on  $[-1, 1]$ .  $F$  linear combinations are generated, and a search is made over these for the best split. This form of random forest is useful when there are only a few attributes available, so as to reduce the correlation between individual classifiers.

Random forests are comparable in accuracy to AdaBoost, yet are more robust to errors and outliers. The generalization error for a forest converges as long as the number of trees in the forest is large. Thus, overfitting is less likely to be a problem. The accuracy of a random forest depends on the strength of the individual classifiers and a measure of the dependence between them. The ideal is to maintain the strength of individual classifiers without increasing their correlation. Random forests are insensitive to the number of attributes selected for consideration at each split. Typically, up to  $\log_2 d + 1$  are chosen. (An interesting empirical observation was that using a single random input attribute may result in good accuracy that is often higher than when using several attributes.) Because random forests consider much fewer attributes for each split, they are efficient on very large

databases. They can be faster than either bagging or boosting. Random forests give internal estimates of variable importance.

### 7.7.5 Improving Classification Accuracy of Class-Imbalanced Data

In this section, we revisit the *class imbalance problem*. In particular, we study approaches to improving the classification accuracy of class-imbalanced data.

Given two-class data, the data are class-imbalanced if the main class of interest (the positive class) is represented by only a few tuples, while the majority of tuples represent the negative class. For multiclass-imbalanced data, the data distribution of each class differs substantially where, again, the main class or classes of interest are rare. The class imbalance problem is closely related to cost-sensitive learning, wherein the costs of errors per class are not equal. In medical diagnosis, for example, it is much more costly to falsely diagnose a cancerous patient as healthy (a false negative) than to misdiagnose a healthy patient as having cancer (a false positive). A false negative error could lead to the loss of life and therefore is much more expensive than a false positive error. Other applications involving class-imbalanced data include fraud detection, the detection of oil spills from satellite radar images, and fault monitoring.

Traditional classification algorithms aim to minimize the number of errors made during classification. They assume that the costs of false positive and false negative errors are equal. By assuming a balanced distribution of classes and equal error costs, they are therefore not suitable for class-imbalanced data. Earlier parts of this chapter presented ways of addressing the class imbalance problem. Although the accuracy measure assumes that the cost of classes are equal, alternative evaluation metrics can be used that consider the different types of classifications. Section 7.6.1, for example, presented *sensitivity* or recall (the true positive rate) and *specificity* (the true negative rate), which help to assess how well a classifier can predict the class label of imbalanced data. Additional relevant measures discussed include  $F_1$  and  $F_\beta$ . Section 7.6.6 showed how ROC curves plot *sensitivity* versus  $1 - \text{specificity}$  (i.e., the false positive rate). Such curves can provide insight when studying the performance of classifiers on class-imbalanced data.

In this section, we look at general approaches for *improving* the classification accuracy of class-imbalanced data. These approaches include (1) oversampling, (2) undersampling, (3) threshold moving, and (4) ensemble techniques. The first three do not involve any changes to the construction of the classification model. That is, oversampling and undersampling change the distribution of tuples in the training set; threshold moving affects how the model makes decisions when classifying new data. Ensemble methods follow the techniques described in Section 7.7.2 through Section 7.7.4. For ease of explanation, we describe these general approaches with respect to the two-class imbalanced data problem, where the higher-cost classes are rarer than the lower-cost classes.

Both oversampling and undersampling change the training data distribution so that the rare (positive) class is well represented. **Oversampling** works by re-sampling the positive tuples so that the resulting training set contains an equal number of positive and negative tuples. **Undersampling** works by decreasing

the number of negative tuples. It randomly eliminates tuples from the majority (negative) class until there are an equal number of positive and negative tuples.

**Example 7.7.1 Oversampling and undersampling.** Suppose the original training set contains 100 positive and 1000 negative tuples. In oversampling, we replicate tuples of the rare class to form a new training set containing 1000 positive tuples and 1000 negative tuples. In undersampling, we randomly eliminate negative tuples so that the new training set contains 100 positive tuples and 100 negative tuples.

Several variations to oversampling and undersampling exist. They may vary, for instance, in how tuples are added or eliminated. For example, the SMOTE algorithm uses oversampling where synthetic tuples are added, which are “close to” the given positive tuples in tuple space.

The **threshold-moving** approach to the class imbalance problem does not involve any sampling. It applies to classifiers that, given an input tuple, return a continuous output value (just like in Section 7.6.6, where we discussed how to construct ROC curves). That is, for an input tuple,  $\mathbf{X}$ , such a classifier returns as output a mapping,  $f(\mathbf{X}) \rightarrow [0, 1]$ . Rather than manipulating the training tuples, this method returns a classification decision based on the output values. In the simplest approach, tuples for which  $f(\mathbf{X}) \geq t$ , for some threshold,  $t$ , are considered positive, while all other tuples are considered negative. Other approaches may involve manipulating the outputs by weighting. In general, threshold moving moves the threshold,  $t$ , so that the rare class tuples are easier to classify (and hence, there is less chance of costly false negative errors). Examples of such classifiers include naïve Bayesian classifiers (Section 7.3) and neural networks (Chapter 11). The threshold-moving method, although not as popular as over- and undersampling, is simple and has shown some success for the two-class-imbalanced data.

Ensemble methods (Section 7.7.2 through Section 7.7.4) have also been applied to the class imbalance problem. The individual classifiers making up the ensemble may include versions of the approaches described here, such as oversampling and threshold moving.

These methods work relatively well for the class imbalance problem on two-class tasks. Threshold-moving and ensemble methods were empirically observed to outperform oversampling and undersampling. Threshold moving works well even on extremely imbalanced data sets. The class imbalance problem on multi-class tasks is much more difficult where oversampling and threshold moving are less effective. Although threshold-moving and ensemble methods show promise, finding a solution for the multiclass imbalance problem remains an area of future work.

## 7.8 Summary

- **Classification** is a form of data analysis that extracts models describing data classes. A classifier, or classification model, predicts categorical labels (classes). **Numeric prediction** models continuous-valued functions. Clas-

sification and numeric prediction are the two major types of prediction problems.

- **Decision tree induction** is a top-down recursive tree induction algorithm, which uses an attribute selection measure to select the attribute tested for each nonleaf node in the tree. **ID3**, **C4.5**, and **CART** are examples of such algorithms using different attribute selection measures. **Tree pruning** algorithms attempt to improve accuracy by removing tree branches reflecting noise in the data.
- **Naïve Bayesian classification** is based on Bayes' theorem of the posterior probability. It assumes class-conditional independence—that the effect of an attribute value on a given class is independent of the values of other attributes.
- **Linear classifiers** compute a linear weighted combination of the input attribute values, based on which it predicts the class label for a given tuple. **Perceptron** and **logistic regression** are two classic examples of linear classifiers.
- Decision tree classifiers, Bayesian classifiers, and linear classifiers are all examples of **eager learners** in that they use training tuples to construct a generalization model and in this way are ready for classifying new tuples. This contrasts with **lazy learners** or **instance-based** methods of classification, such as nearest-neighbor classifiers and case-based reasoning classifiers, which store all of the training tuples in pattern space and wait until presented with a test tuple before performing generalization. Hence, lazy learners require efficient indexing techniques.
- A **confusion matrix** can be used to evaluate a classifier's quality. For a two-class problem, it shows the *true positives*, *true negatives*, *false positives*, and *false negatives*. Measures that assess a classifier's predictive ability include **accuracy**, **sensitivity** (also known as **recall**), **specificity**, **precision**,  $F$ , and  $F_\beta$ . Reliance on the accuracy measure can be deceiving when the main class of interest is in the minority.
- Construction and evaluation of a classifier require partitioning labeled data into a training set and a test set. **Holdout**, **random sampling**, **cross-validation**, and **bootstrapping** are typical methods used for such partitioning.
- Significance tests and ROC curves are useful tools for model selection. **Significance tests** can be used to assess whether the difference in accuracy between two classifiers is due to chance. **ROC curves** plot the true positive rate (or sensitivity) versus the false positive rate (or  $1 - \text{specificity}$ ) of one or more classifiers.
- **Ensemble methods** can be used to increase overall accuracy by learning and combining a series of individual (base) classifier models. **Bagging**, **boosting**, and **random forests** are popular ensemble methods.

- The **class imbalance problem** occurs when the main class of interest is represented by only a few tuples. Strategies to address this problem include **oversampling**, **undersampling**, **threshold moving**, and **ensemble techniques**.

## 7.9 Exercises

1. Briefly outline the major steps of *decision tree classification*.
2. Why is *tree pruning* useful in decision tree induction? What is a drawback of using a separate set of tuples to evaluate pruning?
3. Given a decision tree, you have the option of (a) *converting* the decision tree to rules and then pruning the resulting rules, or (b) *pruning* the decision tree and then converting the pruned tree to rules. What advantage does (a) have over (b)?
4. It is important to calculate the worst-case computational complexity of the decision tree algorithm. Given data set,  $D$ , the number of attributes,  $n$ , and the number of training tuples,  $|D|$ , analyze the computational complexity in terms of  $n$  and  $|D|$ .
5. Given a 5-GB data set with 50 attributes (each containing 100 distinct values) and 512 MB of main memory in your laptop, outline an efficient method that constructs decision trees in such large data sets. Justify your answer by a rough calculation of your main memory usage.
6. Why is *naïve Bayesian classification* called “naïve”? Briefly outline the major ideas of naïve Bayesian classification.
7. The following table consists of training data from an employee database. The data have been generalized. For example, “31 ... 35” for *age* represents the age range of 31 to 35. For a given row entry, *count* represents the number of data tuples having the values for *department*, *status*, *age*, and *salary* given in that row.

<i>department</i>	<i>status</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>salary</i>	<i>count</i>
sales	senior	31 ... 35	46K ... 50K	30
sales	junior	26 ... 30	26K ... 30K	40
sales	junior	31 ... 35	31K ... 35K	40
systems	junior	21 ... 25	46K ... 50K	20
systems	senior	31 ... 35	66K ... 70K	5
systems	junior	26 ... 30	46K ... 50K	3
systems	senior	41 ... 45	66K ... 70K	3
marketing	senior	36 ... 40	46K ... 50K	10
marketing	junior	31 ... 35	41K ... 45K	4
secretary	senior	46 ... 50	36K ... 40K	4
secretary	junior	26 ... 30	26K ... 30K	6

Let *status* be the class label attribute.

- (a) How would you modify the basic decision tree algorithm to take into consideration the *count* of each generalized data tuple (i.e., of each row entry)?
  - (b) Use your algorithm to construct a decision tree from the given data.
  - (c) Given a data tuple having the values “*systems*,” “*26 . . . 30*,” and “*46–50K*” for the attributes *department*, *age*, and *salary*, respectively, what would a naïve Bayesian classification of the *status* for the tuple be?
8. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of *eager* classification (e.g., decision tree, Bayesian, neural network) versus *lazy* classification (e.g., *k*-nearest neighbor, case-based reasoning).
  9. Write an algorithm for *k-nearest-neighbor classification* given *k*, the nearest number of neighbors, and *n*, the number of attributes describing each tuple.
  10. RainForest is a scalable algorithm for decision tree induction. Develop a scalable naïve Bayesian classification algorithm that requires just a single scan of the entire data set for most databases. Discuss whether such an algorithm can be refined to incorporate *boosting* to further enhance its classification accuracy.
  11. Design an efficient method that performs effective naïve Bayesian classification over an *infinite* data stream (i.e., you can scan the data stream only once). If we wanted to discover the *evolution* of such classification schemes (e.g., comparing the classification scheme at this moment with earlier schemes such as one from a week ago), what modified design would you suggest?
  12. Show that accuracy is a function of *sensitivity* and *specificity*, that is, prove Eq. 7.25.
  13. The harmonic mean is one of several kinds of averages. Chapter 2 discussed how to compute the *arithmetic mean*, which is what most people typically think of when they compute an average. The **harmonic mean**, *H*, of the positive real numbers,  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$ , is defined as

$$H = \frac{n}{\frac{1}{x_1} + \frac{1}{x_2} + \dots + \frac{1}{x_n}}$$

$$= \frac{n}{\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{x_i}}.$$

The *F* measure is the harmonic mean of precision and recall. Use this fact to derive Section 7.28Eq. ( ) for *F*. In addition, write  $F_\beta$  as a function of true positives, false negatives, and false positives.

14. The data tuples of Figure 7.28 are sorted by decreasing probability value, as returned by a classifier. For each tuple, compute the values for the number

of true positives ( $TP$ ), false positives ( $FP$ ), true negatives ( $TN$ ), and false negatives ( $FN$ ). Compute the true positive rate ( $TPR$ ) and false positive rate ( $FPR$ ). Plot the ROC curve for the data.

15. It is difficult to assess classification *accuracy* when individual data objects may belong to more than one class at a time. In such cases, comment on what criteria you would use to compare different classifiers modeled after the same data.
16. Suppose that we want to *select between two prediction models*,  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ . We have performed 10 rounds of 10-fold cross-validation on each model, where the same data partitioning in round  $i$  is used for both  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ . The error rates obtained for  $M_1$  are 30.5, 32.2, 20.7, 20.6, 31.0, 41.0, 27.7, 26.0, 21.5, 26.0. The error rates for  $M_2$  are 22.4, 14.5, 22.4, 19.6, 20.7, 20.4, 22.1, 19.4, 16.2, 35.0. Comment on whether one model is significantly better than the other considering a significance level of 1%.
17. What is *boosting*? State why it may improve the accuracy of decision tree induction.
18. Outline methods for addressing the *class imbalance problem*. Suppose a bank wants to develop a classifier that guards against fraudulent credit card transactions. Illustrate how you can induce a quality classifier based on a large set of legitimate examples and a very small set of fraudulent cases.

## 7.10 Bibliographic Notes

Classification is a fundamental topic in machine learning, statistics, and pattern recognition. Many textbooks from these fields highlight classification methods

<i>Tuple #</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Probability</i>
1	$P$	0.95
2	$N$	0.85
3	$P$	0.78
4	$P$	0.66
5	$N$	0.60
6	$P$	0.55
7	$N$	0.53
8	$N$	0.52
9	$N$	0.51
10	$P$	0.40

Figure 7.28: Tuples sorted by decreasing score, where the score is the value returned by a probabilistic classifier.



such as Mitchell [Mit97]; Bishop [Bis06]; Duda, Hart, and Stork [DHS01]; Theodoridis and Koutroumbas [TK08]; Hastie, Tibshirani, and Friedman [HTF09]; Alpaydin [Alp11]; Marsland [Mar09]; and Aggarwal [Agg15].

For decision tree induction, the C4.5 algorithm is described in a book by Quinlan [Qui93]. The CART system is detailed in *Classification and Regression Trees* by Breiman, Friedman, Olshen, and Stone [BFOS84]. Both books give an excellent presentation of many of the issues regarding decision tree induction. C4.5 has a commercial successor, known as C5.0, which can be found at [www.rulequest.com](http://www.rulequest.com). ID3, a predecessor of C4.5, is detailed in Quinlan [Qui86]. It expands on pioneering work on concept learning systems, described by Hunt, Marin, and Stone [HMS66].

Other algorithms for decision tree induction include FACT (Loh and Vanichsetakul [LV88]), QUEST (Loh and Shih [LS97]), PUBLIC (Rastogi and Shim [RS98]), and CHAID (Kass [Kas80] and Magidson [Mag94]). INFERULE (Uthurusamy, Fayyad, and Spangler [UFS91]) learns decision trees from inconclusive data, where probabilistic rather than categorical classification rules are obtained. KATE (Mango and Kodratoff [MK91]) learns decision trees from complex structured data. Incremental versions of ID3 include ID4 (Schlimmer and Fisher [SF86]) and ID5 (Utgoff [Utg88]), the latter of which is extended in Utgoff, Berkman, and Clouse [UBC97]. An incremental version of CART is described in Crawford [Cra89]. BOAT (Gehrke, Ganti, Ramakrishnan, and Loh [GGRL99]), a decision tree algorithm that addresses the scalability issue in data mining, is also incremental. Other decision tree algorithms that address scalability include SLIQ (Mehta, Agrawal, and Rissanen [MAR96]), SPRINT (Shafer, Agrawal, and Mehta [SAM96]), RainForest (Gehrke, Ramakrishnan, and Ganti [GRG98]), and earlier approaches, such as Catlet [Cat91] and Chan and Stolfo [CS93a, CS93b].

For a comprehensive survey of many salient issues relating to decision tree induction, such as attribute selection and pruning, see Murthy [Mur98]. Perception-based classification (PBC), a visual and interactive approach to decision tree construction, is presented in Ankerst, Elsen, Ester, and Kriegel [AEEK99].

For a detailed discussion on attribute selection measures, see Kononenko and Hong [KH97]. Information gain was proposed by Quinlan [Qui86] and is based on pioneering work on information theory by Shannon and Weaver [SW49]. The gain ratio, proposed as an extension to information gain, is described as part of C4.5 (Quinlan [Qui93]). The Gini impurity was proposed for CART by Breiman, Friedman, Olshen, and Stone [BFOS84]. The G-statistic, based on information theory, is given in Sokal and Rohlf [SR81]. Comparisons of attribute selection measures include Buntine and Niblett [BN92], Fayyad and Irani [FI92], Kononenko [Kon95], Loh and Shih [LS97], and Shih [Shi99]. Fayyad and Irani [FI92] show limitations of impurity-based measures, such as information gain and the Gini impurity. They propose a class of attribute selection measures called C-SEP (Class SEPARation), which outperform impurity-based measures in certain cases.

Kononenko [Kon95] notes that attribute selection measures based on the minimum description length principle have the least bias toward multivalued attributes. Martin and Hirschberg [MH95] proved that the time complexity of decision tree induction increases exponentially with respect to tree height in the worst case, and under fairly general conditions in the average case. Fayad and Irani [FI90] found

that shallow decision trees tend to have many leaves and higher error rates for a large variety of domains. Attribute (or feature) construction is described in Liu and Motoda [LM98, Le98].

There are numerous algorithms for decision tree pruning, including cost complexity pruning (Breiman, Friedman, Olshen, and Stone [BFOS84]), reduced error pruning (Quinlan [Qui87]), and pessimistic pruning (Quinlan [Qui86]). PUBLIC (Rastogi and Shim [RS98]) integrates decision tree construction with tree pruning. MDL-based pruning methods can be found in Quinlan and Rivest [QR89]; Mehta, Agrawal, and Rissanen [MAR96]; and Rastogi and Shim [RS98]. Other methods include Niblett and Bratko [NB86] and Hosking, Pednault, and Sudan [HPS97]. For an empirical comparison of pruning methods, see Mingers [Min89] and Malerba, Floriana, and Semeraro [MFS95]. For a survey on simplifying decision trees, see Breslow and Aha [BA97].

Thorough presentations of Bayesian classification can be found in Duda, Hart, and Stork [DHS01], Weiss and Kulikowski [WK91], and Mitchell [Mit97]. For an analysis of the predictive power of naïve Bayesian classifiers when the class-conditional independence assumption is violated, see Domingos and Pazzani [DP96]. Experiments with kernel density estimation for continuous-valued attributes, rather than Gaussian estimation, have been reported for naïve Bayesian classifiers in John [Joh97].

Nearest-neighbor classifiers were introduced in 1951 by Fix and Hodges [FH51]. A comprehensive collection of articles on nearest-neighbor classification can be found in Dasarathy [Das91]. Additional references can be found in many texts on classification, such as Duda, Hart, and Stork [DHS01] and James [Jam85], as well as articles by Cover and Hart [CH67] and Fukunaga and Hummels [FH87]. Their integration with attribute weighting and the pruning of noisy instances is described in Aha [Aha92]. The use of search trees to improve nearest-neighbor classification time is detailed in Friedman, Bentley, and Finkel [FBF77]. The partial distance method was proposed by researchers in vector quantization and compression. It is outlined in Gersho and Gray [GG92]. The editing method for removing “useless” training tuples was first proposed by Hart [Har68].

The computational complexity of nearest-neighbor classifiers is described in Preparata and Shamos [PS85]; and Haghani, Sebastian, and Karl [HMA09]. References on case-based reasoning include the texts by Riesbeck and Schank [RS89] and Kolodner [Kol93], as well as Leake [Lea96] and Aamodt and Plaza [AP94]. For a list of business applications, see Allen [All94]. Examples in medicine include CASEY by Koton [Kot88] and PROTOS by Bareiss, Porter, and Weir [BPW88], while Rissland and Ashley [RA87] is an example of CBR for law. CBR is available in several commercial software products.

Linear regression and its numerous variants, such as RIDGE regression, robust regression are covered in most statistics textbooks, such as Freedman [Fre09]; Draper and Smith [DS98]; and Fox [Fox97]. For LASSO, see Tibshirani [Tib11]. Perceptron was first invented by Rosenblatt [Ros58], and Novikoff [Nov63] analyzed its convergence property. A general introduction to logistic regression can be found in most machine learning textbooks, such as Mitchell [Mit97]; Hastie, Tibshirani, and Friedman [HTF09]; and Aggarwal [Agg15]. Ng and Jordan [NJ02]

conducted a thorough comparison between naïve Bayesian classifier and logistic regression. The relationship between logistic regression and log-linear model can be found in Christensen [Chr06].

Issues involved in estimating classifier accuracy are described in Weiss and Kulikowski [WK91] and Witten and Frank [WF05]. Sensitivity, specificity, and precision are discussed in most information retrieval textbooks. For the  $F$  and  $F_\beta$  measures, see van Rijsbergen [vR90]. The use of stratified 10-fold cross-validation for estimating classifier accuracy is recommended over the holdout, cross-validation, leave-one-out (Stone [Sto74]), and bootstrapping (Efron and Tibshirani [ET93]) methods, based on a theoretical and empirical study by Kohavi [Koh95]. See Freedman, Pisani, and Purves [FPP07] for the confidence limits and statistical tests of significance.

For ROC analysis, see Egan [Ega75], Swets [Swe88], and Vuk and Curk [VC06]. Bagging is proposed in Breiman [Bre96]. Freund and Schapire [FS97] proposed AdaBoost. This boosting technique has been applied to several different classifiers, including decision tree induction (Quinlan [Qui96]) and naïve Bayesian classification (Elkan [Elk97]). Friedman [Fri01] proposed the gradient boosting machine. Chen and Guestrin designed a highly scalable system called Xgboost [CG16]. The ensemble technique of random forests is described by Breiman [Bre01]. Seni and Elder [SE10] proposed the Importance Sampling Learning Ensembles (ISLE) framework, which views bagging, AdaBoost, random forests, and gradient boosting as special cases of a generic ensemble generation procedure. There are many online software packages for ensemble routines, including bagging, AdaBoost, gradient boosting, and random forests. Studies on the class imbalance problem and/or cost-sensitive learning include Weiss [Wei04], Zhou and Liu [ZL06], Zapkowicz and Stephen [ZS02], Elkan [Elk01], and Domingos [Dom99].

The University of California at Irvine (UCI) maintains a Machine Learning Repository of data sets for the development and testing of classification algorithms. It also maintains a Knowledge Discovery in Databases (KDD) Archive, an online repository of large data sets that encompasses a wide variety of data types, analysis tasks, and application areas. For information on these two repositories, see [www.ics.uci.edu/~mllearn/MLRepository.html](http://www.ics.uci.edu/~mllearn/MLRepository.html) and <http://kdd.ics.uci.edu>.

No classification method is superior to all others for all data types and domains. Empirical comparisons of classification methods include Quinlan [Qui88]; Shavlik, Mooney, and Towell [SMT91]; Brown, Corruble, and Pittard [BCP93]; Curram and Mingers [CM94]; Michie, Spiegelhalter, and Taylor [MST94]; Brodley and Utgoff [BU95]; and Lim, Loh, and Shih [LLS00].



# Bibliography

- [AEEK99] M. Ankerst, C. Elsen, M. Ester, and H.-P. Kriegel. Visual classification: An interactive approach to decision tree construction. In *Proc. 1999 Int. Conf. Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining (KDD'99)*, pages 392–396, San Diego, CA, Aug. 1999.
- [Agg15] Charu C. Aggarwal. *Data classification*. Morgan Springer, 2015.
- [Aha92] D. Aha. Tolerating noisy, irrelevant, and novel attributes in instance-based learning algorithms. *Int. J. Man-Machine Studies*, 36:267–287, 1992.
- [All94] B. P. Allen. Case-based reasoning: Business applications. *Comm. ACM*, 37:40–42, 1994.
- [Alp11] E. Alpaydin. *Introduction to Machine Learning (2nd ed.)*. MIT Press, 2011.
- [AP94] A. Aamodt and E. Plazas. Case-based reasoning: Foundational issues, methodological variations, and system approaches. *AI Comm.*, 7:39–52, 1994.
- [BA97] L. A. Breslow and D. W. Aha. Simplifying decision trees: A survey. *Knowledge Engineering Review*, 12:1–40, 1997.
- [BCP93] D. E. Brown, V. Corruble, and C. L. Pittard. A comparison of decision tree classifiers with backpropagation neural networks for multimodal classification problems. *Pattern Recognition*, 26:953–961, 1993.
- [BFOS84] L. Breiman, J. Friedman, R. Olshen, and C. Stone. *Classification and Regression Trees*. Wadsworth International Group, 1984.
- [Bis06] C. M. Bishop. *Pattern Recognition and Machine Learning*. Springer, 2006.
- [BN92] W. L. Buntine and T. Niblett. A further comparison of splitting rules for decision-tree induction. *Machine Learning*, 8:75–85, 1992.

- [BPW88] E. R. Bareiss, B. W. Porter, and C. C. Weir. Protos: An exemplar-based learning apprentice. *Int. J. Man-Machine Studies*, 29:549–561, 1988.
- [Bre96] L. Breiman. Bagging predictors. *Machine Learning*, 24:123–140, 1996.
- [Bre01] L. Breiman. Random forests. *Machine Learning*, 45:5–32, 2001.
- [BU95] C. E. Brodley and P. E. Utgoff. Multivariate decision trees. *Machine Learning*, 19:45–77, 1995.
- [Cat91] J. Catlett. *MegaInduction: Machine Learning on Very large Databases*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1991.
- [CG16] Tianqi Chen and Carlos Guestrin. Xgboost: A scalable tree boosting system. In *Proceedings of the 22nd acm sigkdd international conference on knowledge discovery and data mining*, pages 785–794, 2016.
- [CH67] T. Cover and P. Hart. Nearest neighbor pattern classification. *IEEE Trans. Information Theory*, 13:21–27, 1967.
- [Chr06] Ronald Christensen. *Log-linear models and logistic regression*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2006.
- [CM94] S. P. Curram and J. Mingers. Neural networks, decision tree induction and discriminant analysis: An empirical comparison. *J. Operational Research Society*, 45:440–450, 1994.
- [Cra89] S. L. Crawford. Extensions to the CART algorithm. *Int. J. Man-Machine Studies*, 31:197–217, Aug. 1989.
- [CS93a] P. K. Chan and S. J. Stolfo. Experiments on multistrategy learning by metalearning. In *Proc. 2nd. Int. Conf. Information and Knowledge Management (CIKM'93)*, pages 314–323, Washington, DC, Nov. 1993.
- [CS93b] P. K. Chan and S. J. Stolfo. Toward multi-strategy parallel & distributed learning in sequence analysis. In *Proc. 1st Int. Conf. Intelligent Systems for Molecular Biology (ISMB'93)*, pages 65–73, Bethesda, MD, July 1993.
- [Das91] B. V. Dasarathy. *Nearest Neighbor (NN) Norms: NN Pattern Classification Techniques*. IEEE Computer Society Press, 1991.
- [DHS01] R. O. Duda, P. E. Hart, and D. G. Stork. *Pattern Classification* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons, 2001.
- [Dom99] P. Domingos. The role of Occam's razor in knowledge discovery. *Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, 3:409–425, 1999.

- [DP96] P. Domingos and M. Pazzani. Beyond independence: Conditions for the optimality of the simple Bayesian classifier. In *Proc. 1996 Int. Conf. Machine Learning (ML'96)*, pages 105–112, Bari, Italy, July 1996.
- [DS98] Norman R Draper and Harry Smith. *Applied regression analysis*, volume 326. John Wiley & Sons, 1998.
- [Ega75] J. P. Egan. *Signal Detection Theory and ROC Analysis*. Academic Press, 1975.
- [Elk97] C. Elkan. Boosting and naive Bayesian learning. In *Technical Report CS97-557*, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Univ. Calif. at San Diego, Sept. 1997.
- [Elk01] C. Elkan. The foundations of cost-sensitive learning. In *Proc. 17th Intl. Joint Conf. Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI'01)*, pages 973–978, 2001.
- [ET93] B. Efron and R. Tibshirani. *An Introduction to the Bootstrap*. Chapman & Hall, 1993.
- [FBF77] J. H. Friedman, J. L. Bentley, and R. A. Finkel. An algorithm for finding best matches in logarithmic expected time. *ACM Transactions on Math Software*, 3:209–226, 1977.
- [FH51] E. Fix and J. L. Hodges Jr. Discriminatory analysis, non-parametric discrimination: consistency properties. In *Technical Report 21-49-004(4)*, USAF School of Aviation Medicine, Randolph Field, Texas, 1951.
- [FH87] K. Fukunaga and D. Hummels. Bayes error estimation using Parzen and k-nn procedure. *IEEE Trans. Pattern Analysis and Machine Learning*, 9:634–643, 1987.
- [FI90] U. M. Fayyad and K. B. Irani. What should be minimized in a decision tree? In *Proc. 1990 Nat. Conf. Artificial Intelligence (AAAI'90)*, pages 749–754, AAAI/MIT Press, 1990.
- [FI92] U. M. Fayyad and K. B. Irani. The attribute selection problem in decision tree generation. In *Proc. 1992 Nat. Conf. Artificial Intelligence (AAAI'92)*, pages 104–110, AAAI/MIT Press, 1992.
- [Fox97] John Fox. *Applied regression analysis, linear models, and related methods*. Sage Publications, Inc, 1997.
- [FPP07] D. Freedman, R. Pisani, and R. Purves. *Statistics (4th ed.)*. W. W. Norton & Co., 2007.
- [Fre09] David A Freedman. *Statistical models: theory and practice*. cambridge university press, 2009.

- [Fri01] J. H. Friedman. Greedy function approximation: A gradient boosting machine. *Ann. Statistics*, 29:1189–1232, 2001.
- [FS97] Y. Freund and R. E. Schapire. A decision-theoretic generalization of on-line learning and an application to boosting. *J. Computer and System Sciences*, 55:119–139, 1997.
- [GG92] A. Gersho and R. M. Gray. *Vector Quantization and Signal Compression*. Kluwer Academic, 1992.
- [GGRL99] J. Gehrke, V. Ganti, R. Ramakrishnan, and W.-Y. Loh. BOAT—optimistic decision tree construction. In *Proc. 1999 ACM-SIGMOD Int. Conf. Management of Data (SIGMOD’99)*, pages 169–180, Philadelphia, PA, June 1999.
- [GRG98] J. Gehrke, R. Ramakrishnan, and V. Ganti. RainForest: A framework for fast decision tree construction of large datasets. In *Proc. 1998 Int. Conf. Very Large Data Bases (VLDB’98)*, pages 416–427, New York, NY, Aug. 1998.
- [Har68] P. E. Hart. The condensed nearest neighbor rule. *IEEE Trans. Information Theory*, 14:515–516, 1968.
- [HMA09] Parisa Haghani, Sebastian Michel, and Karl Aberer. Distributed similarity search in high dimensions using locality sensitive hashing. In *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Extending Database Technology: Advances in Database Technology*, pages 744–755, 2009.
- [HMS66] E. B. Hunt, J. Marin, and P. T. Stone. *Experiments in Induction*. Academic Press, 1966.
- [HPS97] J. Hosking, E. Pednault, and M. Sudan. A statistical perspective on data mining. *Future Generation Computer Systems*, 13:117–134, 1997.
- [HTF09] T. Hastie, R. Tibshirani, and J. Friedman. *The Elements of Statistical Learning: Data Mining, Inference, and Prediction* (2nd ed.). Springer Verlag, 2009.
- [Jam85] M. James. *Classification Algorithms*. John Wiley & Sons, 1985.
- [Joh97] G. H. John. *Enhancements to the Data Mining Process*. Ph.D. Thesis, Computer Science Department, Stanford University, 1997.
- [Kas80] G. V. Kass. An exploratory technique for investigating large quantities of categorical data. *Applied Statistics*, 29:119–127, 1980.
- [KH97] I. Kononenko and S. J. Hong. Attribute selection for modeling. *Future Generation Computer Systems*, 13:181–195, 1997.



- [Koh95] R. Kohavi. A study of cross-validation and bootstrap for accuracy estimation and model selection. In *Proc. 14th Joint Int. Conf. Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI'95)*, volume 2, pages 1137–1143, Montreal, Canada, Aug. 1995.
- [Kol93] J. L. Kolodner. *Case-Based Reasoning*. Morgan Kaufmann, 1993.
- [Kon95] I. Kononenko. On biases in estimating multi-valued attributes. In *Proc. 14th Joint Int. Conf. Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI'95)*, volume 2, pages 1034–1040, Montreal, Canada, Aug. 1995.
- [Kot88] P. Koton. Reasoning about evidence in causal explanation. In *Proc. 7th Nat. Conf. Artificial Intelligence (AAAI'88)*, pages 256–263, Aug. 1988.
- [Le98] H. Liu and H. Motoda (eds.). *Feature Extraction, Construction, and Selection: A Data Mining Perspective*. Kluwer Academic, 1998.
- [Lea96] D. B. Leake. CBR in context: The present and future. In D. B. Leake, editor, *Cased-Based Reasoning: Experiences, Lessons, and Future Directions*, pages 3–30. AAAI Press, 1996.
- [LLS00] T.-S. Lim, W.-Y. Loh, and Y.-S. Shih. A comparison of prediction accuracy, complexity, and training time of thirty-three old and new classification algorithms. *Machine Learning*, 40:203–228, 2000.
- [LM98] H. Liu and H. Motoda. *Feature Selection for Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining*. Kluwer Academic, 1998.
- [LS97] W. Y. Loh and Y. S. Shih. Split selection methods for classification trees. *Statistica Sinica*, 7:815–840, 1997.
- [LV88] W. Y. Loh and N. Vanichsetakul. Tree-structured classificaiton via generalized discriminant analysis. *J. American Statistical Association*, 83:715–728, 1988.
- [Mag94] J. Magidson. The CHAID approach to segmentation modeling: CHI-squared automatic interaction detection. In R. P. Bagozzi, editor, *Advanced Methods of Marketing Research*, pages 118–159. Blackwell Business, 1994.
- [MAR96] M. Mehta, R. Agrawal, and J. Rissanen. SLIQ: A fast scalable classifier for data mining. In *Proc. 1996 Int. Conf. Extending Database Technology (EDBT'96)*, pages 18–32, Avignon, France, Mar. 1996.
- [Mar09] S. Marsland. *Machine Learning: An Algorithmic Perspective*. Chapman and Hall/CRC, 2009.

- [MFS95] D. Malerba, E. Floriana, and G. Semeraro. A further comparison of simplification methods for decision tree induction. In D. Fisher and H. Lenz, editors, *Learning from Data: AI and Statistics*. Springer Verlag, 1995.
- [MH95] J. K. Martin and D. S. Hirschberg. The time complexity of decision tree induction. In *Technical Report ICS-TR 95-27*, Department of Information and Computer Science, Univ. California, Irvine, CA, Aug. 1995.
- [Min89] J. Mingers. An empirical comparison of pruning methods for decision-tree induction. *Machine Learning*, 4:227–243, 1989.
- [Mit97] T. M. Mitchell. *Machine Learning*. McGraw-Hill, 1997.
- [MK91] M. Manago and Y. Kodratoff. Induction of decision trees from complex structured data. In G. Piatetsky-Shapiro and W. J. Frawley, editors, *Knowledge Discovery in Databases*, pages 289–306. AAAI/MIT Press, 1991.
- [MST94] D. Michie, D. J. Spiegelhalter, and C. C. Taylor. *Machine Learning, Neural and Statistical Classification*. Ellis Horwood, Chichester, UK, 1994.
- [Mur98] S. K. Murthy. Automatic construction of decision trees from data: A multi-disciplinary survey. *Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, 2:345–389, 1998.
- [NB86] T. Niblett and I. Bratko. Learning decision rules in noisy domains. In M. A. Brammer, editor, *Expert Systems '86: Research and Development in Expert Systems III*, pages 25–34. British Computer Society Specialist Group on Expert Systems, Dec. 1986.
- [NJ02] Andrew Y Ng and Michael I Jordan. On discriminative vs. generative classifiers: A comparison of logistic regression and naive bayes. In *Advances in neural information processing systems*, pages 841–848, 2002.
- [Nov63] Albert B Novikoff. On convergence proofs for perceptrons. Technical report, STANFORD RESEARCH INST MENLO PARK CA, 1963.
- [PS85] F. P. Preparata and M. I. Shamos. *Computational Geometry: An Introduction*. Springer Verlag, 1985.
- [QR89] J. R. Quinlan and R. L. Rivest. Inferring decision trees using the minimum description length principle. *Information and Computation*, 80:227–248, Mar. 1989.
- [Qui86] J. R. Quinlan. Induction of decision trees. *Machine Learning*, 1:81–106, 1986.

- [Qui87] J. R. Quinlan. Simplifying decision trees. *Int. J. Man-Machine Studies*, 27:221–234, 1987.
- [Qui88] J. R. Quinlan. An empirical comparison of genetic and decision-tree classifiers. In *Proc. 1988 Int. Conf. Machine Learning (ICML'88)*, pages 135–141, Ann Arbor, MI, June 1988.
- [Qui93] J. R. Quinlan. *C4.5: Programs for Machine Learning*. Morgan Kaufmann, 1993.
- [Qui96] J. R. Quinlan. Bagging, boosting, and C4.5. In *Proc. 1996 Nat. Conf. Artificial Intelligence (AAAI'96)*, volume 1, pages 725–730, Portland, OR, Aug. 1996.
- [RA87] E. L. Rissland and K. Ashley. HYPO: A case-based system for trade secret law. In *Proc. 1st Int. Conf. Artificial Intelligence and Law*, pages 60–66, Boston, MA, May 1987.
- [Ros58] Frank Rosenblatt. The perceptron: a probabilistic model for information storage and organization in the brain. *Psychological review*, 65(6):386, 1958.
- [RS89] C. Riesbeck and R. Schank. *Inside Case-Based Reasoning*. Lawrence Erlbaum, 1989.
- [RS98] R. Rastogi and K. Shim. Public: A decision tree classifier that integrates building and pruning. In *Proc. 1998 Int. Conf. Very Large Data Bases (VLDB'98)*, pages 404–415, New York, NY, Aug. 1998.
- [SAM96] J. Shafer, R. Agrawal, and M. Mehta. SPRINT: A scalable parallel classifier for data mining. In *Proc. 1996 Int. Conf. Very Large Data Bases (VLDB'96)*, pages 544–555, Bombay, India, Sept. 1996.
- [SE10] G. Seni and J. F. Elder. *Ensemble Methods in Data Mining: Improving Accuracy Through Combining Predictions*. Morgan and Claypool, 2010.
- [SF86] J. C. Schlimmer and D. Fisher. A case study of incremental concept induction. In *Proc. 1986 Nat. Conf. Artificial Intelligence (AAAI'86)*, pages 496–501, Philadelphia, PA, 1986.
- [Shi99] Y.-S. Shih. Families of splitting criteria for classification trees. *Statistics and Computing*, 9:309–315, 1999.
- [SMT91] J. W. Shavlik, R. J. Mooney, and G. G. Towell. Symbolic and neural learning algorithms: An experimental comparison. *Machine Learning*, 6:111–144, 1991.
- [SR81] R. Sokal and F. Rohlf. *Biometry*. Freeman, 1981.

- [Sto74] M. Stone. Cross-validatory choice and assessment of statistical predictions. *J. Royal Statistical Society*, 36:111–147, 1974.
- [SW49] C. E. Shannon and W. Weaver. *The mathematical theory of communication*. University of Illinois Press, 1949.
- [Swe88] J. Swets. Measuring the accuracy of diagnostic systems. *Science*, 240:1285–1293, 1988.
- [Tib11] Robert Tibshirani. Regression shrinkage and selection via the lasso: a retrospective. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series B (Statistical Methodology)*, 73(3):273–282, 2011.
- [TK08] S. Theodoridis and K. Koutroubas. *Pattern Recognition, 4th ed.* Academic Press, 2008.
- [UBC97] P. E. Utgoff, N. C. Berkman, and J. A. Clouse. Decision tree induction based on efficient tree restructuring. *Machine Learning*, 29:5–44, 1997.
- [UFS91] R. Uthurusamy, U. M. Fayyad, and S. Spangler. Learning useful rules from inconclusive data. In G. Piatetsky-Shapiro and W. J. Frawley, editors, *Knowledge Discovery in Databases*, pages 141–157. AAAI/MIT Press, 1991.
- [Utg88] P. E. Utgoff. An incremental ID3. In *Proc. Fifth Int. Conf. Machine Learning (ICML’88)*, pages 107–120, San Mateo, CA, 1988.
- [VC06] M. Vuk and T. Curk. ROC curve, lift chart and calibration plot. *Metodološki zvezki*, 3:89–108,, 2006.
- [vR90] C. J. van Rijsbergen. *Information Retrieval*. Butterworth, 1990.
- [Wei04] G. M. Weiss. Mining with rarity: A unifying framework. *SIGKDD Explorations*, 6:7–19, 2004.
- [WF05] I. H. Witten and E. Frank. *Data Mining: Practical Machine Learning Tools and Techniques* (2nd ed.). Morgan Kaufmann, 2005.
- [WK91] S. M. Weiss and C. A. Kulikowski. *Computer Systems that Learn: Classification and Prediction Methods from Statistics, Neural Nets, Machine Learning, and Expert Systems*. Morgan Kaufman, 1991.
- [ZL06] Z.-H. Zhou and X.-Y. Liu. Training cost-sensitive neural networks with methods addressing the class imbalance problem. *IEEE Trans. on Knowledge and Data Engineering*, 18:63–77, 2006.
- [ZS02] N. Zapkowicz and S. Stephen. The class imbalance program: a systematic study. *Intelligence Data Analysis*, 6:429–450, 2002.