

Introduction to Natural Language Processing

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Natural Language Processing



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- ▶ Language helps us talk to each other—and now, to computers too!
- ▶ NLP (Natural Language Processing) teaches machines to understand, interpret, and generate human language.
- ▶ Why is NLP important?
 - Makes **chatbots** like ChatGPT and Siri possible
 - Powers **search engines** like Google
 - Helps **translate languages** (Google Translate)
 - Finds out what **people feel in reviews** (sentiment analysis)
- ▶ NLP is foundational to advanced AI systems.

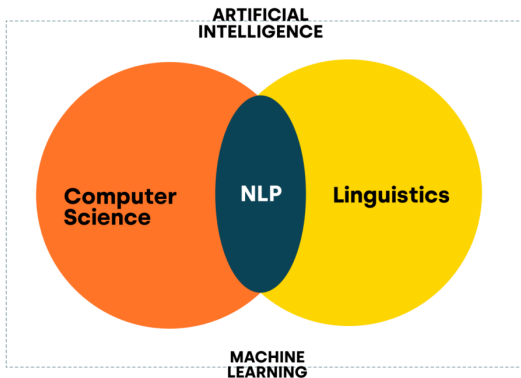
- ▶ **Define** Natural Language Processing (NLP)
- ▶ **Explain and construct** N-grams (unigram, bigram, trigram)
- ▶ **Understand** sequence notation and tokenization
- ▶ **Compute** N-gram probabilities and count matrices
- ▶ **Apply** start/end tokens and handle unknown words (OOV, UNK)
- ▶ **Recognize** the limitations of N-gram models and future directions

Natural Language Processing: **Introduction**

What is NLP?

- ▶ Study of computational approaches to processing natural languages.
- ▶ Processing includes:
 - Acquiring language data
 - Representing information
 - Storing text and speech
 - Understanding meaning
 - Characterizing language patterns
 - Generating new language
- ▶ Natural languages refer to human languages.

What is Natural Language Processing?



NLP = Computer Science + Linguistics + AI

► Deals with:

- Language understanding (input)
- Language generation (output)
- Language translation
- Information extraction

► Subfields:

- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics
- Discourse



Goal: Deep Understanding

Requires context, linguistic structure, meanings...



To Avoid: Shallow Matching

Could be useful also though depending on use case

Goal of NLP:

- ▶ Enable machines to understand and generate human language.
- ▶ Facilitate human-computer interaction through natural language.
- ▶ Develop systems that can process and analyze large amounts of text data.

► Text Preprocessing

- Cleaning and preparing raw text for analysis.

► Tokenization

- Splitting text into words, sentences, or other meaningful units.

► POS Tagging

- Assigning parts of speech (noun, verb, etc.) to each token.

► Parsing

- Analyzing grammatical structure of sentences.

► Named Entity Recognition (NER)

- Identifying entities such as people, organizations, locations.

► Sentiment Analysis / Classification

- Determining sentiment or categorizing text.

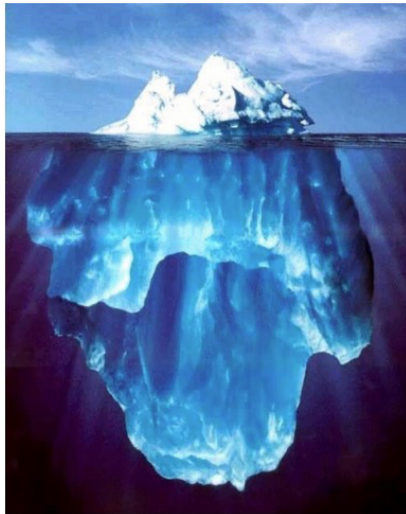
► Language Modeling

- Predicting the next word or sequence in text.

- ▶ An iceberg is a large piece of freshwater ice that has broken off from a snow-formed glacier or ice shelf and is floating in open water.



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Teaching machines to **understand and generate human language**

► **Text preprocessing:**

Cleaning and preparing raw text data (removing noise, tokenization, normalization).

► **Understanding meaning:**

Extracting meaning from text using techniques like part-of-speech tagging, named entity recognition, and sentiment analysis.

► **Language modeling:**

Building models that can predict or generate text, such as autocomplete or next-word prediction.

► **Translation, summarization, etc.:**

Enabling applications like machine translation, text summarization, question answering, and more.

Text data is everywhere: tweets, reviews, articles, chats! NLP helps us make sense of this vast information.

Task	What It Does	Example
Tokenization	Split text into words	"I love NLP" → ["I", "love", "NLP"]
POS Tagging	Label grammar tags	"Dogs bark" → [Noun, Verb]
Named Entity Recognition	Find names, places, etc.	"Christopher Nolan lives in Los Angeles"
Sentiment Analysis	Detect mood	"This movie was amazing!" → Positive
Machine Translation	Language to language	English → French

► **Lowercase everything:**

Example: "NLP" → "nlp"

► **Removing stop words:**

Eliminate common words that carry little meaning (e.g., "is", "the", "and") to focus on important content.

► **Stemming/Lemmatization:**

Reduce words to their root or base form.

Example: "running" → "run"

► **Vectorization:**

Transform words or documents into numerical representations for machine learning models:

- **Bag of Words:** Counts word occurrences in a document.
- **TF-IDF (Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency):** Weighs words by importance across documents.
- **Word2Vec:** Learns dense vector representations capturing word meaning and



What is a corpus?

- ▶ A corpus is a collection of text.
- ▶ Often annotated in some way.
- ▶ Sometimes just lots of text.
- ▶ **Balanced corpora:** Usually not possible in practice.
- ▶ **Examples:**
 - Newswire collections: 500M+ words
 - Brown corpus: 1M words of tagged “balanced” text
 - Penn Treebank: 1M words of parsed WSJ
 - Canadian Hansards: 10M+ words of aligned French/English sentences
 - The Web: billions of words of who knows what

- ▶ **Vocabulary** = All unique words in your dataset
- ▶ Example: "I love NLP and NLP loves me" →
Vocabulary = {"I", "love", "NLP", "and", "loves", "me"}
- ▶ More data = Bigger vocabulary = Harder to process!

Tip: Rare words may not help; common words may not mean much.

Traditional approach: One-hot encoding

- ▶ Example: "NLP" $\rightarrow [0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0, \dots]$

Problem:

- ▶ High-dimensional (thousands of words!)
- ▶ Sparse (mostly 0s)
- ▶ No meaning in structure (no relation between "king" and "queen")
- ▶ Not efficient for learning

Feature extraction = Turning text into numbers

- ▶ Count how often each word appears (**Term Frequency**)

Example:

Text	"great product"	"bad product"
Word: "great"	1	0
Word: "bad"	0	1

Use this to find patterns in sentiment, spam, etc.

Suppose you're classifying reviews:

Positive Reviews: ["amazing", "good", "great"]

Negative Reviews: ["bad", "awful", "terrible"]

Count how often each word appears in each class.

Example table:

Word	Positive Count	Negative Count
good	20	1
bad	1	30

Helps models detect the “tone” (**sentiment clues**) of new text.

- ▶ **Bag of Words (BoW)**: Just counts word frequencies in each document.
- ▶ **TF-IDF (Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency)**: Adjusts for how “unique” or important a word is in a document compared to all documents.
 - Words like "the", "is" are less important.
- ▶ **Word Embeddings (later)**: Add meaning and capture relationships between words (e.g., similarity, analogy).

Natural Language Processing: **N-grams**

What are N-grams?

An N-gram is a sequence of N words

Corpus: I am happy because I am learning

Unigrams: { I , am , happy , because , learning }

Bigrams: { I am , am happy , happy because ... }

✗ I happy

Trigrams: { I am happy , am happy because, ... }

- Items are typically **words** or **characters**.

- ▶ Tokenization is the process of breaking text into smaller units called **tokens**.
- ▶ Tokens can be words, characters, or subwords.
- ▶ Example: "I love NLP" can be tokenized into:
 - Words: ["I", "love", "NLP"]
 - Characters: ["I", " ", "l", "o", "v", "e", " ", "N", "L", "P"]
 - Subwords: ["I", " ", "lov", "e", " ", "N", "L", "P"]
- ▶ Tokenization is crucial for preparing text data for NLP tasks.

Sentence: “I love NLP”

- ▶ **Unigrams:** I, love, NLP
- ▶ **Bigrams:** I love, love NLP
- ▶ **Trigrams:** I love NLP

- ▶ Capture local word co-occurrence
- ▶ Build simple language models
- ▶ Easy to compute and analyze
- ▶ Trade-off between simplicity (unigram) and contextual richness (trigram)

Sequence Notation Basics

Sentence: w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n

For example: $w_1 = \text{I}$, $w_2 = \text{love}$, $w_3 = \text{NLP}$

General representation:

- ▶ Unigram: $P(w_i)$
- ▶ Bigram: $P(w_i \mid w_{i-1})$
- ▶ Trigram: $P(w_i \mid w_{i-2}, w_{i-1})$

Sequence Notation Example:

Corpus: This is great ... teacher drinks tea. $m = 500$

$w_1 \ w_2 \ w_3$ $w_{498} \ w_{499} \ w_{500}$

$$w_1^m = w_1 \ w_2 \ \dots \ w_m$$

$$w_1^3 = w_1 \ w_2 \ w_3$$

$$w_{m-2}^m = w_{m-2} \ w_{m-1} \ w_m$$

Sequence Notation Basics

Sentence: w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n

For example: $w_1 = \text{l}$, $w_2 = \text{love}$, $w_3 = \text{NLP}$

General representation:

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Corpus: I am happy because I am learning

Size of corpus $m = 7$

$$P(I) = \frac{2}{7}$$

$$P(happy) = \frac{1}{7}$$

Probability of unigram:

$$P(w) = \frac{C(w)}{m}$$

Corpus: I am happy because I am learning

$$P(am|I) = \frac{C(I \text{ } am)}{C(I)} = \frac{2}{2} = 1$$

$$P(happy|I) = \frac{C(I \text{ } happy)}{C(I)} = \frac{0}{2} = 0 \quad \times \text{ I happy}$$

$$P(learning|am) = \frac{C(am \text{ } learning)}{C(am)} = \frac{1}{2}$$

Probability of a bigram:
$$P(y|x) = \frac{C(x \text{ } y)}{\sum_w C(x \text{ } w)} = \frac{C(x \text{ } y)}{C(x)}$$

Corpus: I am happy because I am learning

$$P(\text{happy} | \text{I am}) = \frac{C(\text{I am happy})}{C(\text{I am})} = \frac{1}{2}$$

Probability of a trigram:
$$P(w_3 | w_1^2) = \frac{C(w_1^2 w_3)}{C(w_1^2)}$$

$$C(w_1^2 w_3) = C(w_1 w_2 w_3) = C(w_1^3)$$

Probability of N-gram: $P(w_N | w_1^{N-1}) = \frac{C(w_1^{N-1} w_N)}{C(w_1^{N-1})}$

$$C(w_1^{N-1} w_N) = C(w_1^N)$$

Objective: Compute the probability of a sentence

N-gram Assumption: The probability of a word depends only on the previous $(n - 1)$ words.

Formula:

$$P(w_1^n) \approx \prod_{i=1}^n P(w_i \mid w_{i-n+1}^{i-1})$$

where w_1^n denotes the sequence w_1, w_2, \dots, w_n and w_{i-n+1}^{i-1} is the context of the previous $(n - 1)$ words.

Bigram MLE:

$$P(w_i | w_{i-1}) = \frac{\text{Count}(w_{i-1}, w_i)}{\text{Count}(w_{i-1})}$$

- ▶ $\text{Count}(w_{i-1}, w_i)$: Number of times the bigram (w_{i-1}, w_i) appears in the corpus.
- ▶ $\text{Count}(w_{i-1})$: Number of times the word w_{i-1} appears as a context.

Text: "I love NLP. I love AI."

Bigrams and Counts:

- ▶ (I, love): 2
- ▶ (love, NLP): 1
- ▶ (love, AI): 1

Probability Calculations:

- ▶ $P(\text{love} \mid \text{I}) = \frac{2}{2} = 1.0$
- ▶ $P(\text{NLP} \mid \text{love}) = \frac{1}{2} = 0.5$
- ▶ $P(\text{AI} \mid \text{love}) = \frac{1}{2} = 0.5$

Count Matrix: A matrix that counts occurrences of word pairs in a corpus.

Probability Matrix: A matrix that calculates probabilities of word pairs based on counts.

Example: For the sentence "I love NLP. I love AI."

- ▶ Count Matrix: Counts how many times each word appears with every other word.
- ▶ Probability Matrix: Calculates the probability of each word appearing given the previous word.

$$P(w_n | w_{n-N+1}^{n-1}) = \frac{C(w_{n-N+1}^{n-1}, w_n)}{C(w_{n-N+1}^{n-1})}$$

- Rows: unique corpus (N-1)-grams
- Columns: unique corpus words

Corpus: <s>I study I learn</s>

- Bigram count matrix

"study I" bigram

	<s>	</s>	I	study	learn
<s>	0	0	1	0	0
</s>	0	0	0	0	0
I	0	0	0	1	1
study	0	0	1	0	0
learn	0	1	0	0	0

Text: "I love NLP. I love AI."

Bigrams:

- ▶ (I, love): 2
- ▶ (love, NLP): 1
- ▶ (love, AI): 1

Count Matrix:

- ▶ Rows: Words in the corpus
- ▶ Columns: Words in the corpus
- ▶ Cells: Count of occurrences of each word pair

- Divide each cell by its row sum

Corpus: <s>I study I learn</s>

Count matrix (bigram)

	<s>	</s>	I	study	learn	sum
<s>	0	0	1	0	0	1
</s>	0	0	0	0	0	0
I	0	0	0	1	1	2
study	0	0	1	0	0	1
learn	0	1	0	0	0	1



Probability matrix

	<s>	</s>	I	study	learn
<s>	0	0	1	0	0
</s>	0	0	0	0	0
I	0	0	0	0.5	0.5
study	0	0	1	0	0
learn	0	1	0	0	0

$$P(w_n | w_{n-N+1}^{n-1}) = \frac{C(w_{n-N+1}^{n-1}, w_n)}{C(w_{n-N+1}^{n-1})}$$

$$\text{sum}(\text{row}) = \sum_{w \in V} C(w_{n-N+1}^{n-1}, w) = C(w_{n-N+1}^{n-1})$$

Probability Calculation:

Bigram Probability:

$$P(\text{love} \mid \text{I}) = \frac{\text{Count}(\text{I}, \text{love})}{\text{Count}(\text{I})} = \frac{2}{2} = 1$$

Probability Matrix:

- ▶ Rows: Words in the corpus
- ▶ Columns: Words in the corpus
- ▶ Cells: Probability of each word given the previous word

- Given a sentence, what is its probability?

$$P(\textit{the teacher drinks tea}) = ?$$

- Conditional probability and chain rule reminder

$$P(B|A) = \frac{P(A, B)}{P(A)} \implies P(A, B) = P(A)P(B|A)$$

$$P(A, B, C, D) = P(A)P(B|A)P(C|A, B)P(D|A, B, C)$$

$$P(\textit{the teacher drinks tea}) =$$

$$P(\textit{the})P(\textit{teacher}|\textit{the})P(\textit{drinks}|\textit{the teacher}) \\ P(\textit{tea}|\textit{the teacher drinks})$$

Problem: Corpus almost never contains the exact sentence we're interested in or even its longer subsequences!

$$P(\textit{the teacher drinks tea}) =$$

$$P(\textit{the})P(\textit{teacher}|\textit{the})P(\textit{drinks}|\textit{the teacher})$$

$$P(\textit{tea}|\textit{the teacher drinks})$$

the teacher drinks tea

$$P(\text{tea}|\text{the teacher drinks}) \approx P(\text{tea}|\text{drinks})$$

$$\begin{aligned} P(\text{teacher}|\text{the}) \\ P(\text{drinks}|\text{teacher}) \\ P(\text{tea}|\text{drinks}) \end{aligned}$$

$$P(\text{the teacher drinks tea}) = P(\text{the})P(\text{teacher}|\text{the})P(\text{drinks}|\text{the teacher})P(\text{tea}|\text{the teacher drinks})$$



$$P(\text{the})P(\text{teacher}|\text{the})P(\text{drinks}|\text{teacher})P(\text{tea}|\text{drinks})$$

- Markov assumption: only last N words matter
- Bigram $P(w_n|w_1^{n-1}) \approx P(w_n|w_{n-1})$
- N-gram $P(w_n|w_1^{n-1}) \approx P(w_n|w_{n-N+1}^{n-1})$
- Entire sentence modeled with bigram $P(w_1^n) \approx \prod_{i=1}^n P(w_i|w_{i-1})$
 $P(w_1^n) \approx P(w_1)P(w_2|w_1)\dots P(w_n|w_{n-1})$

Objective: Apply sequence probability approximation with bigrams.

Question:

Given these conditional probabilities

$P(\text{Mary})=0.1$; $P(\text{likes})=0.2$; $P(\text{cats})=0.3$
 $P(\text{Mary}|\text{likes})=0.2$; $P(\text{likes}|\text{Mary})=0.3$; $P(\text{cats}|\text{likes})=0.1$; $P(\text{likes}|\text{cats})=0.4$

Approximate the probability of the following sentence with bigrams: "Mary likes cats"

Type: Multiple Choice, single answer

Options and solution:

1. $P(\text{Mary likes cats}) = 0$

2. $P(\text{Mary likes cats}) = 1$

3. $P(\text{Mary likes cats}) = 0.003$

4. $P(\text{Mary likes cats}) = 0.008$

N-gram Models: **Start and End Tokens**

- ▶ **Start:** <s> or <start>
- ▶ **End:** </s> or <end>

Benefits:

- ▶ Helps model sentence boundaries
- ▶ Enables generation and evaluation

the teacher drinks tea

$$P(\text{the teacher drinks tea}) \approx P(\text{the})P(\text{teacher}|\text{the})P(\text{drinks}|\text{teacher})P(\text{tea}|\text{drinks})$$



<s> the teacher drinks tea

$$P(\text{<s> the teacher drinks tea}) \approx P(\text{the}|\text{<s>})P(\text{teacher}|\text{the})P(\text{drinks}|\text{teacher})P(\text{tea}|\text{drinks})$$

- Trigram:

$$P(\text{the teacher drinks tea}) \approx$$

$$P(\text{the})P(\text{teacher}|\text{the})P(\text{drinks}|\text{the teacher})P(\text{tea}|\text{teacher drinks})$$

the teacher drinks tea \Rightarrow <s> <s> the teacher drinks tea

$$P(w_1^n) \approx P(w_1|\text{<s> <s>})P(w_2|\text{<s> } w_1) \dots P(w_n|w_{n-2} w_{n-1})$$

- N-gram model: add N-1 start tokens <s>

$$P(y|x) = \frac{C(x \ y)}{\sum_w C(x \ w)} = \frac{C(x \ y)}{C(x)}$$

Corpus:

<s> Lyn drinks chocolate

<s> John drinks

$$\sum_w C(drinks \ w) = 1$$

$$C(drinks) = 2$$

End of sentence token <s> - motivation (cont.)

Corpus

<s> yes no

<s> yes yes

<s> no no

Sentences of length 2:

<s> yes yes

<s> yes no

<s> no no

<s> no yes

$$P(< s > \text{ yes yes}) =$$

$$P(\text{yes} \mid < s >) \times P(\text{yes} \mid \text{yes}) =$$

$$\frac{C(< s > \text{ yes})}{\sum_w C(< s > w)} \times \frac{C(\text{yes yes})}{\sum_w C(\text{yes } w)} =$$

$$\frac{2}{3} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{1}{3}$$

End of sentence token <s> - motivation (cont.)

Corpus

<s> yes no

<s> yes yes

<s> no no

Sentences of length 2:

<s> yes yes

<s> yes no

<s> no no

<s> no yes

$$P(< s > \text{ yes yes}) = \frac{1}{3}$$

$$P(< s > \text{ yes no}) = \frac{1}{3}$$

$$P(< s > \text{ no no}) = \frac{1}{3}$$

$$P(< s > \text{ no yes}) = 0$$

$$\sum_{\text{2 word}} P(\dots) = 1$$

End of sentence token <s> - motivation (cont.)

Corpus

<s> yes no

<s> yes yes

<s> no no

Sentences of length 3:

<s> yes yes yes

<s> yes yes no

...

<s> no no no

$$P(< s > \text{ yes yes yes}) = \dots$$

$$P(< s > \text{ yes yes no}) = \dots$$

$$\dots = \dots$$

$$P(< s > \text{ no no no}) = \dots$$

$$\sum_{\text{3 word}} P(\dots) = 1$$

Corpus

<s> yes no

<s> yes yes

<s> no no

$$\sum_{2 \text{ word}} P(\dots) + \sum_{3 \text{ word}} P(\dots) + \dots = 1$$

- Bigram

<s> the teacher drinks tea \Rightarrow <s> the teacher drinks tea </s>

$$P(the|<s>)P(teacher|the)P(drinks|teacher)P(tea|drinks)P(</s>|tea)$$

Corpus:

<s> Lyn drinks chocolate </s>

<s> John drinks </s>

$$\sum_w C(drinks\ w) = 2$$
$$C(drinks) = 2$$

- N-gram => just one </s>

E.g. Trigram:

the teacher drinks tea => <s> <s> the teacher drinks tea </s>

Corpus

<s	Lyn	drinks	chocolate	</s>
>s>	John	drinks	tea	</s>

<s> Lyn eats chocolate </s>

$$P(\text{sentence}) = \boxed{\frac{2}{3}} * \boxed{\frac{1}{2}} * \boxed{\frac{1}{2}} * \boxed{\frac{2}{2}} = \frac{1}{6}$$

$$P(\text{John}|\text{<s>}) = \frac{1}{3}$$

$$P(\text{chocolate}|\text{eats}) = \frac{1}{2}$$

$$P(\text{</s>}|\text{tea}) = \frac{1}{1}$$

$$P(\text{Lyn}|\text{<s>}) = ? = \frac{2}{3}$$

Objective: Apply sequence probability approximation with bigrams after adding start and end word.

Question:

Given these conditional probabilities

$P(\text{Mary})=0.1;$ $P(\text{likes})=0.2;$ $P(\text{cats})=0.3$

$P(\text{Mary}|\text{<s>})=0.2;$ $P(\text{</s>}|\text{cats})=0.6$

$P(\text{likes}|\text{Mary})=0.3;$ $P(\text{cats}|\text{likes})=0.1$

Approximate the probability of the following sentence with bigrams: "<s> Mary likes cats </s>"

Type: Multiple Choice, single answer

Options and solution:

1. $P(\text{<s> Mary likes cats </s>}) = 0$

2. $P(\text{<s> Mary likes cats </s>}) = 0.0036$

3. $P(\text{<s> Mary likes cats </s>}) = 0.003$

4. $P(\text{<s> Mary likes cats </s>}) = 1$

N-gram Models: **Out of vocabulary words**

Problem: Many words in a language are not present in the training corpus, leading to OOV issues.

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Impact: OOV words can lead to poor model performance and inaccurate predictions.

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Closed vs. Open Vocabularies:

- ▶ **Closed vocabulary:** Only words seen during training are recognized.
- ▶ **Open vocabulary:** Model can handle unseen words.

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Impact: OOV words can lead to poor model performance and inaccurate predictions.

Closed vs. Open Vocabularies:

- ▶ **Closed vocabulary:** Only words seen during training are recognized.
- ▶ **Open vocabulary:** Model can handle unseen words.

Solution: Use a special tag <UNK> in the corpus and input to represent unknown words.

Using <UNK>: Replace rare or unseen words with the special token <UNK>.

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Why? Helps the model generalize to words it has not seen during training.

Using <UNK>: Replace rare or unseen words with the special token <UNK>.

Why? Helps the model generalize to words it has not seen during training.

Example:

- ▶ Original: I love ChatGPT
- ▶ With OOV handling: I love <UNK>

1. **Create vocabulary V :** Build a list of all words to be recognized (e.g., most frequent words).
2. **Replace OOV words:** For any word in the corpus not in V , replace it with <UNK>.
3. **Estimate probabilities:** Treat <UNK> as a regular word when computing word probabilities.

This approach allows the model to handle unseen words gracefully during inference.

Corpus

<s> Lyn drinks chocolate </s>

<s> John drinks tea </s>

<s> Lyn eats chocolate </s>



Corpus

<s> Lyn drinks chocolate </s>

<s> <UNK> drinks <UNK> </s>

<s> Lyn <UNK> chocolate </s>

Min frequency $f=2$

Vocabulary

Lyn, drinks, chocolate

Input query

<s> Adam drinks chocolate </s>



<s> <UNK> drinks chocolate </s>

Criteria for Vocabulary Selection:

- ▶ **Minimum word frequency f :** Only include words that appear at least f times in the corpus.
- ▶ **Maximum vocabulary size $|V|$:** Limit V to the top $|V|$ most frequent words.

Use <UNK> Sparingly: Choose f and $|V|$ to minimize the number of words replaced by <UNK>, while keeping the vocabulary manageable. **Perplexity:** Only compare language models that use the same vocabulary V to ensure fair evaluation.

N-gram Models: **Limitations**

Data Sparsity

Limited Context (only N-1 words)

Explodes with Vocabulary Size

Doesn't Capture Semantics/Syntax

N-gram Models: **Summary**

- ▶ Neural Language Models (e.g., Word2Vec, LSTMs)
- ▶ Transformer-based Models (BERT, GPT)
- ▶ Subword Tokenization (Byte-Pair Encoding)
- ▶ Pretrained Language Models
- ▶ Contextual Representations

- ▶ NLP enables machines to understand human language
- ▶ N-grams model word sequences simply and effectively
- ▶ Sequence notation and probability estimation are essential
- ▶ Start/end/UNK tokens improve modeling and robustness
- ▶ N-gram models are limited → neural models offer solutions

NLP: References

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Credits

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