

# Spring 2026 Natural Language Processing (CSCI-6515)

Azerbaijani Wikipedia Corpus: Tokenization, Heaps' Law, BPE,  
Sentence Segmentation, and Spell Checking

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# Motivation

- Azerbaijani is a low-resource language for NLP research
- Wikipedia provides freely licensed, diverse text data (CC BY-SA)
- Goal: build a clean corpus and implement core preprocessing modules
- Outputs are fully reproducible via bash scripts/run\_all.sh

# Dataset Snapshot

- Source: Azerbaijani Wikipedia (MediaWiki API)
- Cleaned corpus stored as CSV: data/raw/corpus.csv
- Final size:
  - 623 documents
  - 238,286 tokens
  - 48,151 unique token types

# Cleaning Challenges

- Wikipedia markup noise:
  - templates, categories, navigation text, references
- Mixed-language artifacts (English-heavy references)
- Broken punctuation / formatting residue
- Short or empty pages removed to improve quality

## Tokenization (Unicode-aware)

We tokenize using Unicode letter categories and preserve Azerbaijani characters.

$\text{token} \in \{\text{letters}\}^+ \text{ with optional internal } [']$

Example:

‘‘S.Rustamov 2.5 df artırsaq’’  $\Rightarrow$  [S.Rustamov, 2.5, df, artırsaq]

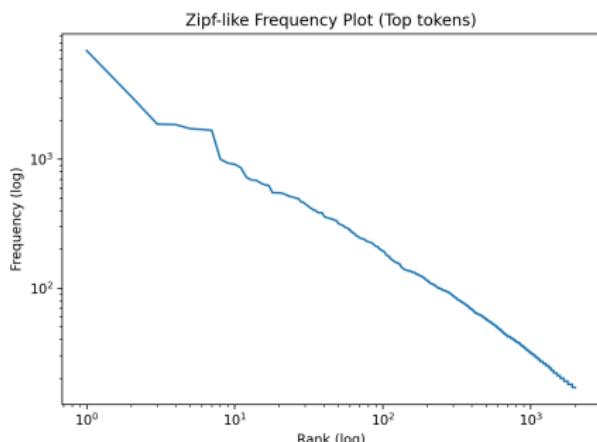
- Handles diacritics: , ğ, ö, ş, ü, ı, ç
- Keeps decimals to avoid splitting numeric expressions
- Lowercasing used for vocabulary normalization

# Zipf's Law (Rank–Frequency)

- Empirical law for word frequencies
- Frequency decays with rank

$$f(r) \propto \frac{1}{r^s} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \log f(r) = c - s \log r$$

- Near-linear mid section on log–log plot
- Confirms heavy-tailed behavior in our corpus



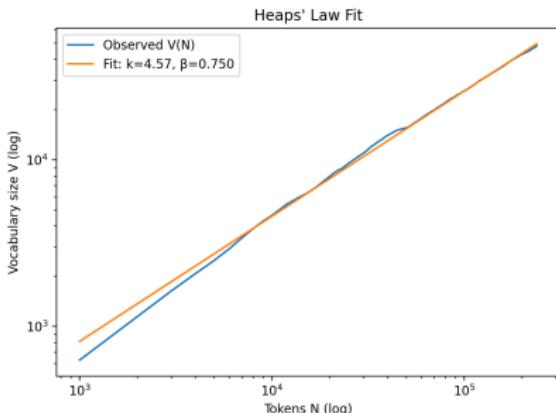
# Heaps' Law (Vocabulary Growth)

$$V(N) = kN^\beta \quad \Rightarrow \quad \log V = \log k + \beta \log N$$

- Sample  $(N, V)$  every 1000 tokens
- Fit  $\log V$  vs.  $\log N$  by linear regression

$$k = 4.57, \quad \beta = 0.750$$

- $\beta > 0.5$  indicates fast vocabulary growth
- Encyclopedic topics + named entities increase diversity



# Byte Pair Encoding (BPE)

BPE learns subword units by repeatedly merging the most frequent symbol pairs.

$$(a, b) = \arg \max_{(x,y)} \text{freq}(x y) \quad \Rightarrow \quad xy \rightarrow \langle xy \rangle$$

- Merges: 5000 → Subword vocab: 5239
- Reduces OOV rate and helps with morphology

Example:

azrbaycanlılardan ⇒ azrbaycan + lı + lardan

# Enhanced Rule-Based Sentence Segmentation

Sentence boundaries are detected using punctuation

$$p \in \{., !, ?\}$$

**only when contextual constraints are satisfied.**

**We block sentence boundaries if:**

Non-space on both sides of  $p \Rightarrow$  no split

Examples: 3.14, 50.5, S.Rustamov

Uppercase initial + period  $\Rightarrow$  no split

Example: A. Mlikli

# Quotation-Aware and Context-Sensitive Splitting

Special handling is applied to quoted text and citations.

## Quotation rule:

closing quote + space + Uppercase  $\Rightarrow$  sentence boundary

closing quote + space + lowercase  $\Rightarrow$  no split

## This prevents over-splitting in:

- Embedded citations
- Lowercase continuations (e.g., kv. verst)
- Azerbaijani quotation styles (", , etc.)

# Why These Rules Matter

- Azerbaijani Wikipedia contains dense punctuation and abbreviations
- Naive punctuation splitting produces many false sentence boundaries
- Our rules significantly reduce:
  - False splits in names and numbers
  - Errors in quoted material
- Lightweight, interpretable, and fast
- Strong baseline for low-resource languages

## Spell Checking: Levenshtein Distance

Baseline: Levenshtein distance via dynamic programming.

$$D(i, j) = \min \begin{cases} D(i - 1, j) + 1 & \text{delete} \\ D(i, j - 1) + 1 & \text{insert} \\ D(i - 1, j - 1) + [x_i \neq y_j] & \text{substitute} \end{cases}$$

- Given misspelled token  $w$ , search candidates  $c \in V$
- Rank by smallest  $D(w, c)$  (with pruning / max distance)

# Weighted Edit Distance (From Confusions)

We replace uniform substitution costs with learned costs from character confusions.

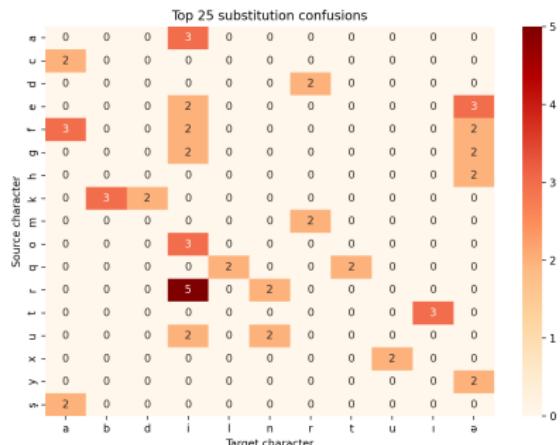
$$\text{cost}(a \rightarrow b) = \frac{1}{\epsilon + P(b|a)}$$

**Weighted recurrence:**

$$D(i, j) = \min \begin{cases} D(i - 1, j) + w_{\text{del}}(x_i) \\ D(i, j - 1) + w_{\text{ins}}(y_j) \\ D(i - 1, j - 1) + w_{\text{sub}}(x_i, y_j) \end{cases}$$

# Weighted Edit Distance (Interpretation)

- Confusions learned from synthetic misspellings
- Common substitutions get lower penalty
- Diacritic and keyboard-adjacent errors favored
- Improves ranking of realistic corrections



# Evaluation Metrics

We evaluate spellchecker ranking using Accuracy@k.

$$\text{Acc}@k = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \mathbf{1}\{y_i \in \text{TopK}(x_i)\}$$

Results on 1000 synthetic misspellings:

$$\text{Acc}@1 = 0.637, \quad \text{Acc}@5 = 0.801$$

- Acc@1 = strict correction success
- Acc@5 = practical usefulness of suggestions

# Key Outputs (Reproducibility)

- Run everything:
  - bash scripts/run\_all.sh
- Plots:
  - outputs/plots/zipf.png, outputs/plots/heaps.png
- BPE:
  - outputs/bpe/merges.txt, bpe\_summary.json
- Spellcheck:
  - spell\_eval.json, confusion\_heatmap.png

# Conclusion

- Built a clean Azerbaijani Wikipedia corpus (623 docs)
- Verified Zipf-like distribution and fitted Heaps' law
- Trained BPE subword model for robust tokenization
- Implemented rule-based sentence segmentation with edge-case handling
- Developed spellchecker with weighted edit distance;  $\text{Acc}@5 = 0.801$

## Future Work

- Improve cleaning and Azerbaijani-only filtering earlier
- Replace synthetic gold data with manual annotations
- Context-aware spell correction using language model scoring
- Explore neural sentence segmentation as stronger baseline

# Questions?