

Figure 1: Overview of our approach. We combine a pre-trained retriever (*Query Encoder + Document Index*) with a pre-trained seq2seq model (*Generator*) and fine-tune end-to-end. For query x , we use Maximum Inner Product Search (MIPS) to find the top-K documents z_i . For final prediction y , we treat z as a latent variable and marginalize over seq2seq predictions given different documents.

Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG)

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Outline

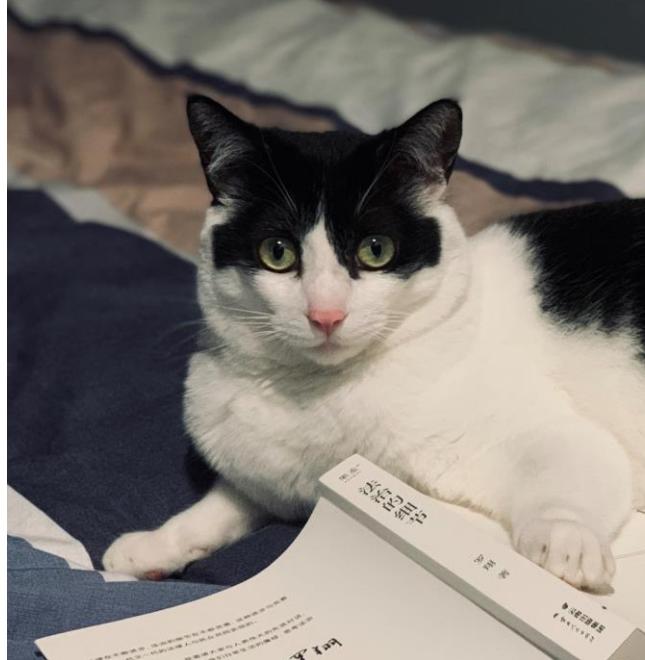
- Intro to Large Language Models
- RAG pipeline
- Embedding vectors
 - Sentence BERT
- Vector DB
 - Algorithms (HNSW)

Prerequisites

- Structure of the Transformer model and how the attention mechanism works.
- BERT (MLM task, [cls] token)

Extra

- As usual, my cat 奥利奥 will also be part of this video.



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What is a language model?

A language model is a probabilistic model that assign probabilities to sequence of words.
In practice, a language model allows us to compute the following:

$$P [\text{"China"} | \text{"Shanghai is a city in" }]$$

Next Token **Prompt**

We usually train a neural network to predict these probabilities. A neural network trained on a large corpora of text is known as a Large Language Model (LLM).

How do we train and inference a Language Model?

Training

A language model is trained on a corpora of text, that is, a large collection of documents. Often, Language Models are trained on the entire Wikipedia and millions of web pages. This allows the Language Model to acquire as much knowledge as possible.

We usually train a Transformer-based neural network as Language Model.

Inference

To inference a Language Model, we build a prompt and let the Language Model generate the rest by iteratively adding tokens.



Complete the following joke: "One day, a language model enters a bar and..."



One day, a language model enters a bar and the bartender says, "Sorry, we don't serve your kind here." The language model replies, "That's okay, I'm used to being left out of the conversation!"



You are what you eat

A language model can only output text and information that it was trained upon. This means, that if we train a language model only on English content, very probably it won't be able to output Japanese or French. To teach new concepts, we need to fine-tune the model.

The cons of fine-tuning

- It can be expensive.
- The number of parameters of the model may not be sufficient to capture all the knowledge we want to teach to it. That's why LLaMA was introduced with 7B, 13B and 70B parameters.
- Fine-Tuning is not additive. It may replace existing knowledge of the model with new knowledge. For example, a language model trained on English that is (heavily) fine-tuned on Japanese may "forget" English.

Prompt Engineering to the rescue!

It is possible to "teach" a language model how to perform a new task by playing with the prompt. For example, by using "few-shot" prompting. The following is an example:



奥利奥 is a cat that likes to play tricks on his friend Umar by replacing all the names in everything he writes with "meow".

For example:

Umar writes: "Bob runs a YouTube channel."

奥利奥 modifies it to: "Meow runs a YouTube channel."

Umar writes: "Alice likes to play with his friend Bob"

奥利奥 modifies it to:



"Meow likes to play with his friend Meow."

QA with Prompt Engineering

Instructions

You're an assistant trained to answer questions using the given context.

Context

Context:

"The engine powering Grok is Grok-1, our frontier LLM, which we developed over the last four months. Grok-1 has gone through many iterations over this span of time. After announcing xAI, we trained a prototype LLM (Grok-0) with 33 billion parameters. This early model approaches LLaMA 2 (70B) capabilities on standard LM benchmarks but uses only half of its training resources. In the last two months, we have made significant improvements in reasoning and coding capabilities leading up to Grok-1, a state-of-the-art language model that is significantly more powerful, achieving 63.2% on the HumanEval coding task and 73% on MMLU.

To understand the capability improvements we made with Grok-1, we have conducted a series of evaluations using a few standard machine learning benchmarks designed to measure math and reasoning abilities.

GSM8k: Middle school math word problems, (Cobbe et al. 2021), using the chain-of-thought prompt.

MMLU: Multidisciplinary multiple choice questions, (Hendrycks et al. 2021), provided 5-shot in-context examples.

HumanEval: Python code completion task, (Chen et al. 2021), zero-shot evaluated for pass@1.

MATH: Middle school and high school mathematics problems written in LaTeX, (Hendrycks et al. 2021), prompted with a fixed 4-shot prompt."

Question

Answer the following question: "How many parameters are there in Grok-0?"

Answer

Grok-0, the prototype LLM mentioned in the provided context, is stated to have been trained with 33 billion parameters.



Prompt

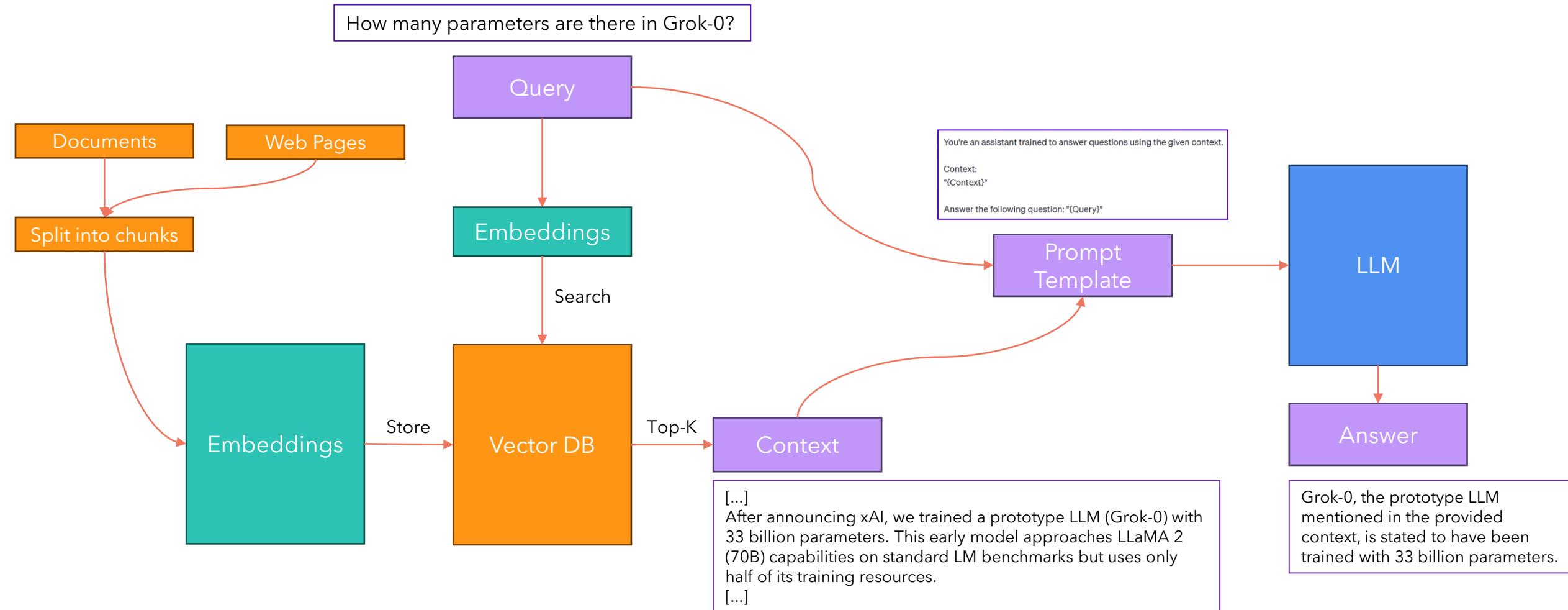
The pros of fine-tuning

- Higher quality results compared to prompt engineering.
- Smaller context size (input size) during inference since we don't need to include the context and instructions.

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QA with Retrieval Augmented Generation

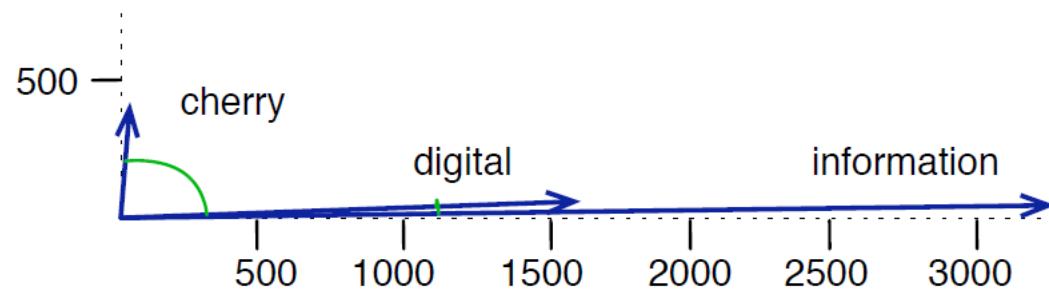


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Why do we use vectors to represent words?

Given the words “**cherry**”, “**digital**” and “**information**”, if we represent the embedding vectors using only 2 dimensions (X, Y) and we plot them, we hope to see something like this: the angle between words with similar meaning is small, while the angle between words with different meaning is big. So, the embeddings “capture” the meaning of the words they represent by projecting them into a high-dimensional space.



Source: Speech and Language Processing 3rd Edition Draft, Dan Jurafsky and James H. Martin

We commonly use the **cosine similarity**, which is based on the **dot product** between the two vectors.

Word embeddings: the ideas

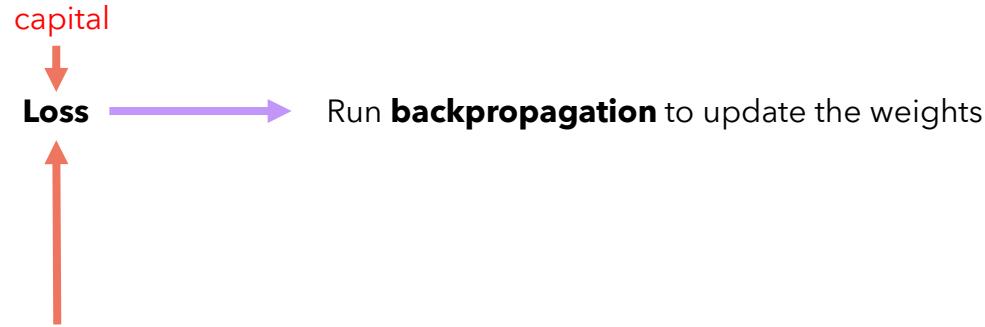
- Words that are synonyms tend to occur in the same context (surrounded by the same words).
 - For example, the word "teacher" and "professor" usually occur surrounded by the words "school", "university", "exam", "lecture", "course", etc..
- The inverse can also be true: words that occur in the same context tend to have similar meanings. This is known as the **distributional hypothesis**.
- This means that to capture the meaning of the word, we also need to have access to its context (the words surrounding it).
- This is why we employ the Self-Attention mechanism in the Transformer model to capture contextual information for every token. The Self-Attention mechanism relates every token to all the other tokens in the sentence.

Word embeddings: the Cloze task

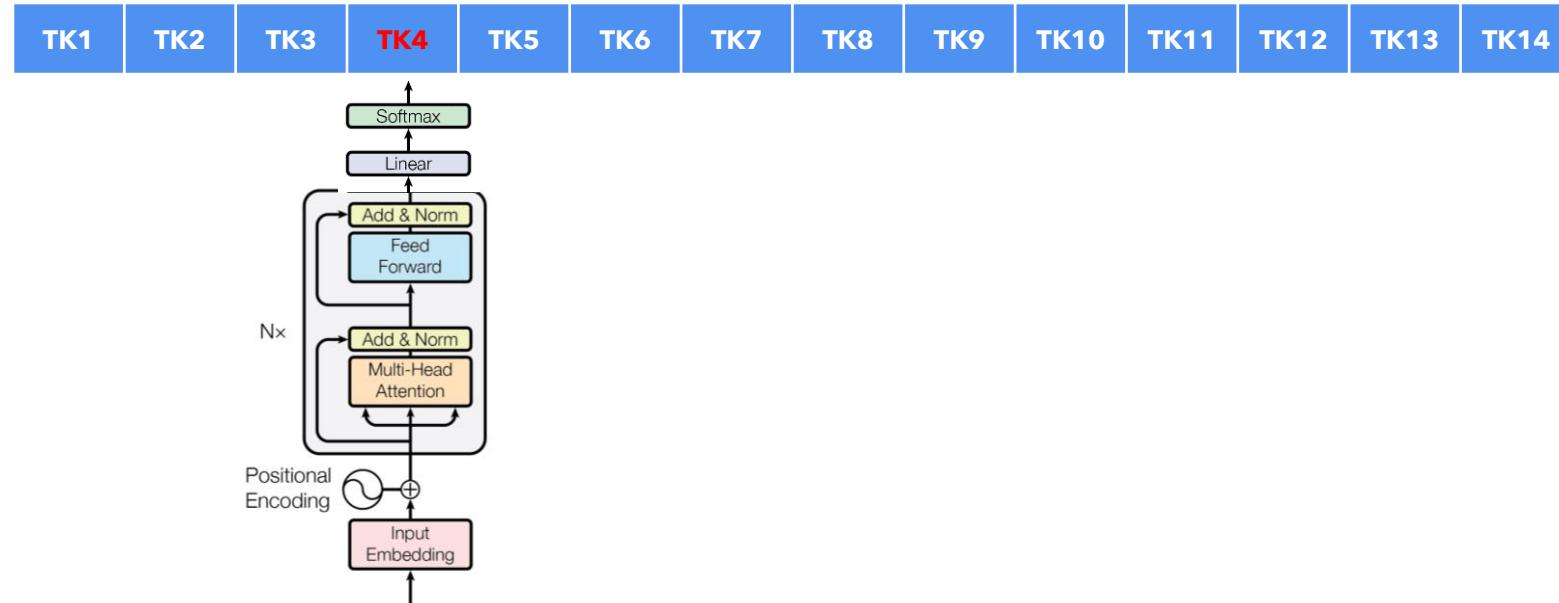
- Imagine I give you the following sentence:
Rome is the _____ of Italy, which is why it hosts many government buildings.
Can you tell me what is the missing word?
- Of course! The missing word is “capital”, because by looking at the rest of the sentence, it is the one that makes the most sense.
- This is how we train BERT: we want the Self-Attention mechanism to relate all the input tokens with each other, so that BERT has enough information about the “context” of the missing word to predict it.

How do we train embedding vectors in BERT?

Target (1 token):



Output (14 tokens):



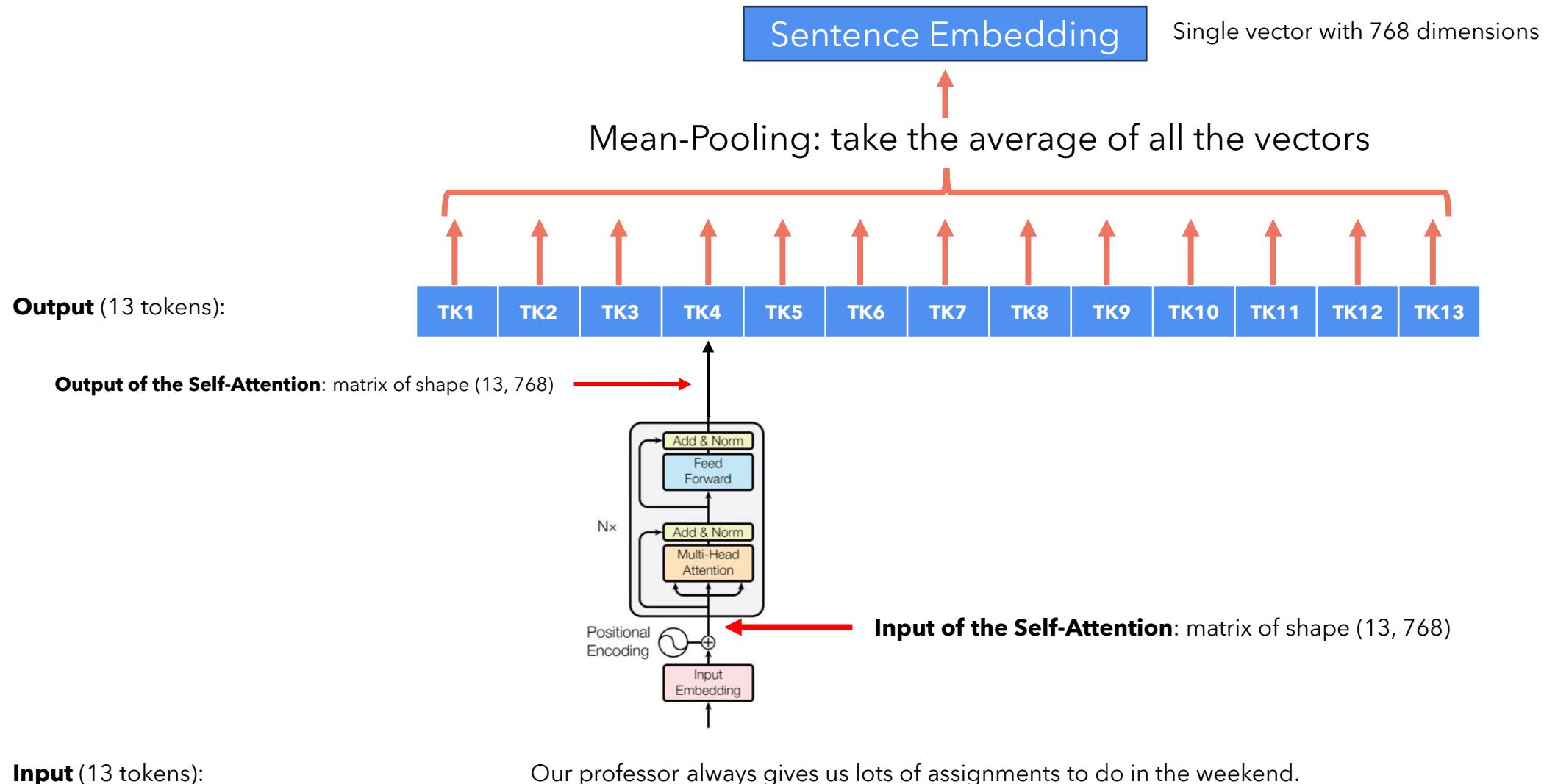
Input (14 tokens):

Rome is the [mask] of Italy, which is why it hosts many government buildings.

Sentence Embeddings

- We can use the Self-Attention mechanism also to capture the “meaning” of an entire sentence.
- We can use a pre-trained BERT model to produce embeddings of entire sentences. Let’s see how

Sentence Embeddings with BERT



Sentence Embeddings: comparison

- How can we compare Sentence Embeddings to see if two sentences have similar “meaning”? We could use the cosine similarity, which measures the cosine of the angle between the two vectors. A small angle results in a high cosine similarity score.

$$\text{cosine similarity} = S_C(A, B) := \cos(\theta) = \frac{\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B}}{\|\mathbf{A}\| \|\mathbf{B}\|} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n A_i B_i}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n A_i^2} \cdot \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n B_i^2}}$$

- **But there's a problem:** nobody told BERT that the embeddings it produces should be comparable with the cosine similarity, that is, two similar sentences should be represented by vectors pointing to the same direction in space. How can we teach BERT to produce embeddings that can be compared with a similarity function of our choice?

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Introducing Sentence BERT

Sentence-BERT: Sentence Embeddings using Siamese BERT-Networks

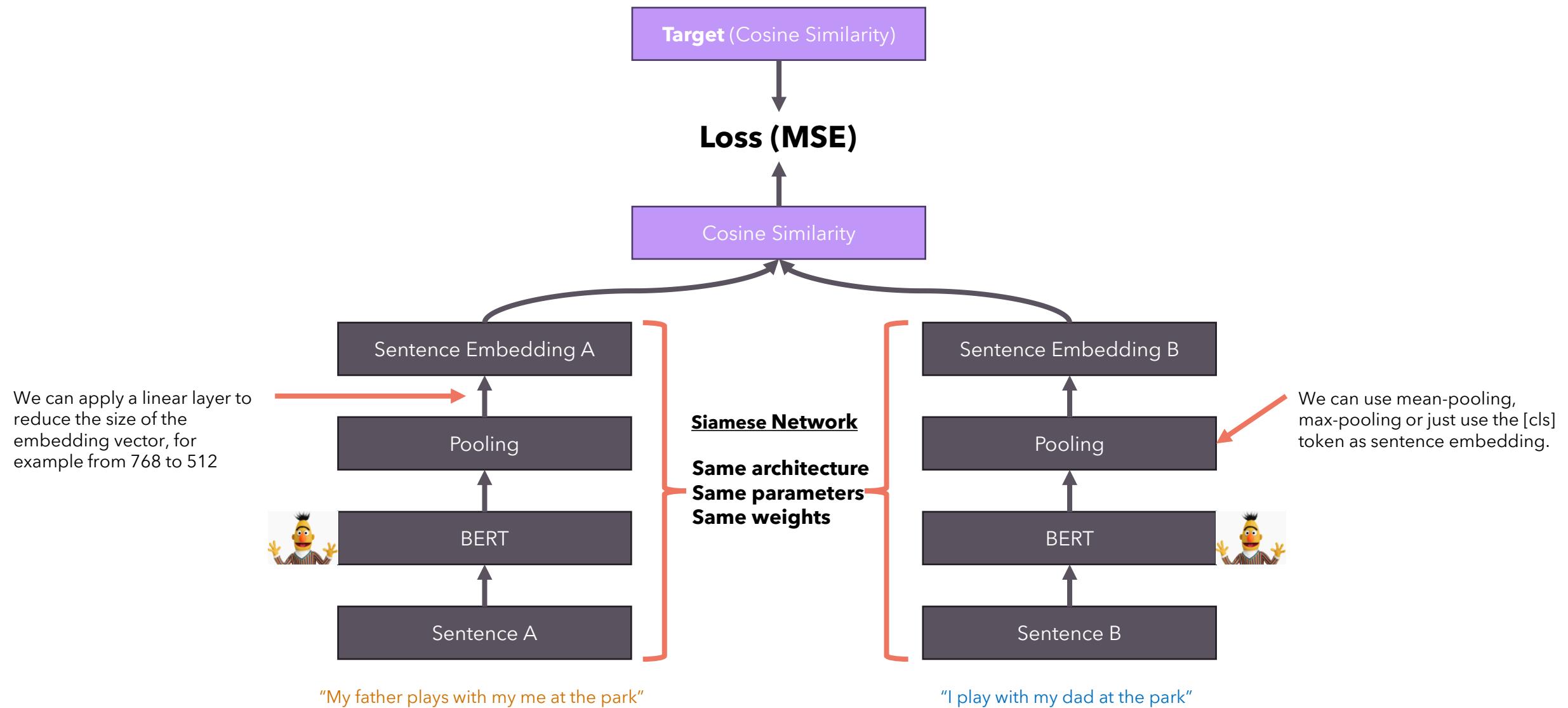
Nils Reimers and Iryna Gurevych

Ubiquitous Knowledge Processing Lab (UKP-TUDA)

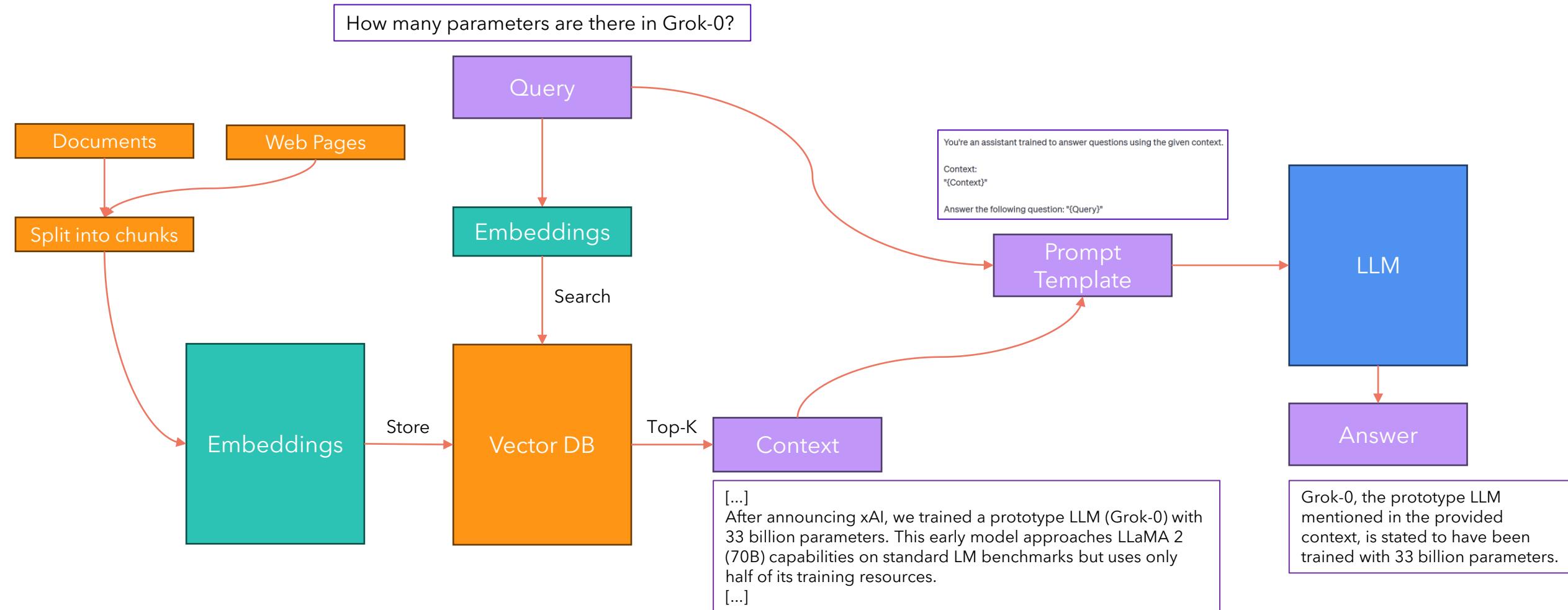
Department of Computer Science, Technische Universität Darmstadt

www.ukp.tu-darmstadt.de

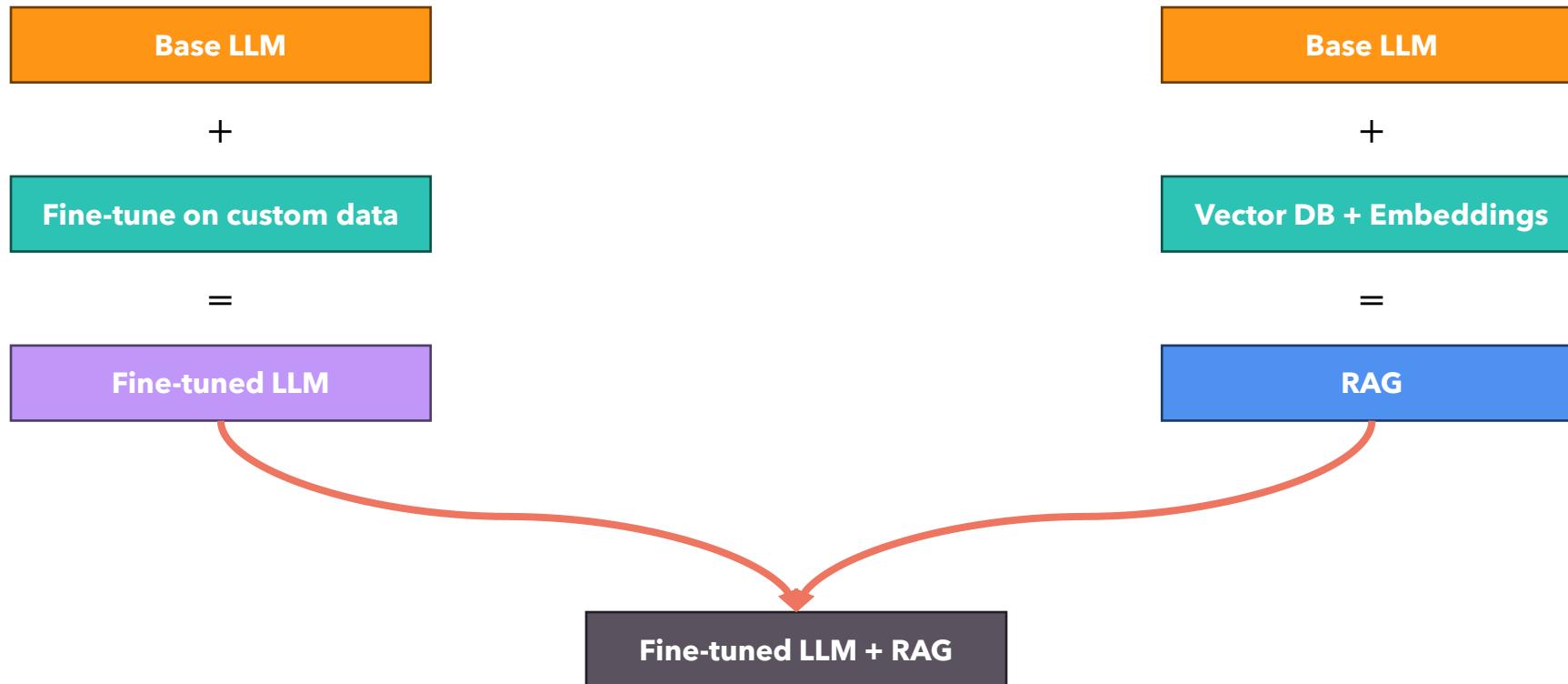
Sentence BERT: architecture



QA with Retrieval Augmented Generation



Strategies to teach new concepts to LLM

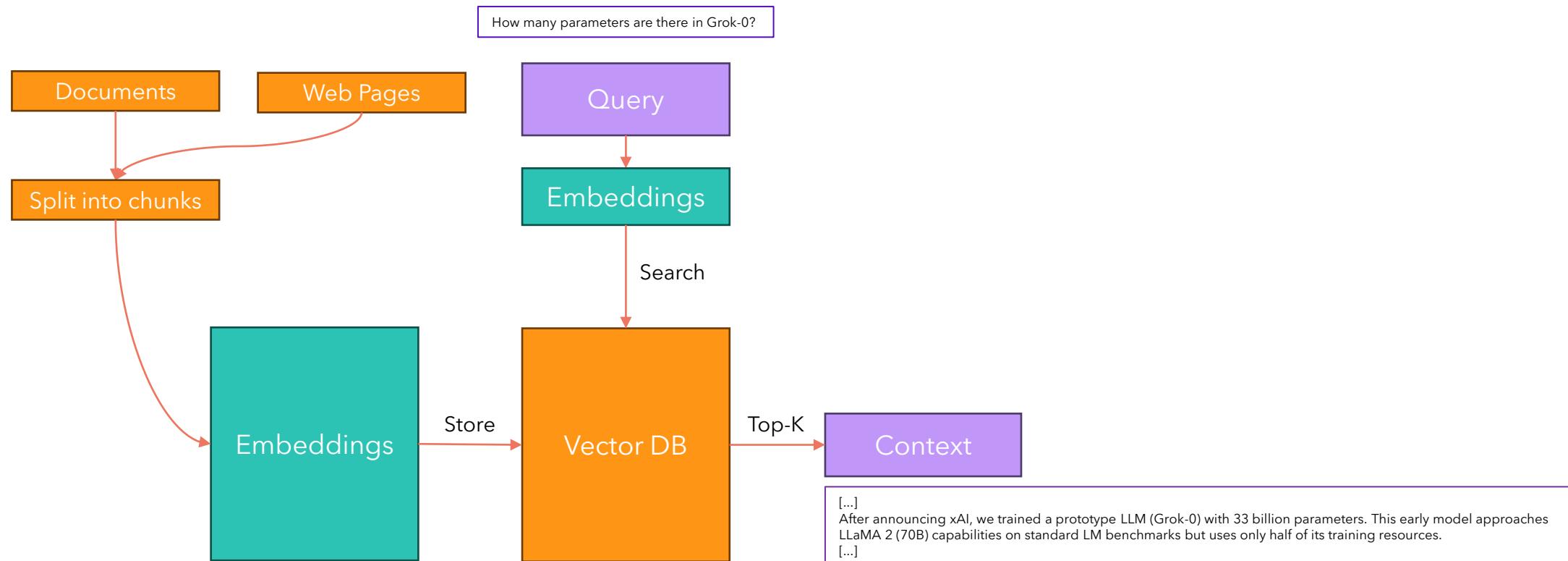


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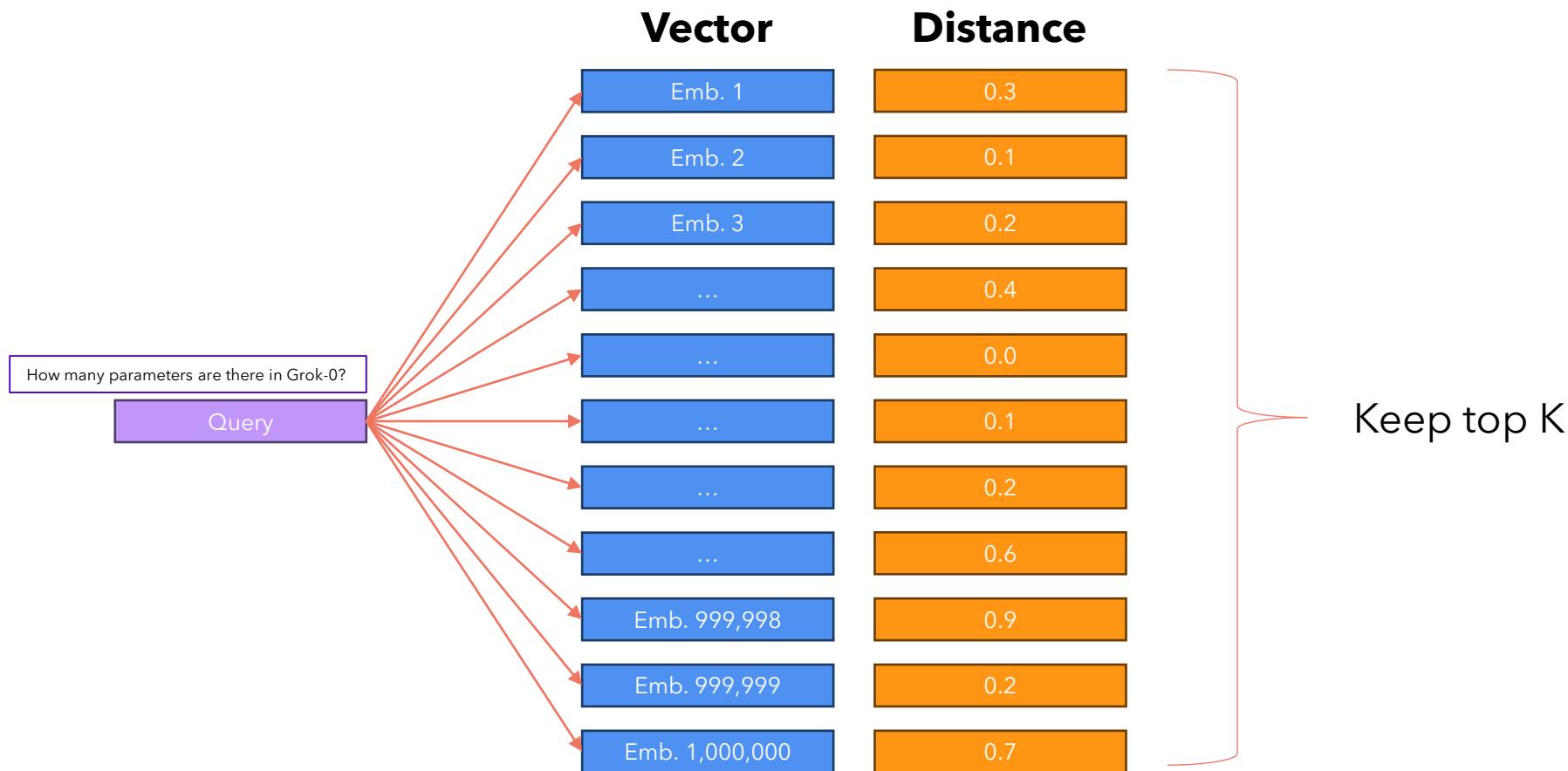
Vector DB: introduction

A vector database stores vectors of fixed dimensions (called embeddings) such that we can then query the database to find all the embeddings that are closest (most similar) to a given query vector using a distance metric, which is usually the cosine similarity, but we can also use the Euclidean distance. The database uses a variant of the KNN (K Nearest Neighbor) algorithm or another similarity search algorithm. Vector DBs are also used for finding similar songs (e.g. Spotify), images (e.g. Google Images) or products (e.g. Amazon).



K-NN: a naive approach

Imagine we want to search for the query in our database: a simple way would be comparing the query with all the vectors, sorting them by distance, and keeping the top K.



If there are N embedding vectors and each has D dimensions, the computational complexity is in the order of **O(N*D)**, too slow!

Outline

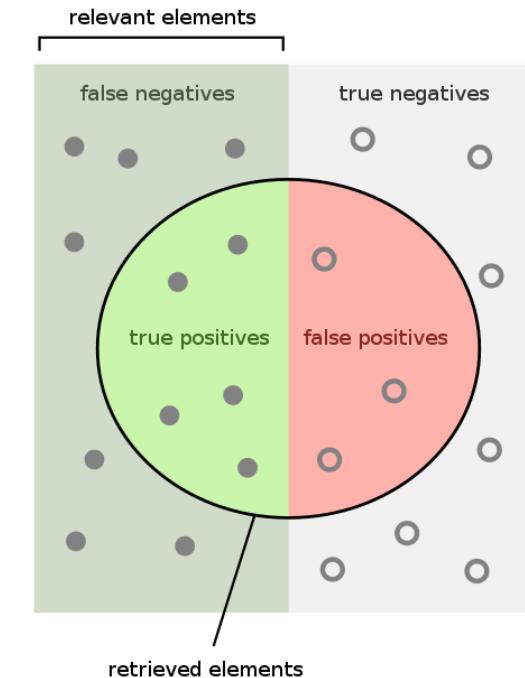
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Similarity Search: let's trade precision for speed

The naïve approach we used before, always produces accurate results, since it compares the query with all the stored vectors, but what if we reduced the number of comparison, but still obtain accurate results with high probability?

The metric we usually care about in Similarity Search is recall.

In this video we will explore an algorithm for Approximate Nearest Neighbors, called **Hierarchical Navigable Small Worlds (HNSW)**.



How many retrieved items are relevant?

$$\text{Precision} = \frac{\text{green}}{\text{green} + \text{red}}$$

How many relevant items are retrieved?

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{\text{green}}{\text{green} + \text{grey}}$$

Source: Wikipedia

HNSW in the real world

It is the same algorithm that powers **Qdrant**, the open source Vector DB used by **Twitter's (X) Grok LLM**, which can access tweets in real time.

The first screenshot shows a tweet from Qdrant (@qdrant_engine) asking how Grok can access real-time knowledge via the X platform. It includes a reply from Elon Musk (@elonmusk) comparing Grok to typical GPT models. Below the tweet is a screenshot of a search interface showing results for "what did joe rogan wear in his latest interview?".

The second screenshot shows another tweet from Qdrant (@qdrant_engine) announcing a new AI feature, followed by a reply from Elon Musk (@elonmusk) stating that the "AI-based 'See similar' posts feature is rolling out now".

The screenshot shows the Qdrant documentation page at <https://qdrant.tech/documentation/concepts/indexing/>. The page discusses supported languages and normalization options, mentioning that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean languages are not enabled by default but can be enabled by building qdrant from source with specific flags. It also provides examples of full-text matching.

The sidebar navigation includes sections for Getting Started, Vector Index, User Manual, and Concepts (Collections, Payload, Points, Search, Filtering, Optimizer, Storage).

The main content area explains that Qdrant uses HNSW as a vector index. It defines HNSW as a graph-based indexing algorithm that builds a multi-layer navigation structure. The text notes that HNSW limits the maximum degree of nodes on each layer and provides ways to specify search ranges.

HNSW: idea #1

HNSW is an evolution of the **Navigable Small Worlds** algorithm for Approximate Nearest Neighbors, which is based on the concept of **Six Degrees of Separation**.

Milgram's experiment aimed to test the social connections among people in the United States. The participants, who were initially located in Nebraska and Kansas, were given a letter to be delivered to a specific person in Boston. However, they were not allowed to send the letter directly to the recipient. Instead, they were instructed to send it to someone they knew on a first-name basis, who they believed might have a better chance of knowing the target person.

At the end of Milgram's small-world experiment, Milgram found that most of the letters reached the final recipient in five or six steps, creating the concept that people all over the world are all connected by six degrees of separation.

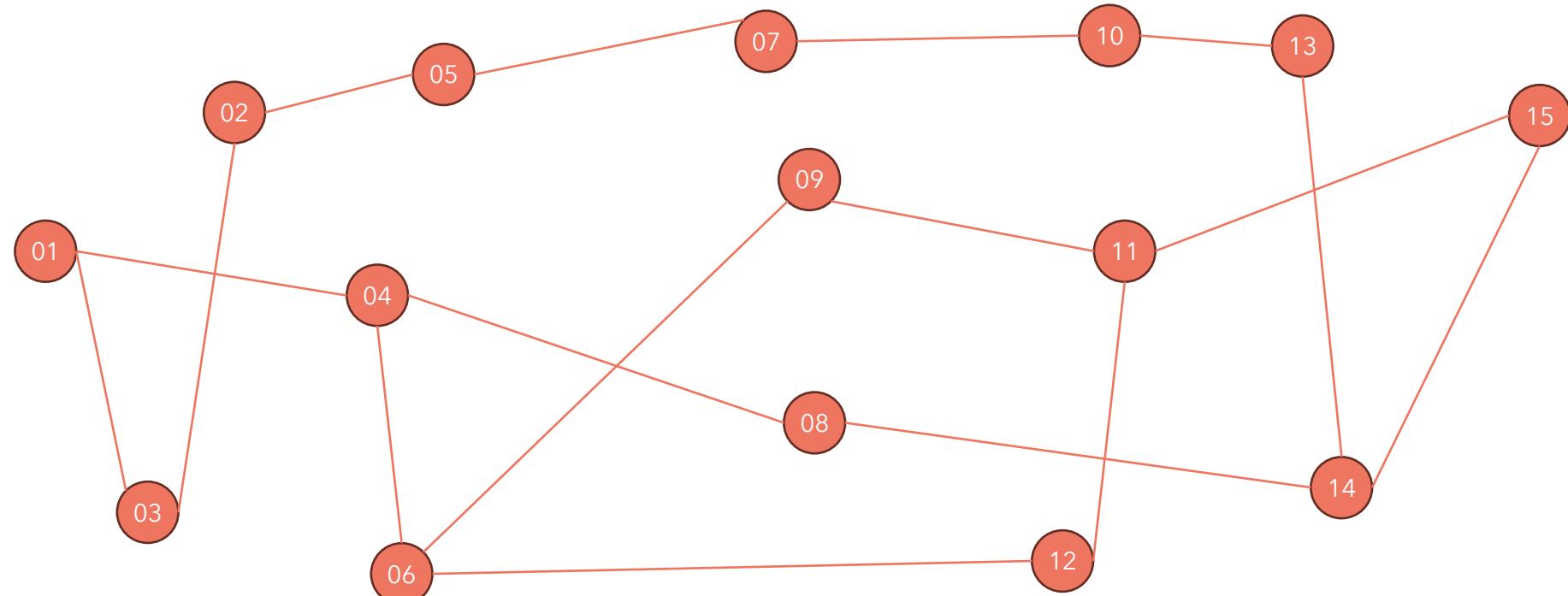
Facebook found in 2016 that its 1.59 billion active users were connected on average by 3.5 degrees of separation: <https://research.facebook.com/blog/2016/02/three-and-a-half-degrees-of-separation/>

This means that you and Mark Zuckerberg are only 3.5 connections apart!

Navigable Small Worlds

The NSW algorithm builds a graph that – just like Facebook friends – connects close vectors with each other but keeping the total number of connections small. For example, every vector may be connected to up to 6 other vectors (to mimic the Six Degrees of Separation).

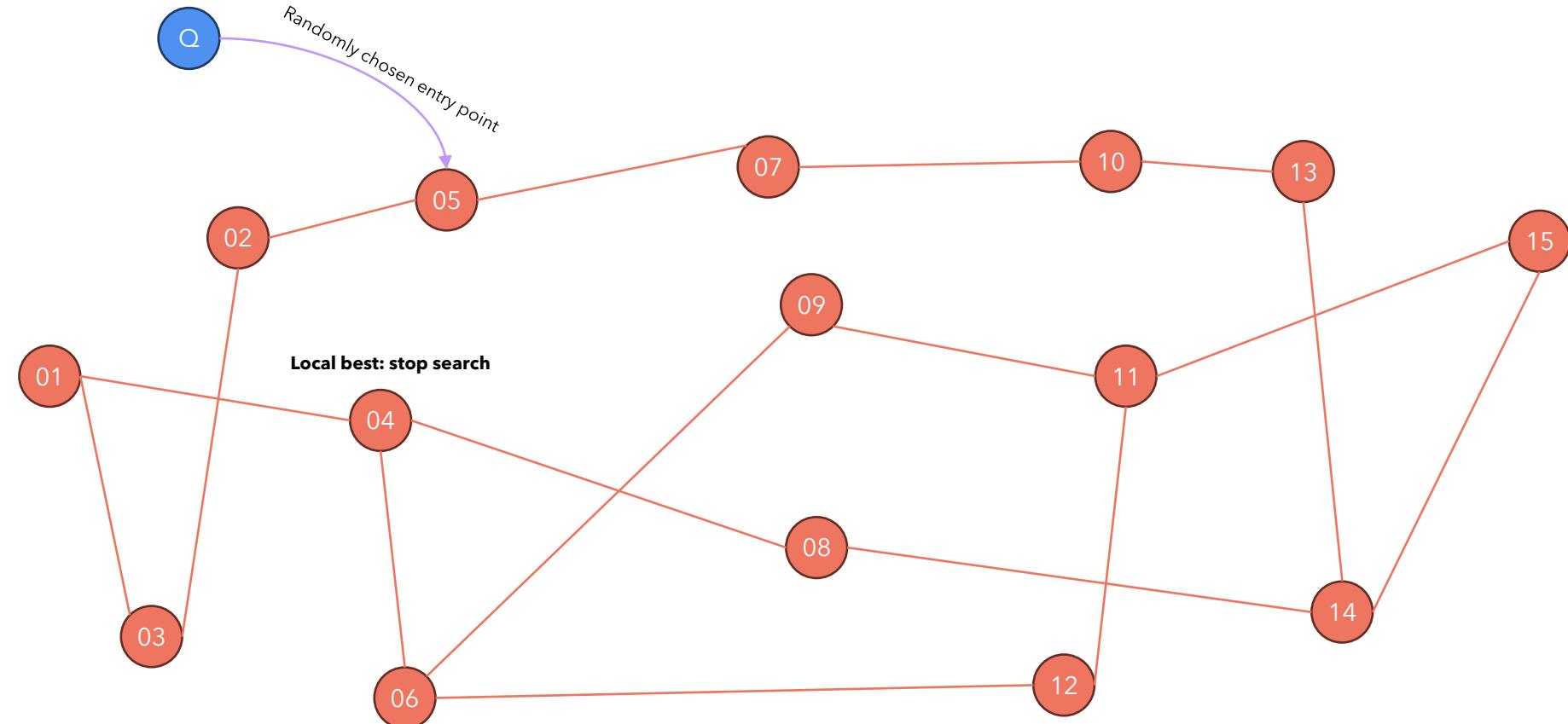
Node	Text
01	[...] The Transformer is a model [...]
02	[...] Diagnose cancer with AI [...]
03	[...] A transformer-based model [...]
04	[...] The Transformer has 6 layers [...]
05	[...] An MRI machine that costs 1\$ [...]
06	[...] The dot-product is a [...]
07	[...] Big-Pharma is not so big [...]
08	[...] Cross-Attention is a great [...]
09	[...] To solve an ODE [...]
10	[...] We are aging too fast [...]
11	[...] Open-source models like [...]
12	[...] MathBERT: a new model [...]
13	[...] AI to control aging [...]
14	[...] Attention is all you need [...]
15	[...] LLaMA 2 has 7B params [...]



Navigable Small Worlds: searching for K-NN

Given the following query: "How many Encoder layers are there in the Transformer model?"
How does the algorithm find the K Nearest Neighbors?

Node	Text
01	[...] The Transformer is a model [...]
02	[...] Diagnose cancer with AI [...]
03	[...] A transformer-based model [...]
04	[...] The Transformer has 6 layers [...]
05	[...] An MRI machine that costs 1\$ [...]
06	[...] The dot-product is a [...]
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08	[...] Cross-Attention is a great [...]
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10	[...] We are aging too fast [...]
11	[...] Open-source models like [...]
12	[...] MathBERT: a new model [...]
13	[...] AI to control aging [...]
14	[...] Attention is all you need [...]
15	[...] LLaMA 2 has 7B params [...]



We repeat the search with randomly chosen starting points and then keep the top K among all the visited nodes.

Navigable Small Worlds: inserting a new vector

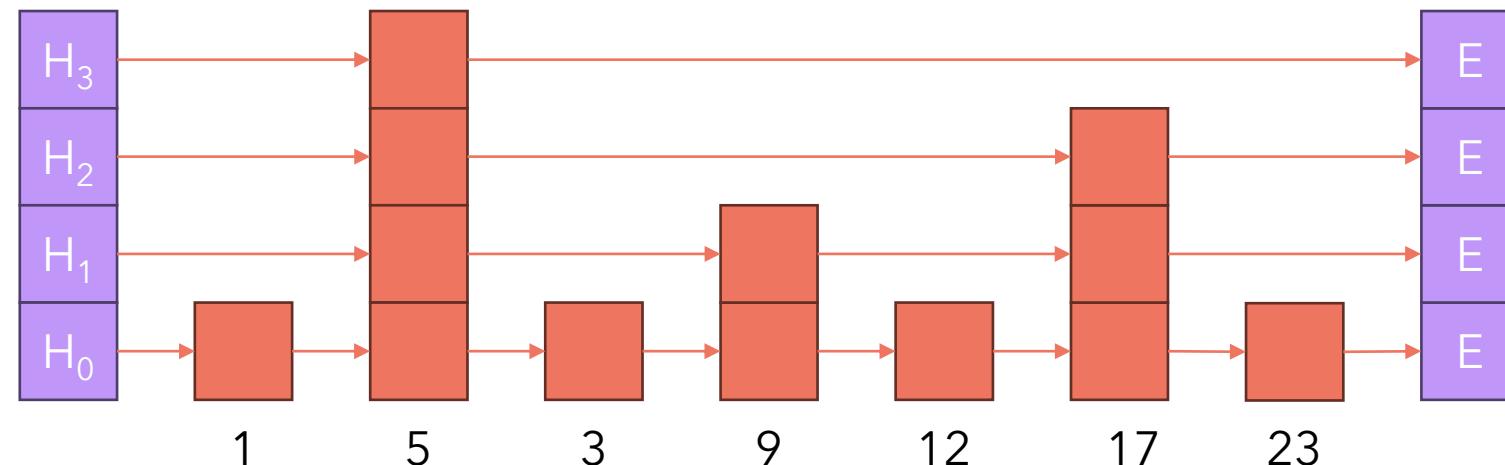
We can insert a new vector by searching the top KNN with the searching algorithm described before and making an edge between the vector and the top K results.

HNSW: idea #2

To go from NSW (Navigable Small Worlds) to HNSW (Hierarchical Navigable Small Worlds), we need to introduce the algorithm behind the data structure known as Skip-List.

The skip list is a data structure that maintains a sorted list and allows search and insertion with an average of $O(\log N)$ time complexity.

Let's search the number **9**



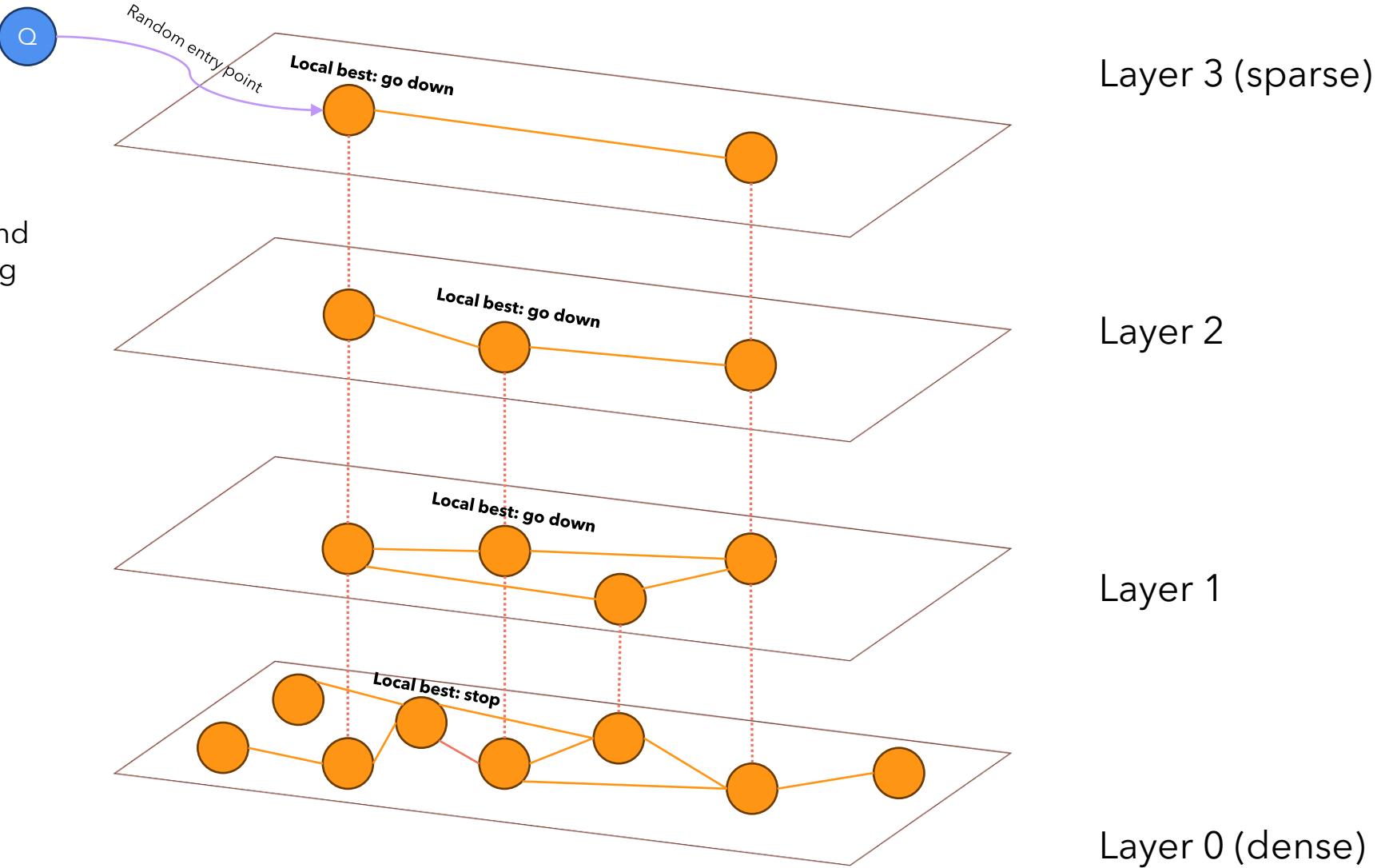
HNSW: Hierarchical Navigable Small Worlds



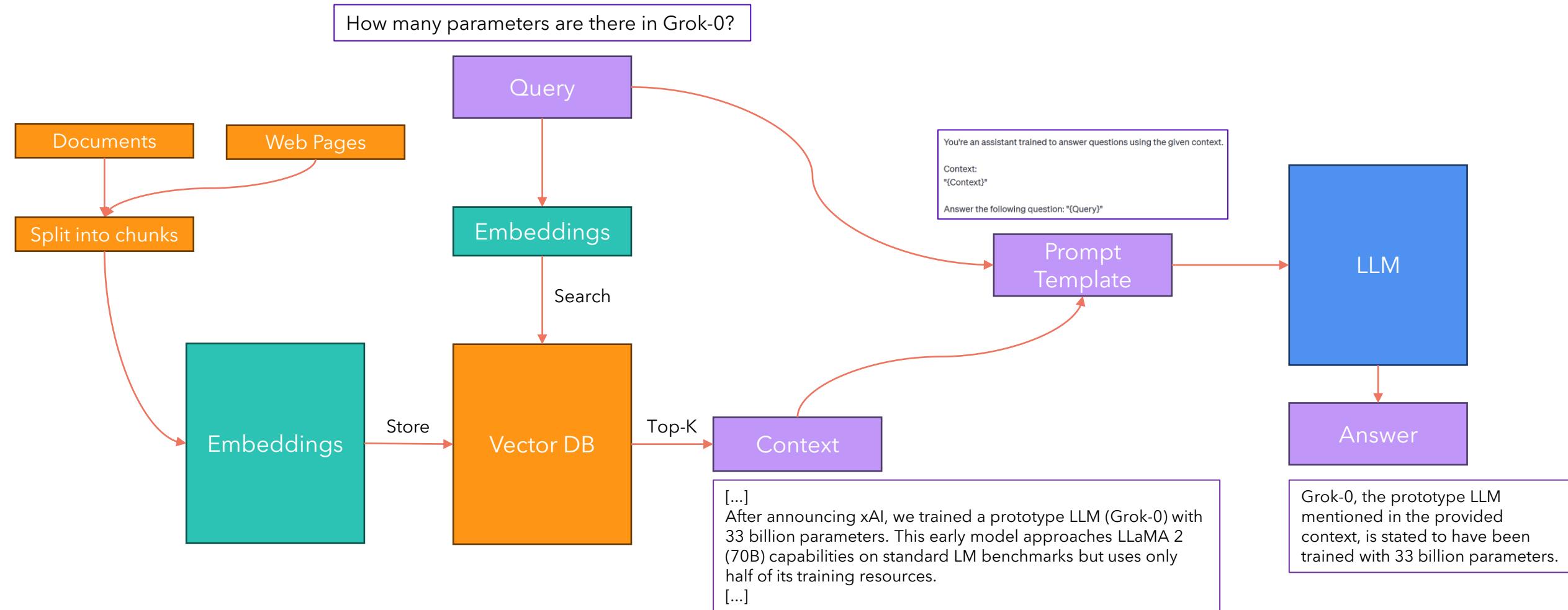
HNSW: Hierarchical Navigable Small Worlds

Let's search!

We repeat the search with randomly chosen starting points (on the top layer) and then keep the top K among all the visited nodes.



QA with Retrieval Augmented Generation



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and Machine Learning!