**Intelligent Discrete Fourier Transform**

*Author:* Oisín Watkins

*Date:* 15/01/2021

*Abstract*

This project sets out to implement a new way for sensor / signal data to be read and understood by Neural Networks, of varying types, that replaces the common approaches of Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN’s) or their equivalents and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN’s) with pre-processed data. The resulting algorithm amounts to an Intelligent Discrete Fourier Transform, which simultaneously transforms time-domain data to frequency-domain data and learns what content of the signal is meaningful to the given application. The final implementation was built using the TensorFlow API and is available for download from github.

*Introduction*

At the time of writing this, the common practice for handling signal data using Neural Networks breaks down into one of two choices: Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN’s) and their equivalents, or pre-processing data into images to accommodate Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN’s). Neither approach is optimised to the task. RNN’s (or more recently 1-D CNN’s) handle series data, which in the context of signal processing is the equivalent of *only* working in the time domain. While it is possible, the amount of computation required to overcome the limitations of working in the time domain prohibit the use of RNN’s / 1-D CNN’s in most complex real-time applications. Likewise, pre-processing data into image format before using a conventional CNN is both time consuming and wasteful from a processing standpoint. The need to generate an image before being able to discern meaning from the data all but exclude this setup from being viable in edge-sensor networks or in real-time systems.

What both approaches lack is the ability to transform sensor data from time-domain to frequency-domain. Certainly, the sensor data – to – image approach attempts to overcome this hinderance, but the question remains: why perform unnecessary processing on a signal prior to discerning meaning from the signal. In this regard the RNN approach has the lead, as it does not pre-process the data at all, but being limited to the time-domain does hold this approach at a disadvantage. The goal of this project is to find a way to pull the best parts from both approaches to make one computationally efficient, real-time system capable approach of handling signal data in the frequency domain. The result was a Discrete Fourier Transform which learns what parts of the signal are meaningful for the given application (an Intelligent Discrete Fourier Transform, if you will).

After the initial tests and demonstrations using MATLAB, a DFT layer was written using the TensorFlow API in Python. As a test of efficacy, this new layer was used to build a model which categorised 1s audio clips of one-word voice commands (eg: “yes”, “no”, “up”, “down”, etc.), and the effectiveness of this model was compared to that of a 1-D ConvNet used as a demonstration in numerous online guides for audio processing with Artificial Intelligence. In this paper, we will review the mathematics behind the Intelligent DFT, the resulting implementation in TensorFlow, and the limitations of this implementation. For reference, the entire body of code discussed in this paper is available at: <https://github.com/OisinWatkins/Intelligent_Signal_Reader>

Bear in mind, these initial tests were performed as a proof of concept. They do not represent the last word on how well this approach handles time-domain data compared to the more typical 1-D ConvNet approach. However, they do indicate that this Intelligent DFT approach does stand to provide similar levels of performance to the more typical approach with greatly reduced processing times. These results suggest that more study on this approach is warranted for the potential improvements it offers to real-time signal processing AI applications.

*Overview*

The Fourier Transform is a well-documented variant of the Laplace Transform commonly used in the realm of signal processing. Formally it is defined as:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | [1] |

However, implementing this equation on digital systems requires the use of Discrete Time, rather than the native Continuous Time equation shown in equation 1. This Discrete Time Fourier Transform (more commonly referred to as the Discrete Fourier Transform, or DFT) is formally defined as:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | [2] |

Where:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | [3] |

As written by ~ the DFT can be implemented using Matrix Algebra, as shown in equation 4.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | [4] |

It is this matrix implementation of the DFT that forms the basis of this research. Using this approach, one could theoretically incorporate a DFT into a larger Deep Learning network. Given that backpropagation simply adjusts network parameters along the negative of the error gradient, and that the derivative of the error w.r.t. the values of the DFT matrix is linear, there should be few issues with incorporating this equation into larger networks.

Principally this does hold true, however as will be shown in the following sections, there are still some issues with implementation. Foremost among them is the inability of most Deep Learning frameworks to accommodate Imaginary Values in the Error Gradient. At the time of writing this it does not pose a major issue. With careful implementation it is possible to build a fully working Neural Network that uses Imaginary values in its layers. However, this limitation does have an impact on model performance. More on this later.

*Implementation*

Considering again equation (4), building a rough proof of concept in a scripting language seems a reasonable place to start. The most prudent things to test here are:

1. Efficacy
2. Response to various Loss Functions
3. Stability

Under the “Demonstration” folder of the repository is just such a proof-of-concept stored as a .mlapp file. Viewing the underlying code will require a valid MATLAB license. This demonstration explores the behaviour a simple model which only performs a DFT and trains using an error signal tied to white noise in the input signal. As with any trained model, there is a wide range of possible Error Signals (and thus Error Gradients) and weight-update rules that can be employed. In this proof of concept, the following selection of Error Signals, Learning Rate, Weight-Update and Regularisation Equations were used:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Weight Update Rules | Equation | Comments |
| 1) |  |  |
| 2) |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Error Gradients | Equation | Comments |
| 1) |  |  |
| 2) |  |  |

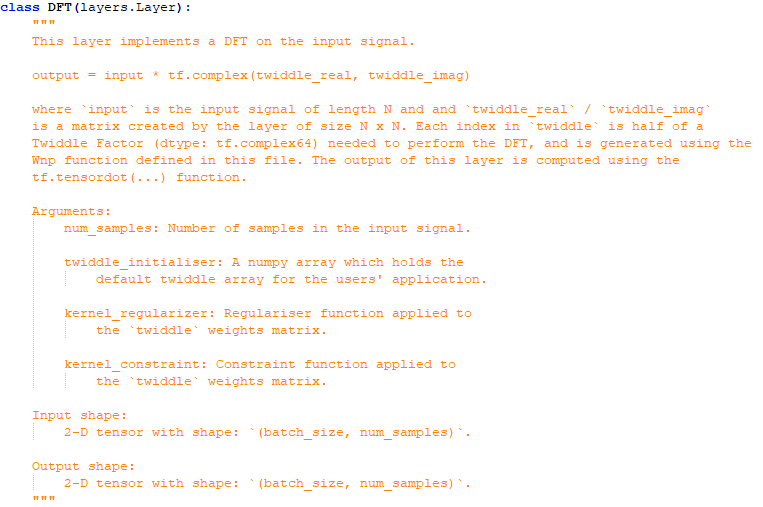
|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Learning Rate | Equation | Comments |
| 1) |  |  |
| 2) |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Regularisation Equation | Equation | Comments |
| 1) |  |  |
| 2) |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Regularisation Rate | Equation | Comments |
| 1) |  |  |
| 2) |  |  |

This very low-level implementation certainly proves that this concept at least has potential to provide a benefit to signal-processing applications that benefit from having intelligence in their systems. In this proof-of-concept, I used noise to provide an error signal to train against. Certainly, with the correct configuration of all training hyperparameters, it is possible to develop a model which mitigates noise in systems such as these. However, there is a real balance to strike between noise mitigation and stability.

With the assurance that this concept has potential, I next developed a higher-level implementation using the TensorFlow API. The goal here was to build a Layer object that had less customisation options as the MATLAB proof-of-concept but was capable of being integrated to a larger Neural Network. The resulting DFT Layer can be found in the Fourier\_Transform.py file:



The Layer weights are stored as Float32 values and conjoined into the necessary Complex64 values using the tf.complex(…) function. This is done to mitigate gradient issues, which will be discussed in full in the Discussion Section of this paper. Crucially, this implementation is focused on 2-D input tensors. While it may be possible to perform a 3-D DFT using equation (4), I have not attempted it in this iteration.

Note also, there is room provided to give this Layer a kernel regulariser and a kernel constraint, however I did not focus on those elements of the Layer. The proof-of-concept seemed to indicate that adding such functionality to the Layer could provide some benefit to the training and operating efficacy, so it is worth returning to this implementation and fleshing it out further.

Many applications will require signals with a great number of samples be processed in near real-time. An example of this would be analysing snippets of voice. The minimum sampling rate accepted for voice recording is 8kHz, meaning that a 1s audio clip requires a vector with shape: (1, 8000). For this layer, that would mean it would need 2 \* 80002 parameters, a total of 128,000,000 Float32 parameters. Irrespective of the performance benefit this layer could provide, the number of parameters it needs is simply prohibitive.

~ {Image of Model Top without input splicing}

Depending on the application, however, it may be possible, even beneficial, to splice the input into N-even slices and compute each DFT independently. Aside from providing more of a spectrogram instead of just a DFT, this approach also allows for significant memory savings. Using the formula:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | [5] |

~ {Image of Model Top with input splicing}

Taking this second approach, I then attempted to use my Layer in a model which classifies 1s voice clips, discerning which 1-word command of a short list they are.

*Results*

*Discussion*

*Future Research*

*References*