

# Lecture 12: Language Models for IR

CS60092: Introduction to IR  
Spring 2024

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Content: Inspired by CS224n Stanford Course

# What is a Language Model?

An LM is

- a probability distribution over sequence of words.
- a way to predict the next word

For a sentence  $S$  consisting of  $m$  words

$$S = w_1 w_2 w_3 \dots \dots w_m$$

In Language Model, we assume:

$$\begin{aligned} P(S) &= P(w_1 w_2 w_3 \dots \dots w_m) \\ &= P(w_1) \times P(w_2 | w_1) \times \dots \times P(w_m | w_{m-1} \dots w_1) \end{aligned}$$

**But How it is helpful to us?**

# What is a Language Model?

Using LM, we can find out

- If a sentence  $S_1$  is more likely than another  $S_2$  (conditioned on  $q$ , but ignore for now).

For example:

- $S_1$ : Virat Kohli plays cricket for India.
- $S_2$ : plays Kohli cricket for India Virat.
- $S_3$ : Virat Kohli plays plays for India.

Which is more likely?

Obviously  $S_1$ . Hence our LM should say  $P(S_1) > P(S_2)$  and  $P(S_1) > P(S_3)$ .

# But, how can LM help us in IR?

Say  $q$  is "Kohli"  $D_1$ : Virat Kohli plays cricket for India.  $D_2$ : Virat Kohli plays for India.  $D_3$ : Sachin plays for India.

Using LM

- We can compute  $P(D_i)$  and  $P(q)$ . With some assumptions

$$P(q|D_i) \propto P(D_i, q) = P(D_i)P(q)$$

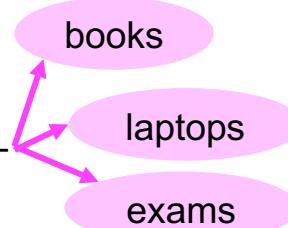
- How to compute that?

- LM helps us learn  $v_{D_1}, v_{D_2}, v_{D_3}, v_q \in \mathbb{R}^d$ .
- We can approximate  $P(D_i)P(q) \propto \frac{v_{D_i}^T v_q}{\|v_{D_i}\| \|v_q\|}$

# n-gram Language Models

How to compute the Probability of the next word?

*the students opened their \_\_\_\_\_*



- **Question:** How to learn a *language* model?
- **Answer:** Learn a *n-gram* language model.

Definition: An *n-gram* is a chunk of n consecutive words.

- **unigrams:** "the", "students", "opened", "their"
- **bigrams:** "the students", "students opened", "opened their"
- **trigrams:** "the students opened", "students opened their"
- **four-grams:** "the students opened their"

Idea: Collect statistics about how frequent different n-grams are and use these to predict next word.

# n-gram Language Models

Markov Assumption:  $w_n$  depends on preceding  $n - 1$  words.

$$\begin{aligned} P(w_m | w_{m-1}, \dots, w_1) &= P(w_m | \underbrace{w_{m-1} \dots w_{m-n+2}}_{n-1 \text{ words}}) \\ &= \frac{P(w_m, w_{m-1} \dots w_{m-n+2})}{P(w_{m-1} \dots w_{m-n+2})} \end{aligned}$$

Prob of n-gram  
Prob of n-1 gram

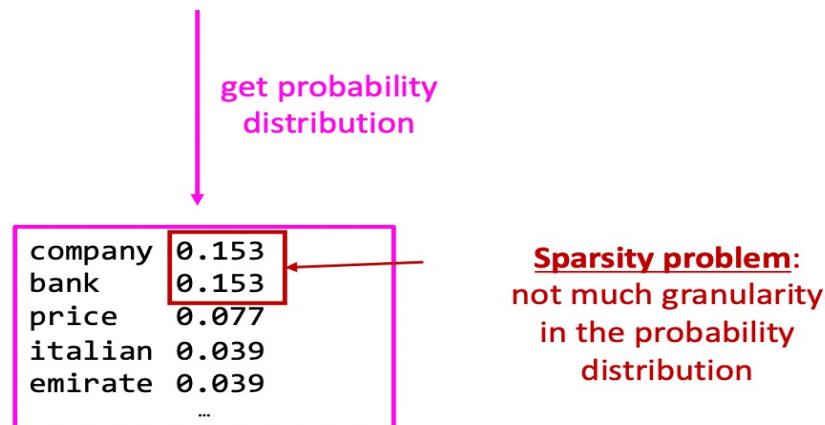
Question: How do we get these n-gram and (n-1)-gram probabilities?

Answer: By **counting** them in some large corpus of text!

$$\approx \frac{\text{count}(w_m, w_{m-1} \dots w_{m-n+2})}{\text{count}(w_{m-1} \dots w_{m-n+2})}$$

# n-gram LM Model in Practice

You can build a simple trigram Language Model over a 1.7 million word corpus (Reuters) in a few seconds on your laptop\*  
today the \_\_\_\_\_



Otherwise, seems reasonable!

\* Try for yourself: <https://nlpforhackers.io/language-models/>

# Generating text with a n-gram Language Model

You can also use a LM to [generate text](#)

*today the price of gold per ton , while production of shoe  
lasts and shoe industry , the bank intervened just after it  
considered and rejected an imf demand to rebuild depleted  
european stocks , sept 30 end primary 76 cts a share .*

Surprisingly grammatical!

...but **incoherent**. We need to consider more than  
three words at a time if we want to model language well.

But increasing  $n$  worsens sparsity problem,  
and increases model size...

# n-gram Language Models

Suppose we are learning a **4-gram** Language Model.

~~as the proctor started the clock, the students opened their~~  
discard condition on this

1. Markov Assumption: Probability of a word depends on previous "n" words.  
What is the value of this n?
    - If n is small, then it may predict a different word. Eg: Consider S: **In IPL, Virat Kohli plays cricket for \_\_\_\_\_**. For **n = 5**, then the predicted word may be "**India**" but
    - **n = 7**, then the predicted word may be "**RCB**".
    - If n is very large, computationally extensive.
  2. A word may be dependent on next words as well.
    1. The word "**United**" has very high probability if next 3 words are "**\_\_ States of America**".

# n-gram Language Models

Problem: What if “students opened their  $w$ ” never occurred in data? Then  $w$  has probability 0!

Partial Solution: Add small  $\delta$  to the count for every  $w \in V$ . This is called **smoothing**.

$$P(w | \text{students opened their}) = \frac{\text{count(students opened their } w\text{)}}{\text{count(students opened their)}}$$

Problem: What if “students opened their” never occurred in data? Then we can’t calculate the probability of  $w$ .

Partial Solution: Just condition on “opened their”. Called backoff.

1. The **numerator** may be zero. We may need to do **Smoothing**.
2. The **denominator** maybe zero for a given corpus. Say  $w_3, w_2$  and  $w_1$  never cooccur in the corpus. To solve this, we could condition on  $w_2$  alone. This is called **backoff**.

# Neural network Language Models

NN-based Language Models solves (some of) these problems related to n-gram Language Models.

$$S = w_1 w_2 w_3 \dots \dots \dots w_n$$

For the **k<sup>th</sup> word**  $w_k$ , we consider its **Context** or surrounding words ( $w_{-k}$ )

We model the conditional probability:

$$P(w_k | \text{Context})$$

using a Neural network.

**But how?**

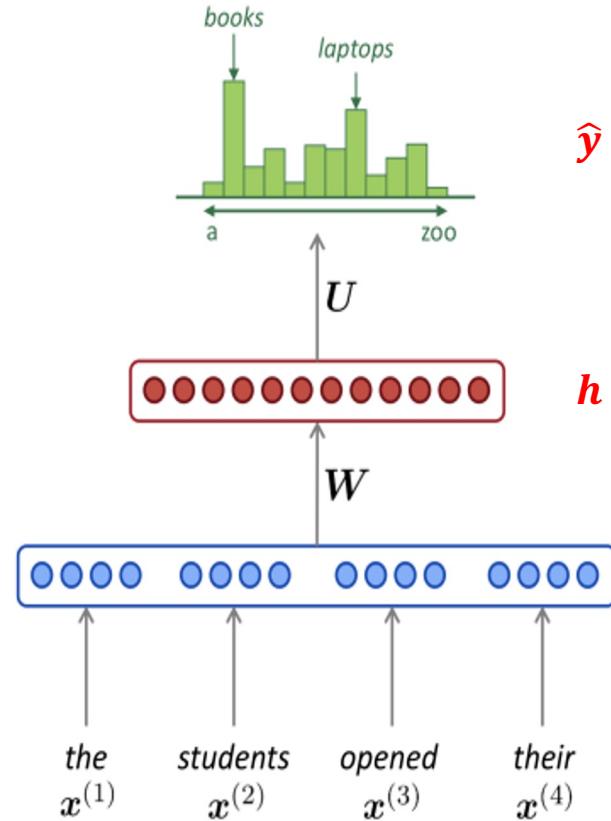
# Neural network Language Models

## Method 1 (Fixed-Window NN)

1. Word's probability depends on its context (but fixed window)
2. Each word has a fixed "continuous vector representation"
3. How to predict next word for the sentence "the students opened their \_\_"?

1. Assume you have a vector for each word. Look up vector for each word from a "lookup table"
2. INPUT: Concatenate vectors  $\mathbf{e} = [\mathbf{e}^{(1)}; \mathbf{e}^{(2)}; \mathbf{e}^{(3)}; \mathbf{e}^{(4)}]$
3. HIDDEN:  $\mathbf{h} = f(\mathbf{We} + \mathbf{b}_1), \mathbf{W} \in \mathbb{R}^{4n \times d}$
4. OUTPUT:  $\hat{\mathbf{y}} = \text{softmax}(\mathbf{Uh} + \mathbf{b}_2), \mathbf{U} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times |V|}$

$\hat{\mathbf{y}}$  is the distribution over words in the vocab.



# Neural network Language Models (Forward Pass)

## Method 1 (Fixed-Window NN)

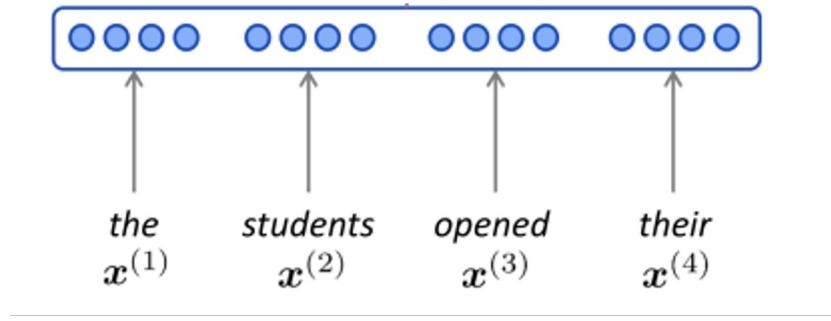
Step 1: Look up the vector representation for **each word** in the context from the “[Look Up Table](#)”.

Example: Consider sentence “***the students opened their* \_\_\_\_**”

Index	Word	Continuous Word Representation
1	the	[0.6762, -0.9607, 0.3626, -0.2410, 0.6636]
200	students	[0.1656, -0.1530, 0.0310, -0.3321, -0.1342]
340	opened	[0.5965, 0.9143, 0.0899, 0.7702, -0.6392]
490	their	[-0.0069, 0.7995, 0.6433, 0.2898, 0.6359]

# Neural network Language Models (Forward Pass)

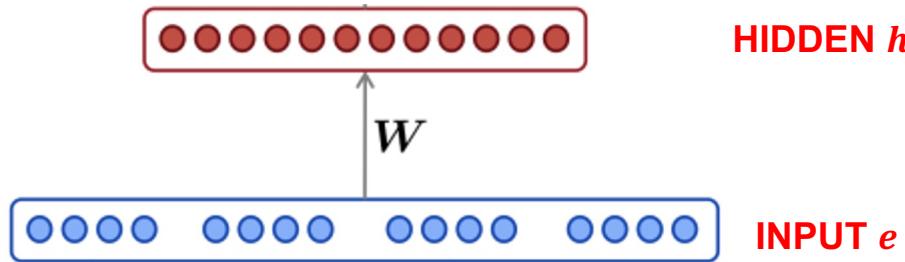
Concatenate the word vectors as shown :



$$\mathbf{e} = [e^{(1)}; e^{(2)}; e^{(3)}; e^{(4)}]$$

Concatenated vector  $\mathbf{e}$  is the **INPUT LAYER** to our Neural Network.

# Neural network Language Models (Forward Pass)



Step 2: Hidden layer output "h" is calculated as:

$$h = f(We + b_1) \quad \xrightarrow{\hspace{1cm}} \boxed{W = ? \ b_1 = ?}$$

$W$  = Weight matrix connecting Input Layer and Hidden Layer

$e$  = Input Layer concatenated vector (see last slide)

$b_1$  = bias,

$f$  = tanh or sigmoid

# Neural network Language Models (Forward Pass)

## Step 3: Hidden to Output Layer:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{z} &= \mathbf{U}\mathbf{h} + \mathbf{b}_2 \\ \hat{y} &= \sigma(\mathbf{z}) \end{aligned} \longrightarrow \boxed{\mathbf{U} =? \quad \mathbf{b}_2 =?}$$

$\mathbf{U}$  = Weight matrix between Hidden Layer and Output Layer.  
 $\mathbf{h}$  = Output of Hidden Layer calculated in the last slide  
 $\mathbf{b}_2$  = bias

Softmax function:  $\hat{y}_i = \sigma(z)_i = \frac{e^{z_i}}{\sum_i e^{z_i}}, \quad y = \langle y_1, y_2, \dots, y_{|\mathcal{V}|} \rangle$

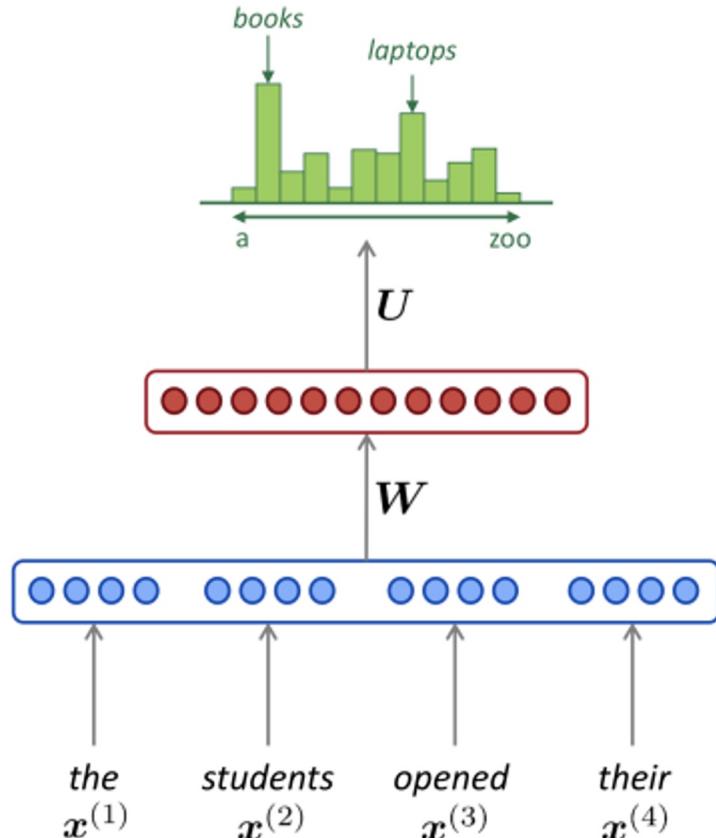
# Neural network Language Models (Forward Pass)

In our example, the word “books” has the highest probability. The word “laptops” has 2<sup>nd</sup> highest probability.

- $\hat{y}_{books} > \hat{y}_{laptops}$

The final sentence becomes:

**the students opened their books**



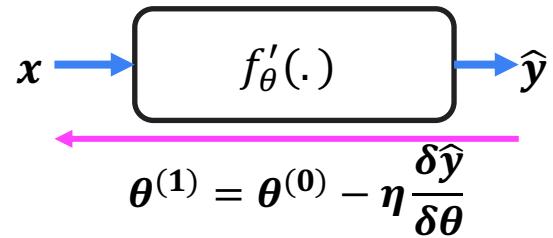
# Neural network Language Models

What did we learn? How do we infer?

- Given set of initial word vectors (lookup table),  $\theta = \langle W, b, U, b2 \rangle$ , we can predict next word.
- Hence we can predict  $P(S)$ . **How?**

But, how do we train?

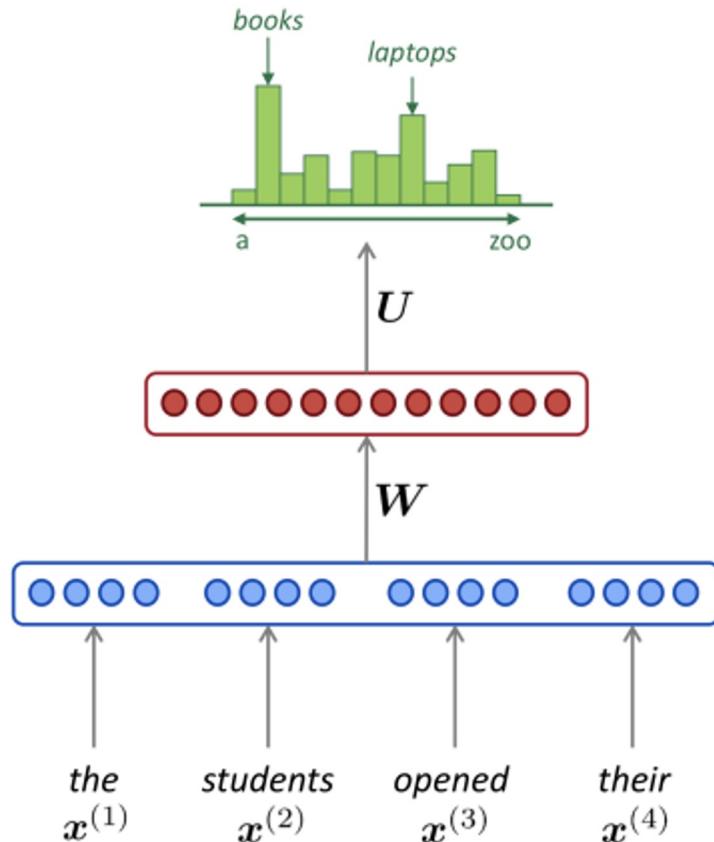
- How do we learn parameters  $\theta = \langle W, b, U, b2 \rangle$ ?
- Using gradient Descent. What corpus? Labeled or unlabeled? Objective?
- To be covered during the lecture for word2vec.



# Neural network Language Models

Points to note:

1. Word's probability depends on the fixed window context (previous or surrounding).
2. A word has a single vector in a table.
  - Even the ones such as “apple”, “fall”.
3. Estimation is only using a 3-layer NN.

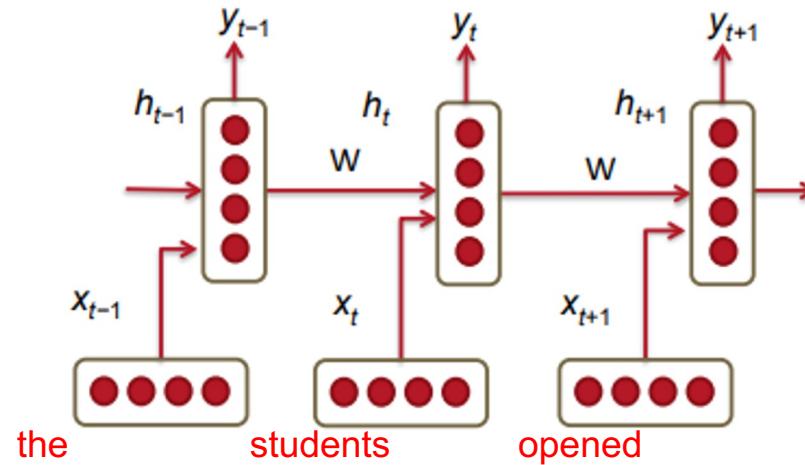


# Recurrent Neural Networks (Method 2)

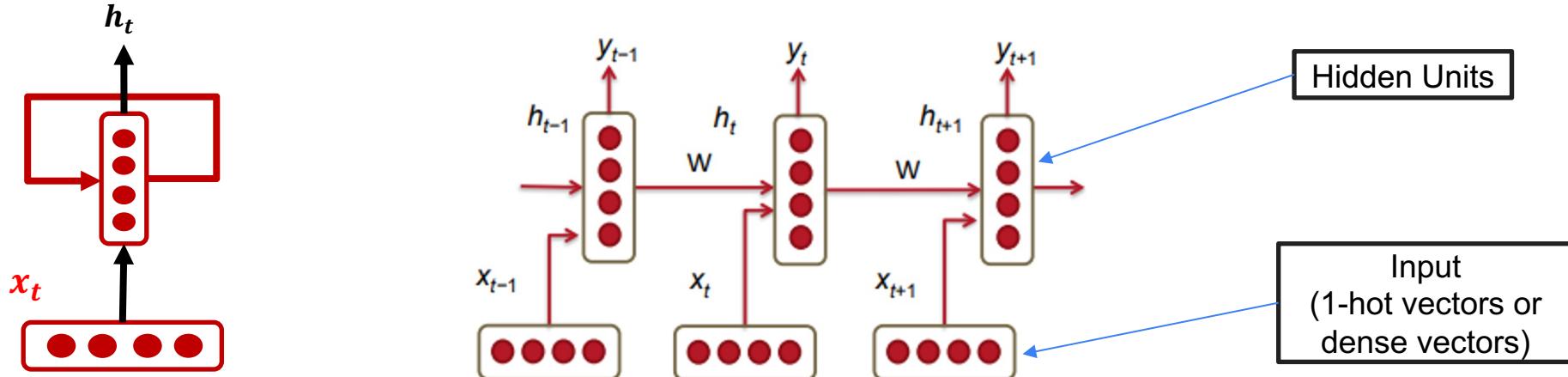
Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN)

- Each word depends on **all previous words** in the "sentence/paragraph".
- **RNNs add the immediate past to the present.**

Here, is a simple architecture of RNN:

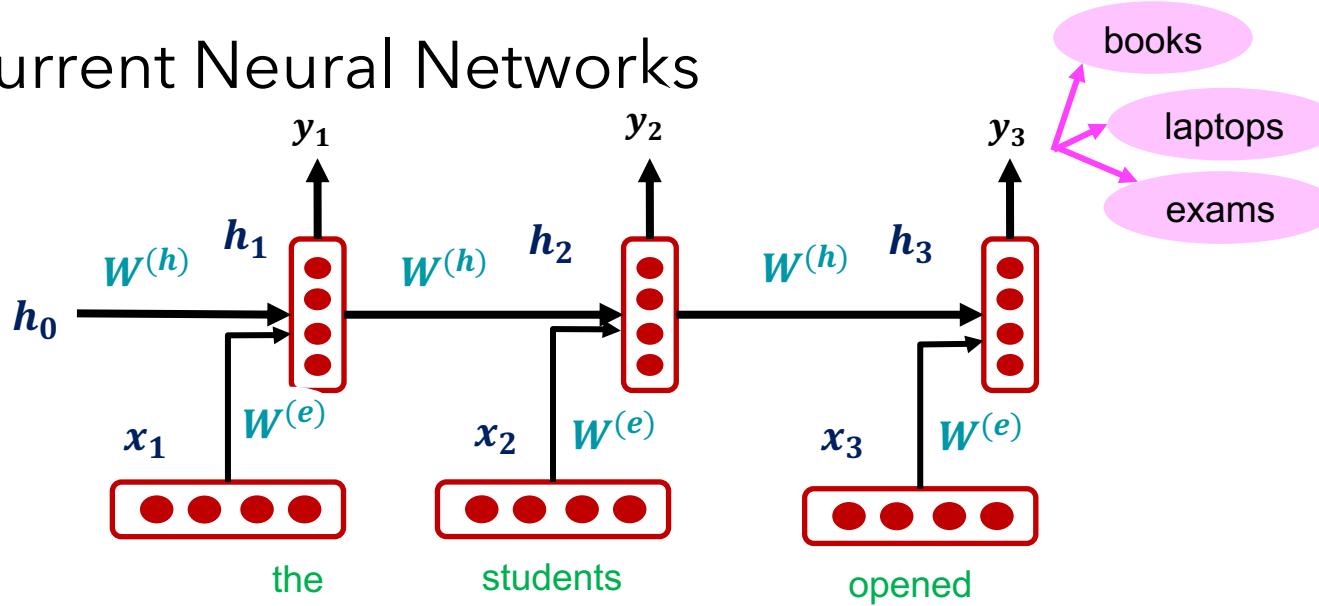


# Recurrent Neural Networks



1. INPUT LAYER:  $x = \langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle$  is the input.
2. HIDDEN LAYER
  1. Vertical box is a hidden unit i.e. ( $h_t$  = hidden unit at timestep t). There is **only one Hidden layer**.
  2. The same computation is applied for **t timesteps** with **t different words**.
3. The Hidden unit **at each step t** has **two inputs**
  1.  $h_{t-1}$ : output of the previous timestep and
  2. the input at this timestep  $x_t$ .

# Recurrent Neural Networks



## HIDDEN LAYER COMPUTATION:

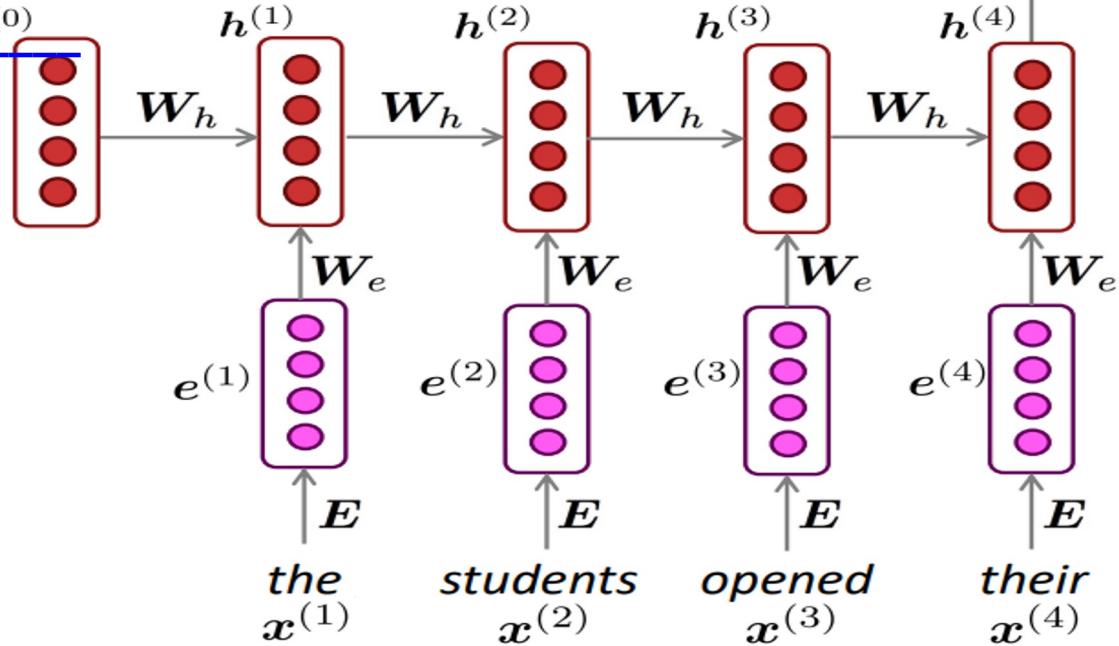
- $h_{t-1}$  and  $x_t$  are “scaled” by **separate weight matrices** to produce  $h_t$
- $h_t$  is multiplied with a weight matrix  $W^{(S)} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times |V|}$
- Then a **softmax()** over the vocabulary to get a prediction output  $y_t$  of the next word.

$$h_t = \sigma(W^{(h)}h_{t-1} + W^{(e)}x_t)$$
$$y_t = \text{softmax}(W^{(S)}h_t)$$

# Recurrent Neural Networks

Working of RNN for the example sentence:

**the students opened their**  $h^{(0)}$



# Recurrent Neural Networks

## Advantages of RNNs

1. They can process input sequences of any length.
2. The model size does not increase for longer input sequence lengths.
3. Computation for step  $t$  can (in theory) use information from many steps back.

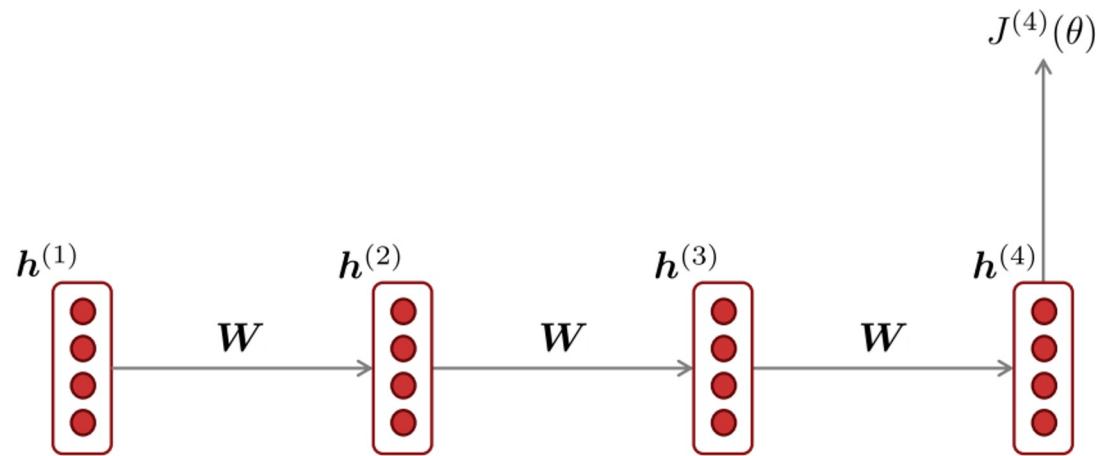
## Disadvantages of RNNs

1. Computation is slow - because it is sequential, it cannot be parallelized.
2. In practice, it is difficult to access information from many steps back due to problems like **vanishing gradients** and **exploding gradients**.

# Recurrent Neural Networks

## Vanishing and Exploding Gradients

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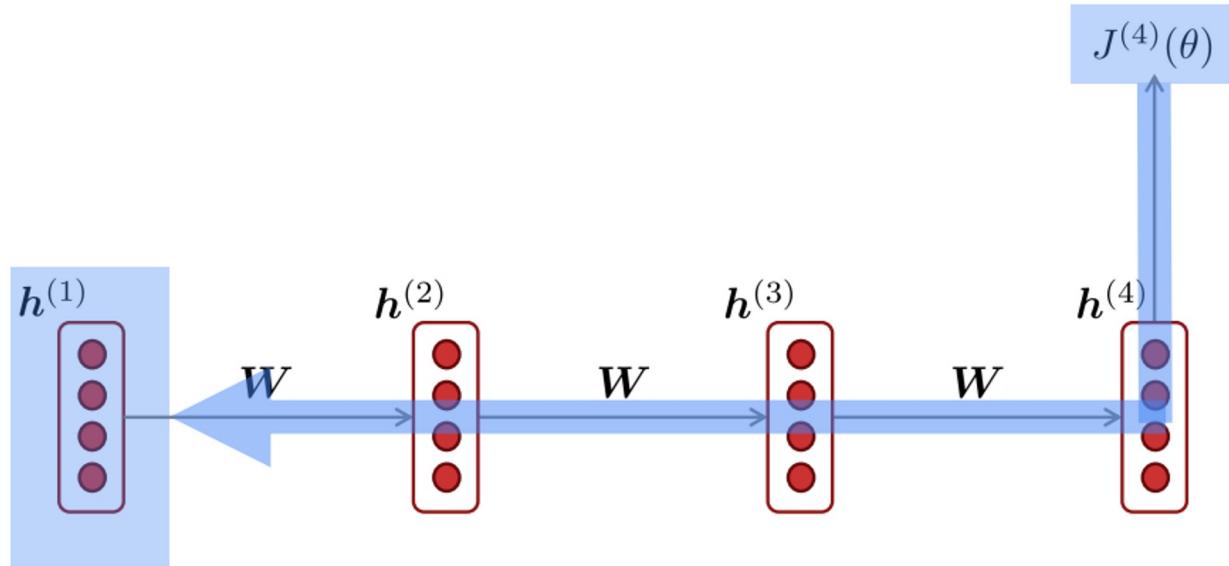


Here,  $J^{(4)}(\theta)$  is the final output. We need to calculate the derivative of it w.r.t  $h^{(1)}$

# Recurrent Neural Networks

## Vanishing Gradient

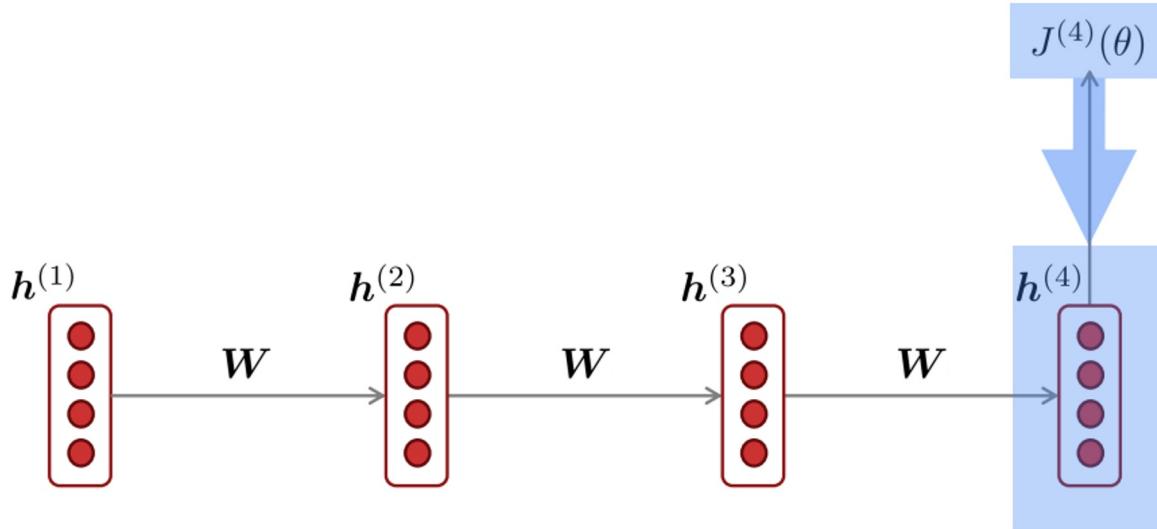
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$$\frac{\partial J^{(4)}}{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(1)}} = ?$$

# Recurrent Neural Networks

## Vanishing Gradient



$$\frac{\partial J^{(4)}}{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(1)}} = \frac{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(2)}}{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(1)}} \times$$

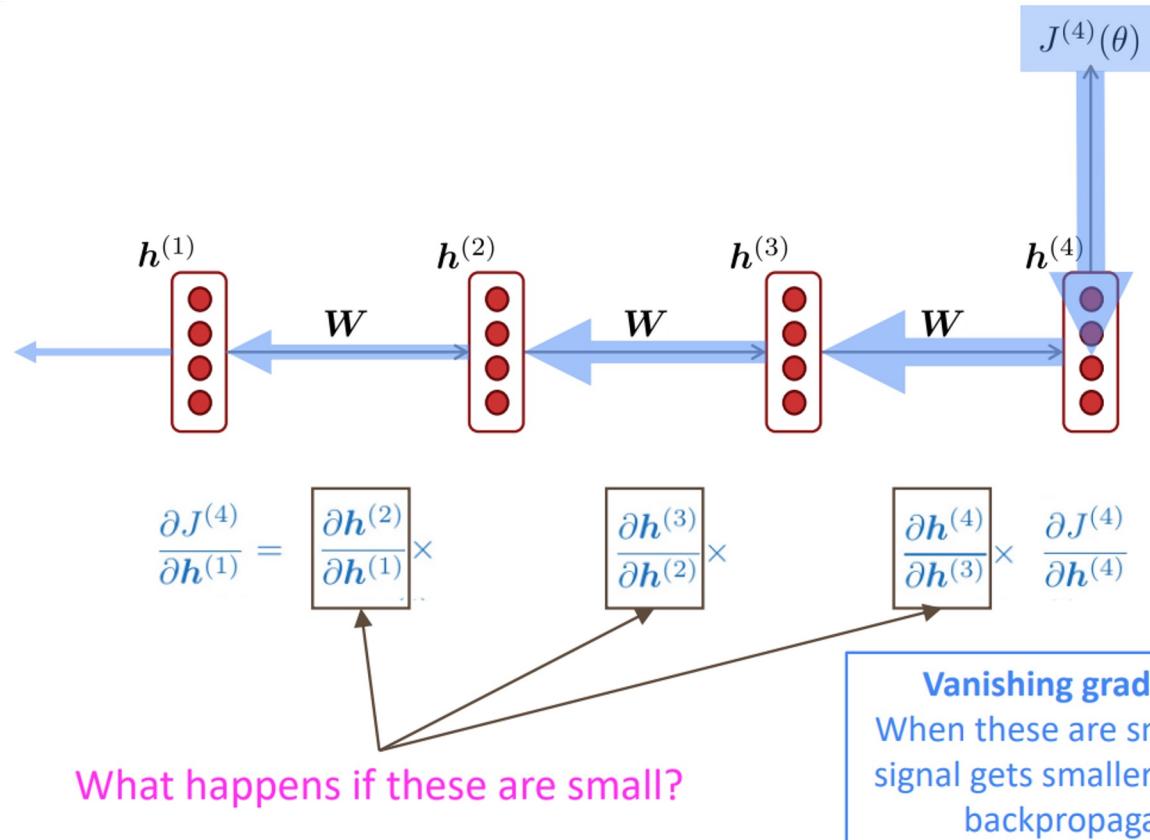
$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(3)}}{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(2)}} \times$$

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(4)}}{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(3)}} \times \frac{\partial J^{(4)}}{\partial \mathbf{h}^{(4)}}$$

chain rule!

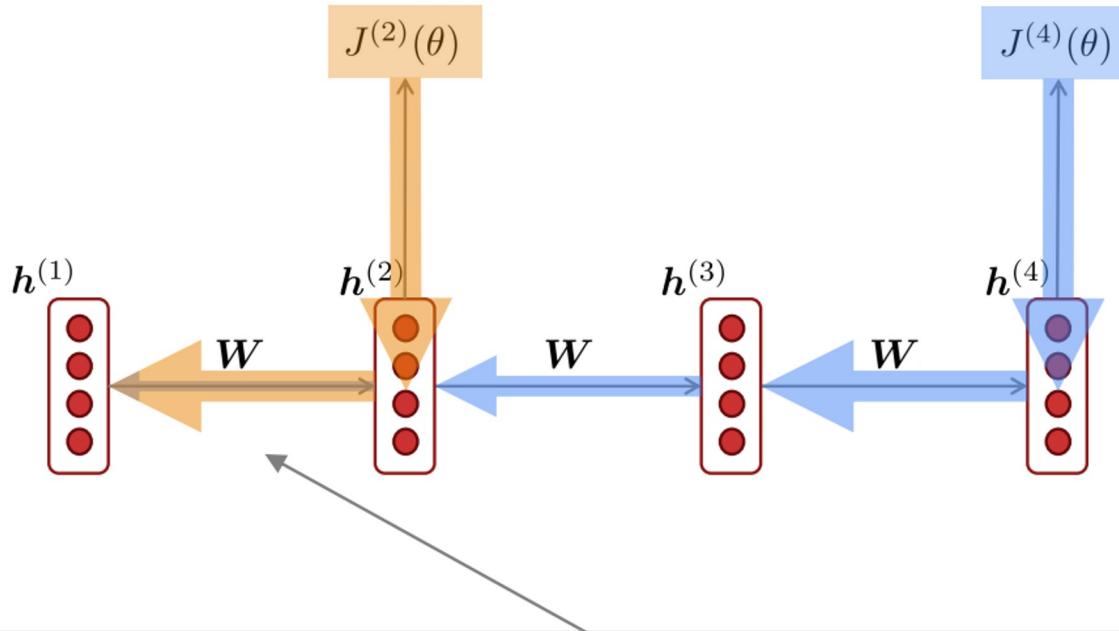
# Recurrent Neural Networks

## Vanishing Gradient



# Recurrent Neural Networks

## Vanishing Gradient



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Gradient signal from far away is lost because it's much smaller than gradient signal from close-by.

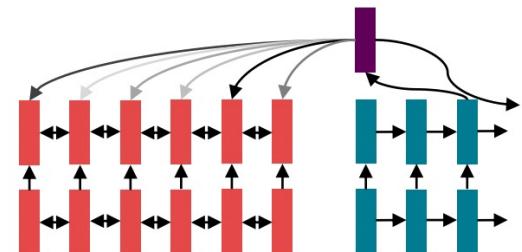
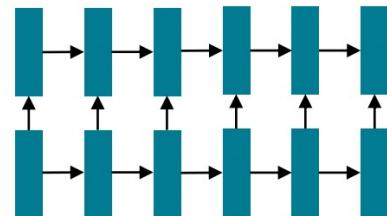
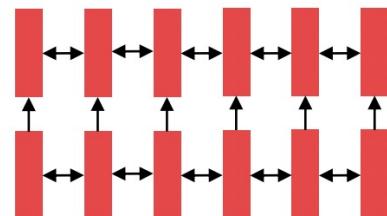
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So, model weights are updated only with respect to **near effects**, not **long-term effects**.

# Transformers-based Language Models

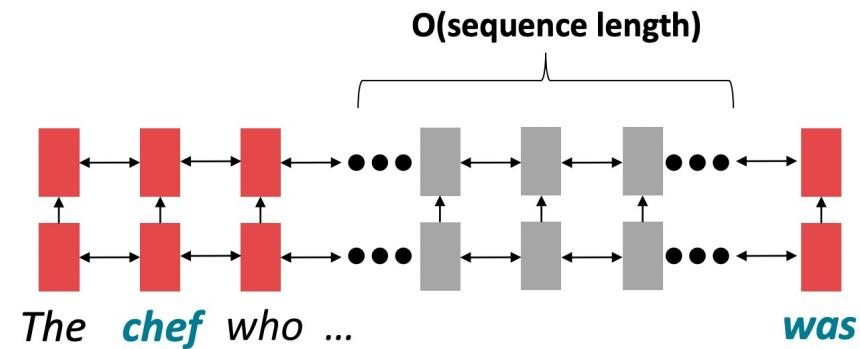
# RNN - De-facto Standard Till 2017

- Circa 2016, de facto in NLP was to encode sentences with a bidirectional LSTM
  - For example, the source sentence in a translation
- Define your output (parse, sentence, summary) as a sequence, and use an LSTM to generate it.
- Use **attention** to allow flexible access to memory



# RNN - Linear Interaction Distance/Non-parallelizable

- RNNs are unrolled “left-to-right”.
- Useful: Nearby words often affect each other’s meanings
- Problem: RNNs take  $O(\text{sequence length})$  steps for distant word pairs to interact
- Problem: Linear Order is “baked in”. Not sure that is best.
  - Right-to-left
  - Left-to-right
  - Bi-directional RNNs.

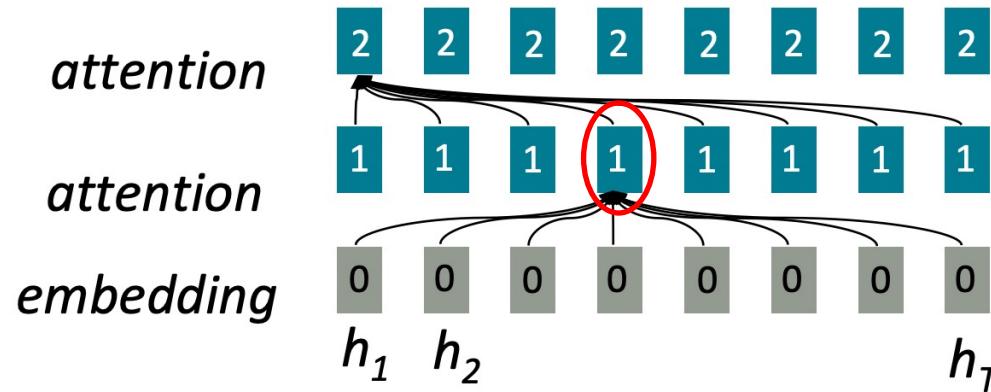


# Recurrence to Attention

- Attention treats each word's representation as a query to access and incorporate information from a set of values.
  - For example, Layer 2 each node  $j$  computes

$$\sum_{i=1}^T \alpha_i w_{ij} h_i, \text{ s.t. } \sum_i \alpha_i = 1$$

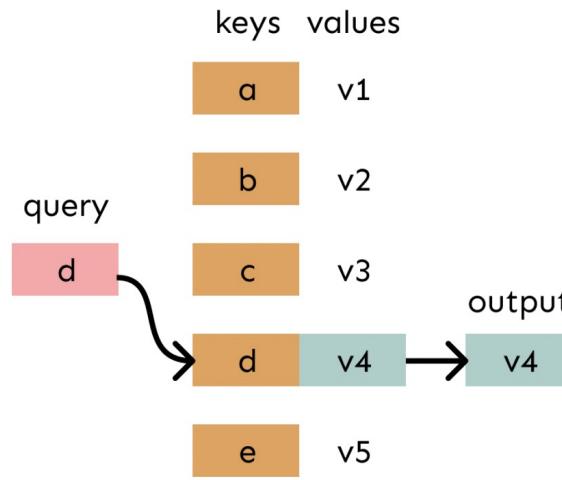
- Max. interaction distance:  $O(1)$ .



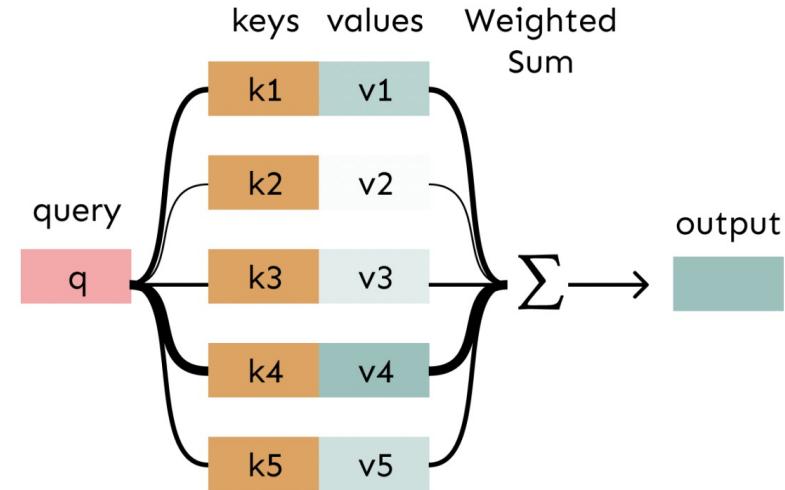
# Attention as a soft, averaging lookup table

We can think of attention as performing fuzzy lookup in a key-value store.

In a **lookup table**, we have a table of **keys** that map to **values**. The **query** matches one of the keys, returning its value.



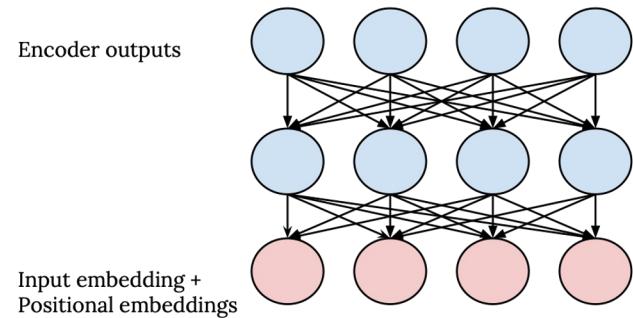
In **attention**, the **query** matches all **keys** *softly*, to a weight between 0 and 1. The keys' **values** are multiplied by the weights and summed.



# Transformers - Motivation

How can we speed up the encoding process of sequences?

- Remove the recurrent connection (from RNNs)
- Only use attention
- But No order?
- No nonlinearities. Just weighted average



## Solution:

- Positional Embeddings (encode positions as vectors)
- Add non-linearities using separate layers FFN+BatchNorm

# Self-Attention: keys, queries, values from the same sequence

Let  $w_{1::n}$  be the words in a vocab  $V$ . Like Zuko made his uncle Tea.

For a  $w_i$ , let  $x_i = Ew_i$ , where  $E \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times |V|}$  is embedding matrix.

1. Transform  $x_i$  (word-emb) with weight matrices  $Q, K, V \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times d}$

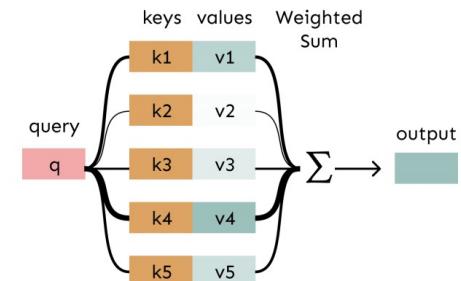
$q_i = Qx_i$  (queries).     $k_i = Kx_i$  (keys).     $v_i = Vx_i$  (values).

2. Compute key-query similarities, and normalize

$$e_{ij} = q_i^T k_j \quad \alpha_{ij} = \frac{\exp(e_{ij})}{\sum_{j'} \exp(e_{ij'})}$$

3. Compute output for each word as weighted sum of values

$$o_i = \sum_j \alpha_{ij} v_i$$



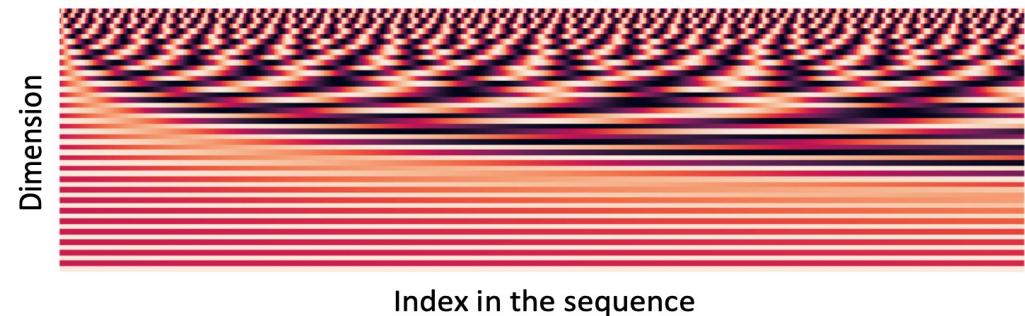
# Transformers Position Encoding

Add positional encoding to  $x_i$ , as  $\tilde{x}_i = x_i + p_i$ , where  $p_i \in \mathbb{R}^d$

Properties: monotonicity, translation invariance, and symmetry

- Sinusoidal position representations: concatenate sinusoidal functions of varying periods (*in Vaswani et al. 2017, fully learnable embeddings in BERT/GPT etc.*)

$$p_i = \begin{pmatrix} \sin(i/10000^{2*1/d}) \\ \cos(i/10000^{2*1/d}) \\ \vdots \\ \sin(i/10000^{2*\frac{d}{2}/d}) \\ \cos(i/10000^{2*\frac{d}{2}/d}) \end{pmatrix}$$



- Pros:
  - Periodicity indicates that maybe “absolute position” isn’t as important
  - Maybe can extrapolate to longer sequences as periods restart!
- Cons: Not learnable; changed later (*survey of PEs Wang et al. ICLR 2021*)

# Barriers and solutions for Self-Attention as a building block

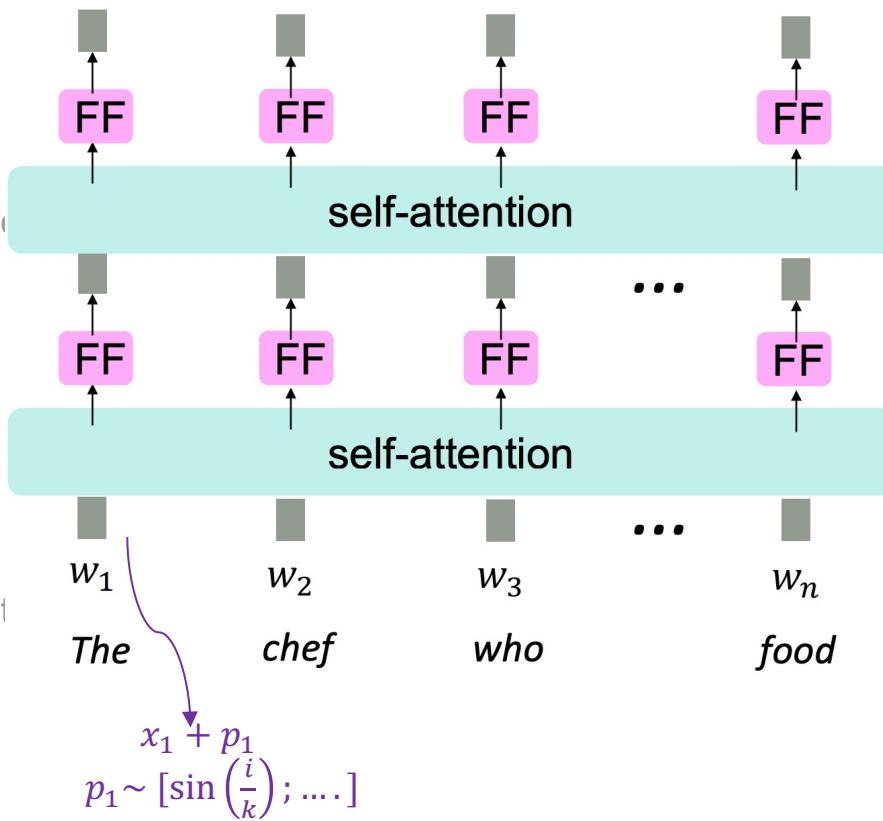
- Doesn't have an inherent notion of order! 
- Add position representations to the inputs
- No nonlinearities for deep learning magic! It's all just weighted averages 
- Easy fix: apply the same feedforward network to each self-attention output.
- Need to ensure we don't "look at the future" when predicting a sequence 
- Mask out the future by artificially setting attention weights to 0!
- Like in machine translation Or language modeling

# Transformers - Motivation

How can we speed up the encoding process of sequences? A: **Only use attention**

## Barriers and Solutions

- Position representations:
  - Specify the sequence order, since self-attention is an unordered function of its inputs.
- Nonlinearities:
  - At the output of the self-attention block
  - Frequently implemented as a simple feedforward network.
- Masking
  - To parallelize operations while not looking at future.
  - Keeps information about the future from “leaking” to the past.

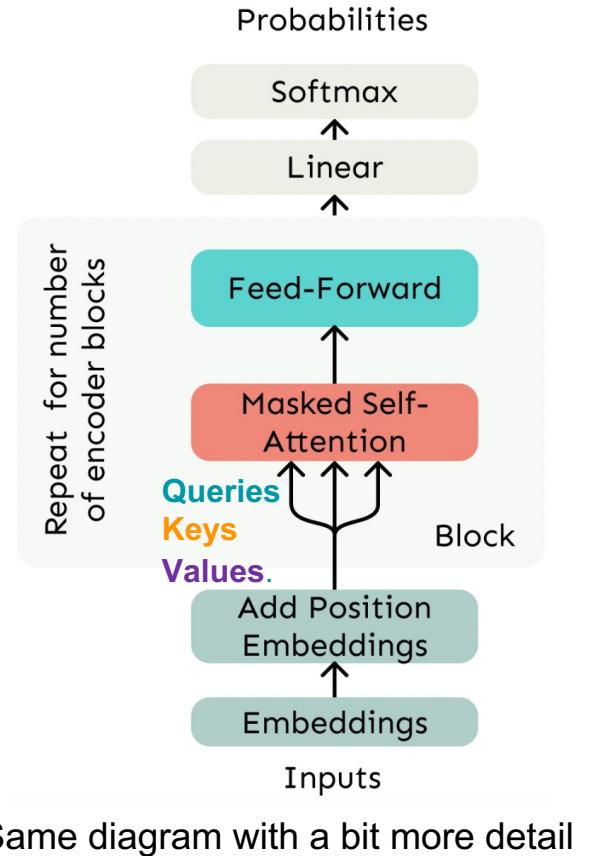


# Transformers Encoder: Building from self-attention

How can we speed up the encoding process of sequences? A: **Only use attention**

## Barriers and Solutions

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# Two Types of Transformer Layers - Encoders and Decoders

## Types of Transformers

- Encoder-decoder
  - Machine Translation, most generic
  - T5, BART
- Decoder only
  - Most popular, Language Modeling
  - OpenAI GPT, GPT-3
- Encoder only
  - Mainly for classification
  - BERT, RoBERTa, ALBERT, ViT, Swin, CLIP

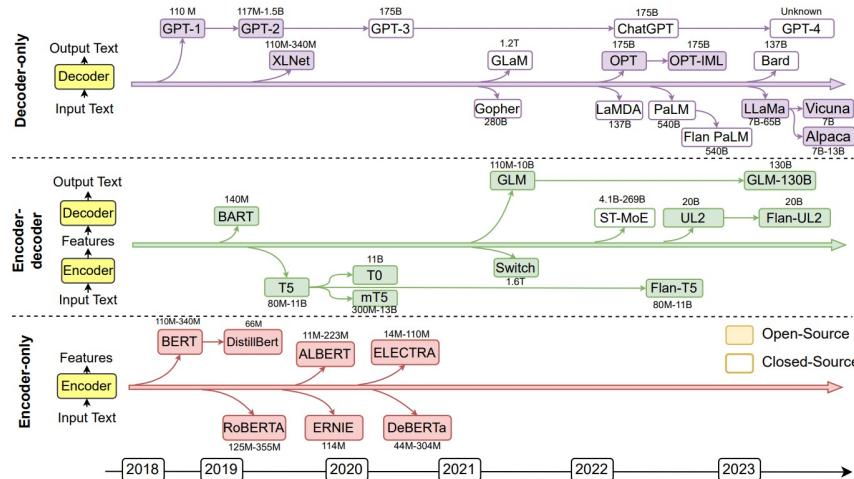
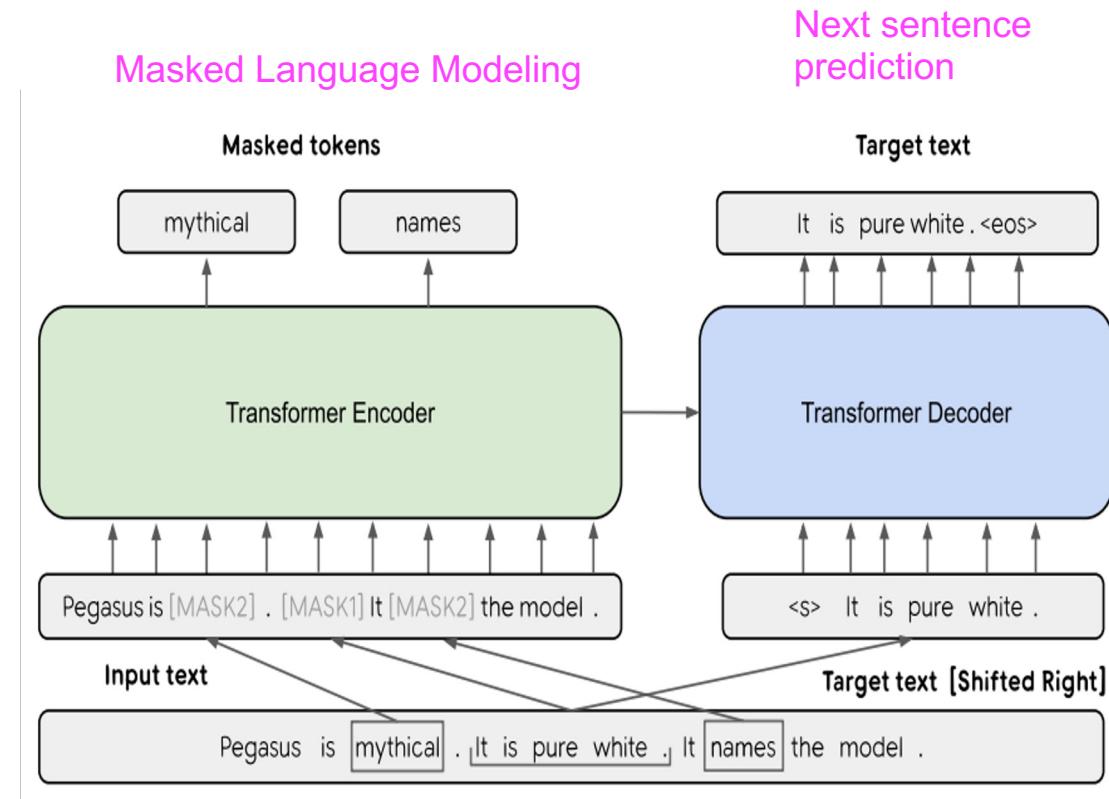


Fig. 2. Representative large language models (LLMs) in recent years. Open-source models are represented by solid squares, while closed source models are represented by hollow squares.

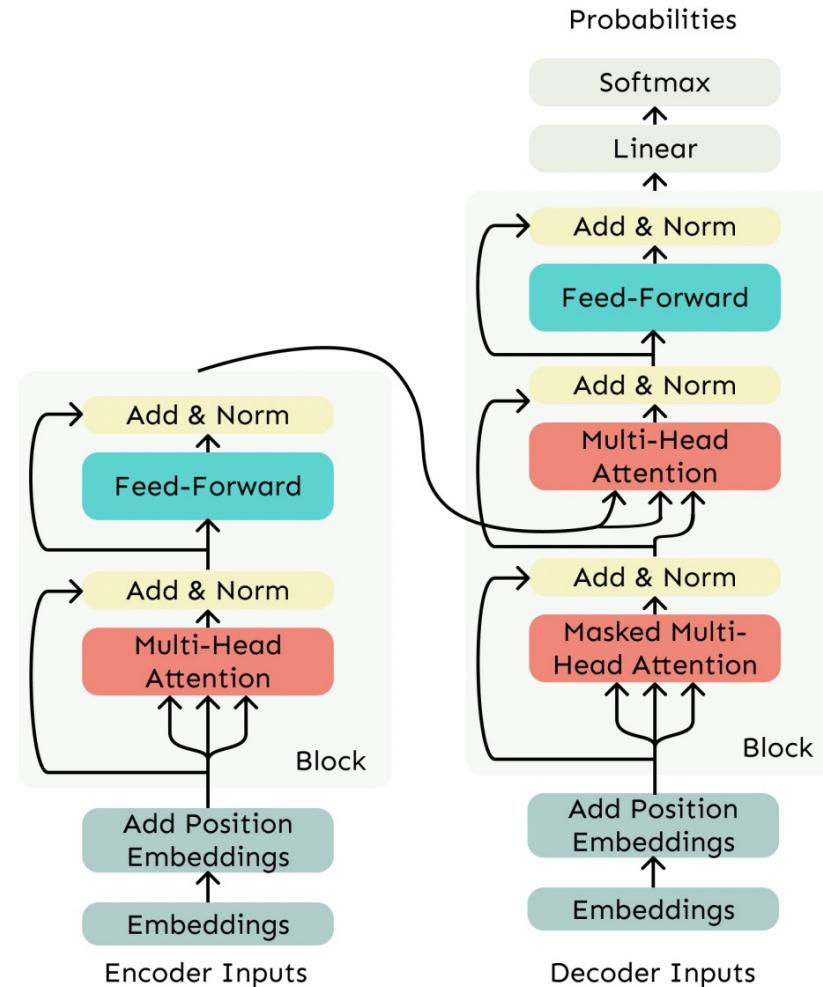
# Encoder-Decoder Models

- Encoder-Decoder
  - Many popular models: BART, T5, Pegasus
- Trained using Unsupervised Objectives
  - Enc: Mask some tokens and predict
  - Enc+Dec: Predict the next sentence.



# Transformers Encoder-Decoder

- In Translation, we processed the source sentence with a bidirectional model and generated the target with a unidirectional model.
- For this kind of seq2seq format, we use a Transformer Encoder-Decoder.
- We use a normal Transformer Encoder.
- Our Transformer Decoder is modified to perform cross-attention to the output of the Encoder



# Transformer Decoder

der

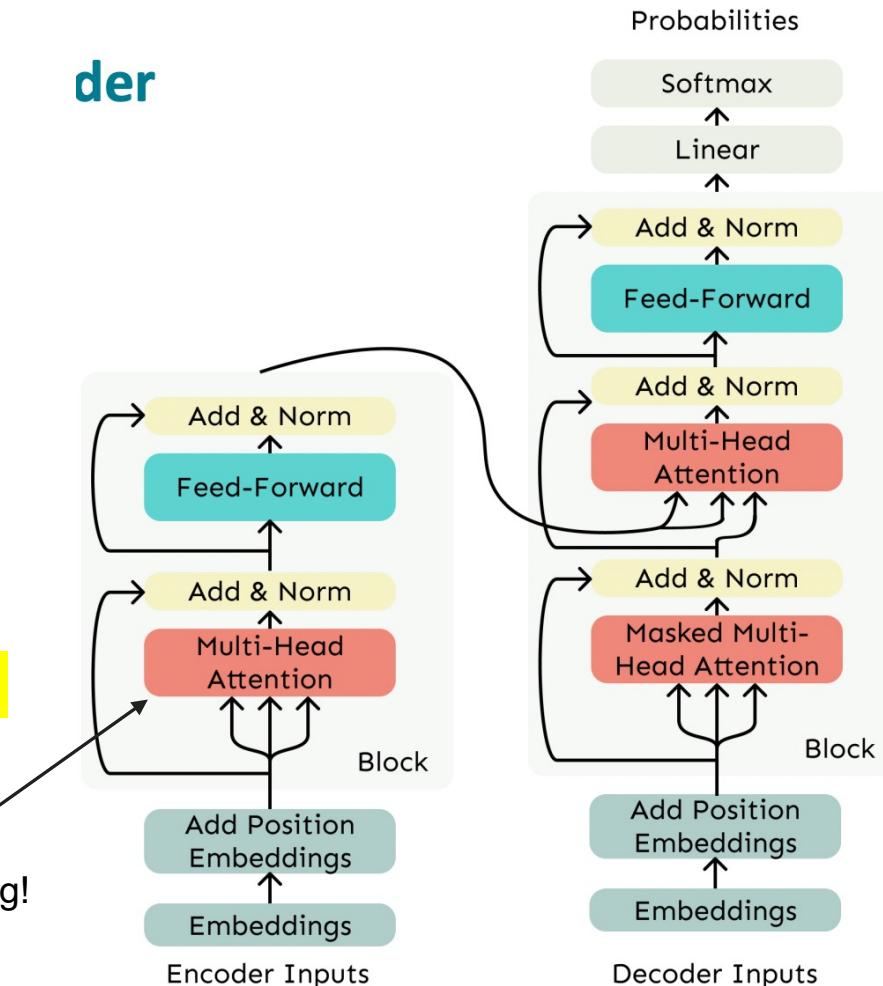
In Addition to Encoder:

1. Cross-Attention between encoder-decoder
2. Masking future inputs

Before we learn Cross-Attention

- Multi-Head Attention
- Residual Norm and Layer Norm (Add & Norm layer)

No Masking!

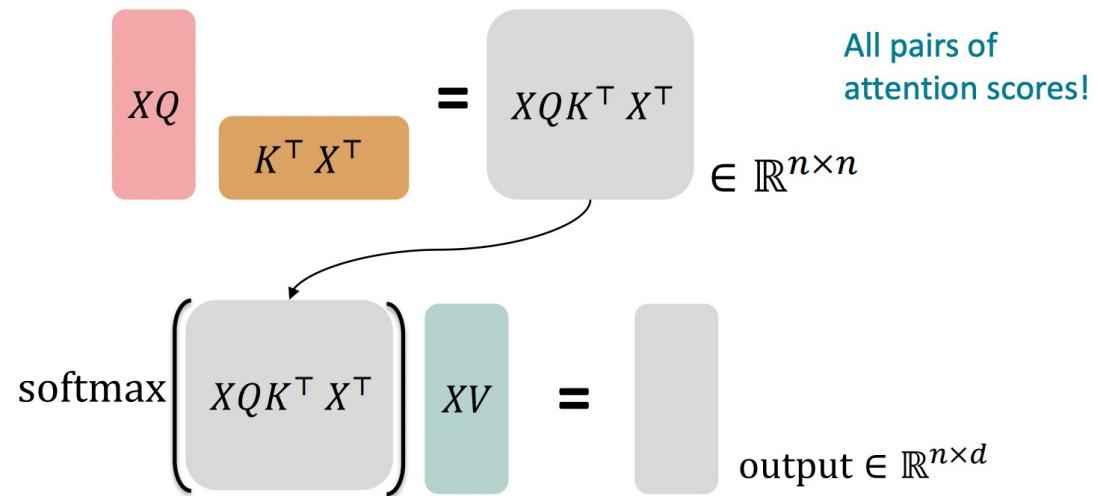


# Multi-Head Attention (Sequence Stacked)

Key-query-value attention in matrix format

- $X = [x_1; \dots; x_n] \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$
- Note  $XK \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$ ,  $XQ \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$ ,  $XV \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$

$$\text{output} = \text{softmax}(XQ(KX)^T) * XV$$



# Transformer - Decoder

**Trick 1:** Multiple Attention heads.

- A single attention “head” learns to concentrate on a single property.
- One for logically related, another for subject-objects
- We need multiple heads.
- $Q_l, K_l, V_l \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times \frac{d}{h}}$ ,  $h$  is #attention-heads,  $l \in \{1, 2, \dots, h\}$
- Each head

$$\text{output}_l = \text{softmax}(XQ_lK_l^TX^T) * XV_l,$$

- Final output:  $\text{output} = [\text{output}_1; \dots, \text{output}_h]$ ,

**Trick 1.1:** “Scaled Dot Product” attention aids in training.

- When dimensionality  $d$  becomes large, dot products between vectors tend to become large.
- Because of this, inputs to the softmax function can be large, making the gradients small

$$\text{output}_l = \text{softmax}\left(\frac{XQ_lK_l^TX^T}{\sqrt{\frac{d}{h}}}\right) * XV_l,$$

# Transformer - Decoder

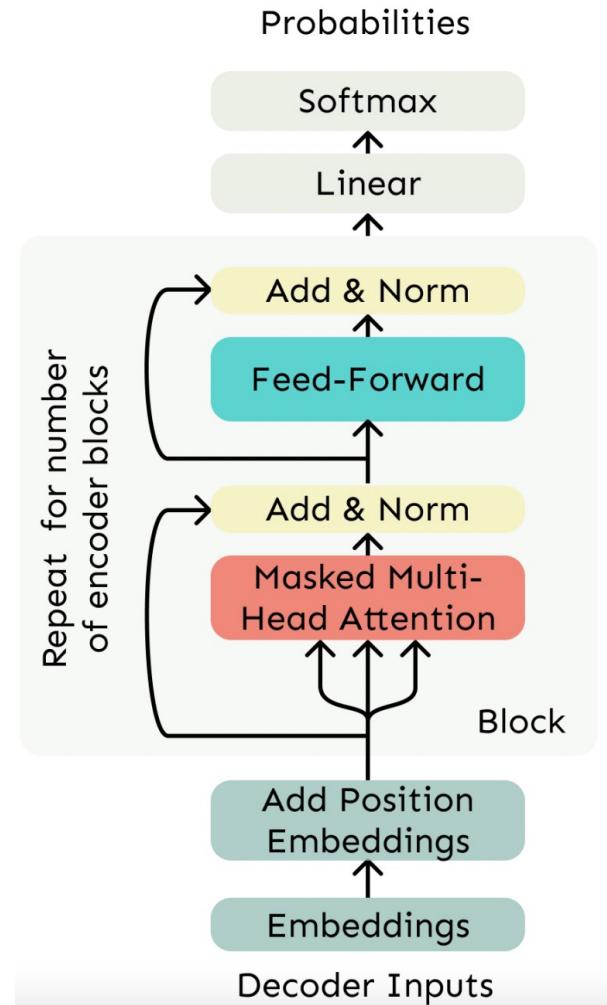
## Trick 2 & 3: Optimization Tricks

- Residual Normalization (add the input back)
  - $x + f(x)$
- Layer Normalization
  - Make gradient descent converge faster.
  - Layer wise variations and mean – make it same.

$$\text{output} = \frac{x - \mu}{\sqrt{\sigma + \epsilon}} * \gamma + \beta$$

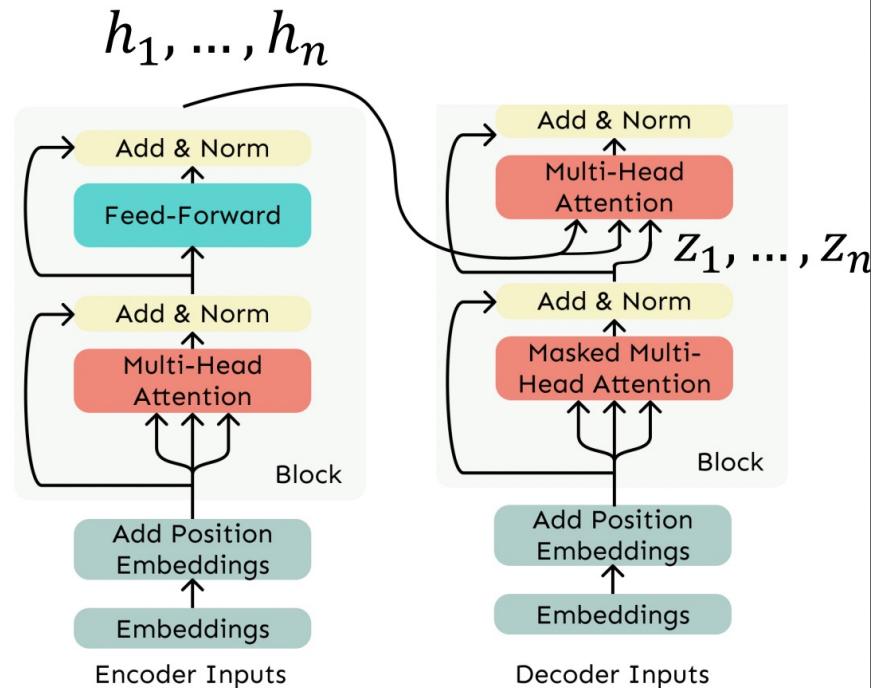
Normalize by scalar mean and variance      Modulate by learned elementwise gain and bias

- Often written together as "Add & Norm"



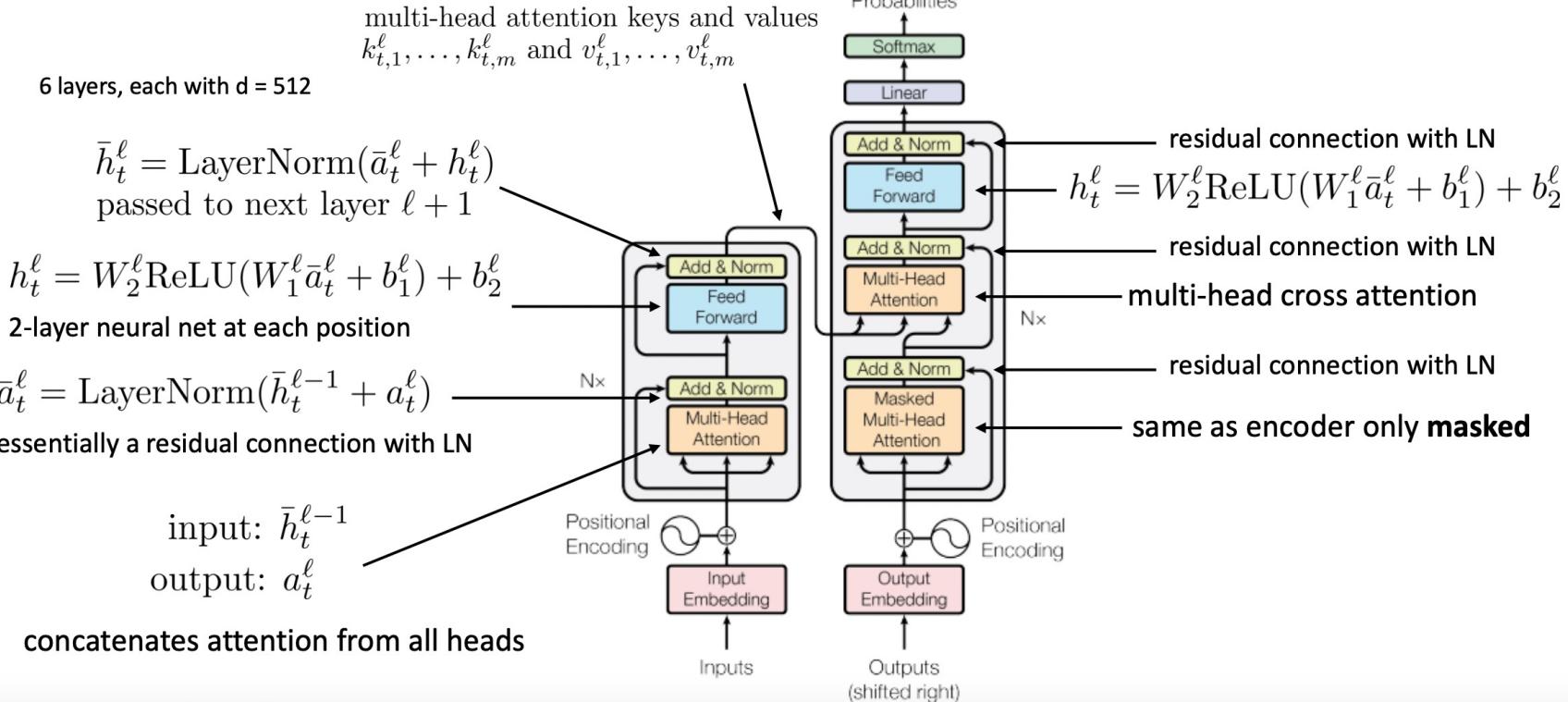
# Transformer - Decoder Cross Attention

- We saw that self-attention is when keys, queries, and values come from the same source.
- In the decoder, we have attention that looks more like what we saw last week.
- Let  $h_1, \dots, h_n$  be **output vectors from the Transformer encoder**;  $x_i \in \mathbb{R}^d$
- Let  $z_1, \dots, z_n$  be input vectors from the Transformer **decoder**,  $z_i \in \mathbb{R}^d$
- Then keys and values are drawn from the **encoder** (like a memory):
  - $k_i = Kh_i, v_i = Vh_i$ .
- And the queries are drawn from the **decoder**,  $q_i = Qz_i$ .

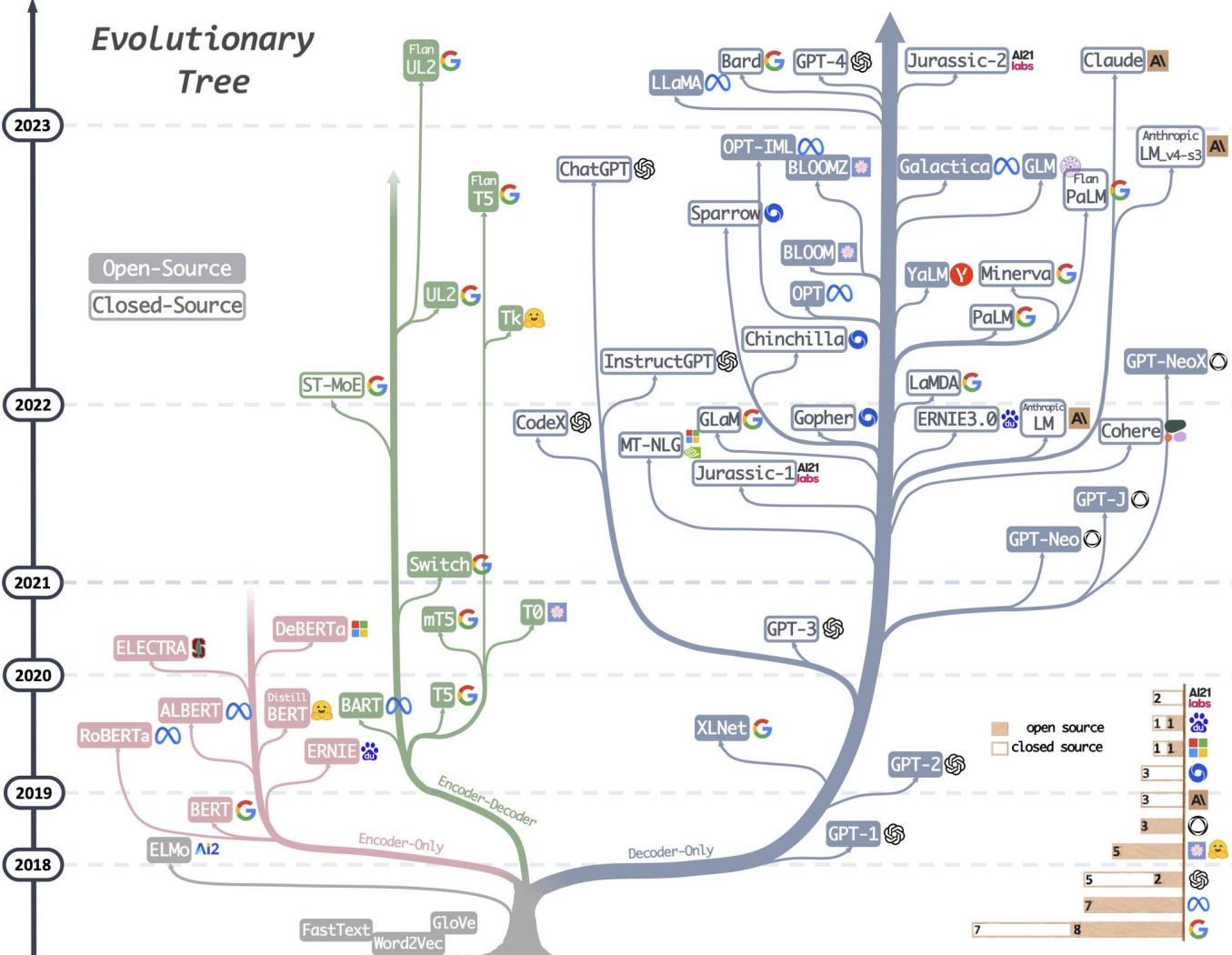


# Putting it All Together

## The Transformer



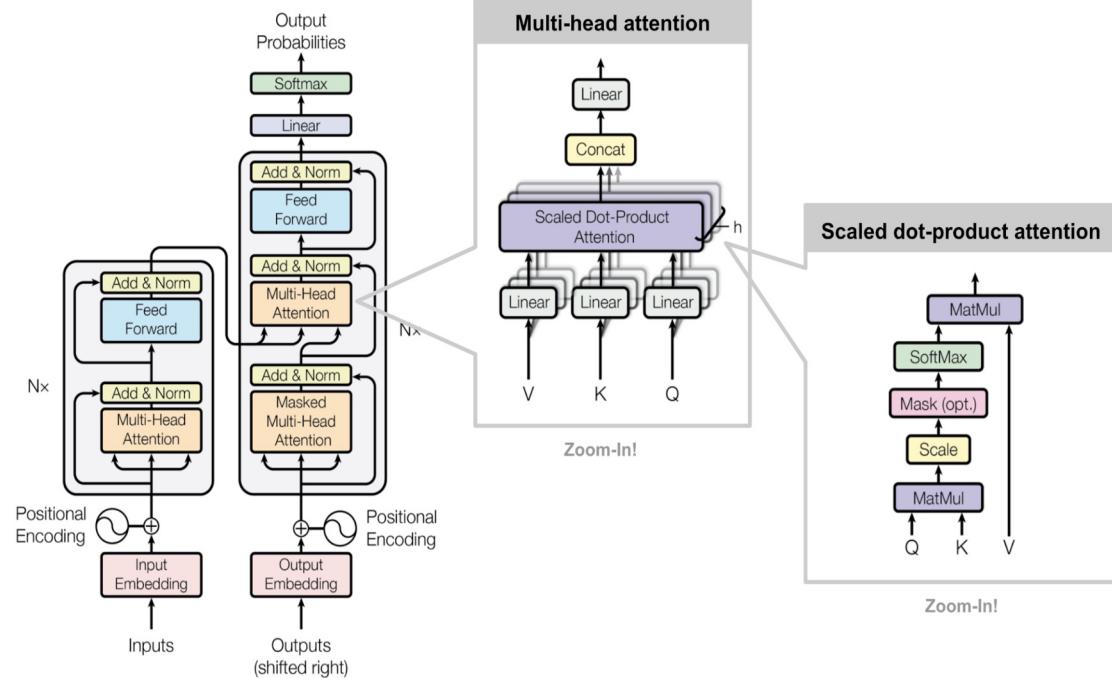
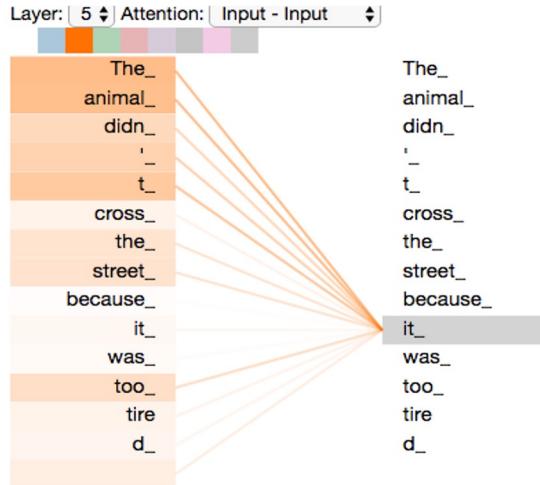
# *Evolutionary Tree*



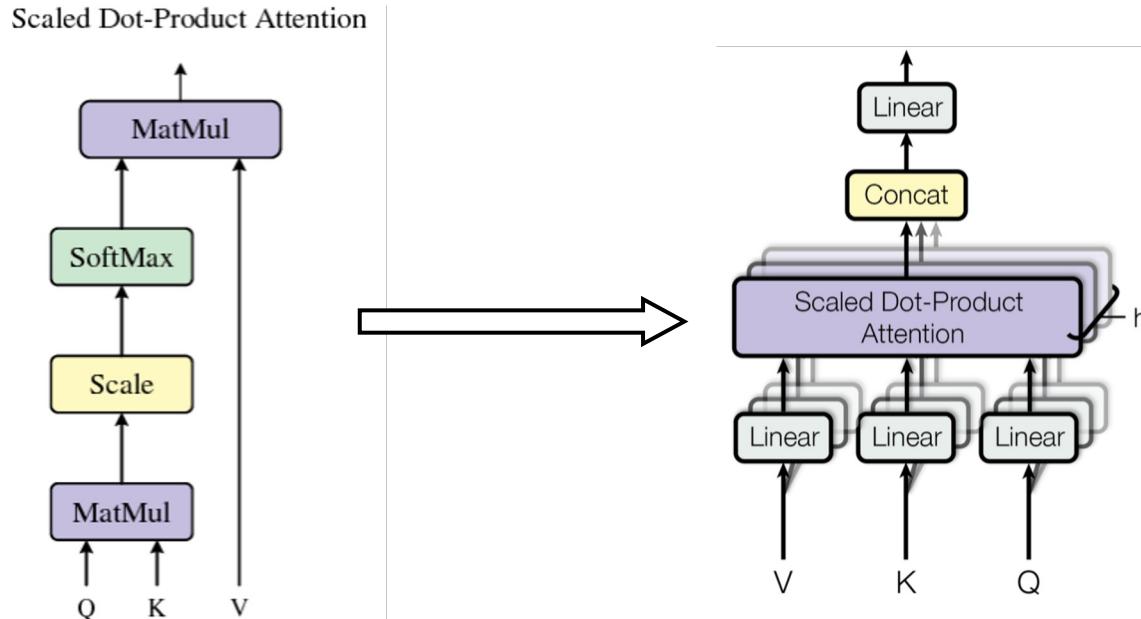
# Extra Slides on LLMs

# The Self-Attention Process (diagrammatic)

$$\text{Attention}(\mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{K}, \mathbf{V}) = \text{softmax}\left(\frac{\mathbf{Q}\mathbf{K}^T}{\sqrt{n}}\right)\mathbf{V}$$



# Multi-Head Attention (diagrammatic)



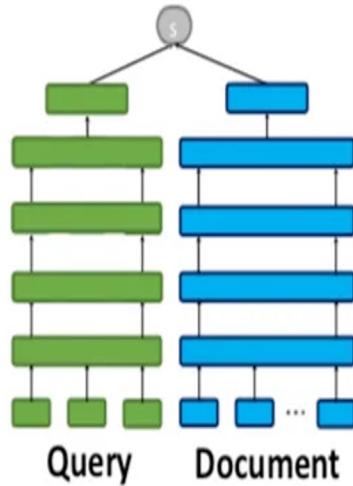
$$\text{MultiHead}(\mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{K}, \mathbf{V}) = [\text{head}_1; \dots; \text{head}_h] \mathbf{W}^O$$

$$\text{where } \text{head}_i = \text{Attention}(\mathbf{Q}\mathbf{W}_i^Q, \mathbf{K}\mathbf{W}_i^K, \mathbf{V}\mathbf{W}_i^V)$$

# Retrieval × LMs

- Document-Query Interaction
- Retrieval-augmented LMs

# Retrieval LMs (Multi-Vector Representations)



(a) Representation-based Similarity  
(e.g., DSSM, SNRM)

(b) Query-Document Interaction  
(e.g., DRMM, KNRM, Conv-KNRM)

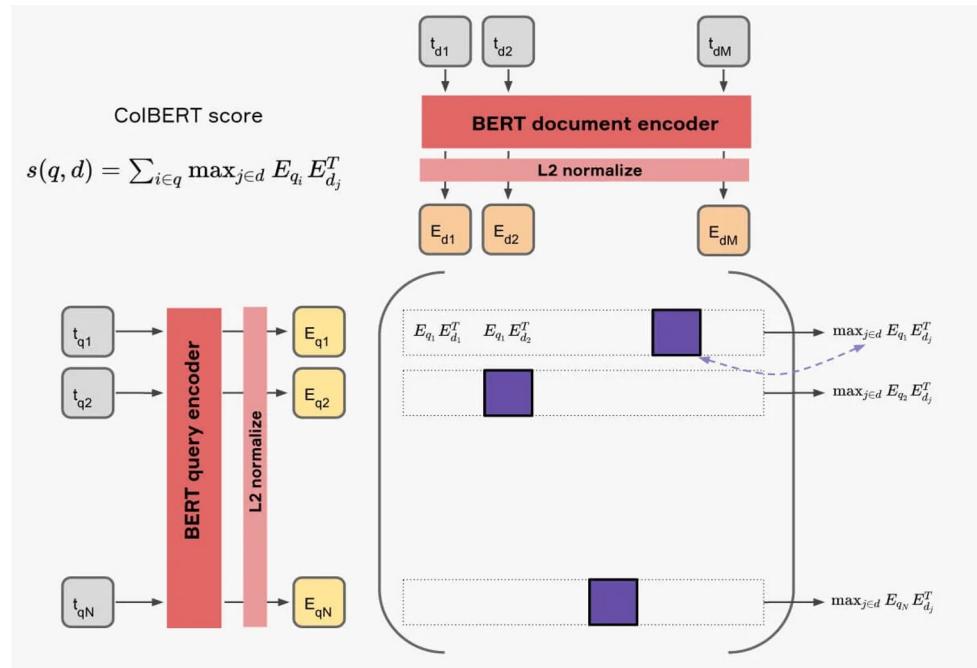
(c) All-to-all Interaction  
(e.g., BERT)

(d) Late Interaction  
(i.e., the proposed ColBERT)

# Retrieval Augmented LLMs

## ColBERT (Contextualized Late interaction over BERT)

- ColBERT uses a late interaction architecture
- Encodes the query and document independently
- Compute similarity later
  - Use cached contextual document embeddings



# Retrieval Augmented LMs (for QA)

- **REALM** is a language model pre-training paradigm
- Novelty: It also incorporates a knowledge retriever to retrieve textual world knowledge
- REALM models avoid relying solely on model parameters, which can lead to memorizing all knowledge

$$p(y | x) = \sum_{z \in \mathcal{Z}} p(y | z, x) p(z | x).$$

↑  
Generate      ↑  
Retrieve

**Knowledge Retriever** The retriever is defined using a dense inner product model:

$$p(z | x) = \frac{\exp f(x, z)}{\sum_{z'} \exp f(x, z')},$$
$$f(x, z) = \text{Embed}_{\text{input}}(x)^\top \text{Embed}_{\text{doc}}(z),$$

# REALM Performance

