

Cross-lingual Word Embeddings Beyond Zero-shot Machine Translation

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Abstract

This thesis explored the possibility of transferring learning from training languages to completely unknown languages in a multilingual neural machine translation system. Using cross-lingual word embeddings as the only knowledge source, we observed little transferability from the training language to other completely unseen test languages. Also, the minor transferability only happens between highly-related languages from our experiment. The lack of regularization in our attentional encoder-decoder model caused the transformation of the output vector space and made it no longer aligned with the input vector space. Finally, to mitigate such architectural shortcomings of our multilingual translation model, we provided suggestions that could better share embedding layers from the training language to unknown languages.

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Preface

This thesis was finished under the supervision of Ali Basirat. I would like to thank him first for his guidance, inspiration and passion.

The Saga supercomputer owned by UNINETT Sigma2 hosted all of the experiment in this thesis.¹ Without it this thesis would not be possible.

Thank you Mr. Anders Wall and everyone in the Anders Wall Scholarship Foundation for sponsoring my Master's study. This opportunity led me to meet everyone in the Master Programme in Language Technology, from whom I have learned a lot during the 2-years journey.

Last but not least, I would like to say a thank you to my parents for their unconditional love and support; to all of my friends for the unique memories we have created; and to my girlfriend, who has always been next to me when the virus made everything unusual.

¹https://www.sigma2.no/systems#saga

1. Introduction

Multilingual neural machine translation (NMT) aims to train a single translation model for multiple languages (Aharoni et al., 2019; M. Johnson et al., 2016). One of its appealing points is zero-shot translation, which enables translations between unseen language pairs when knowledge from one language is transferred to another language by the model's shared parameters. Even though both source and target languages in such an unseen pair should still be in the set of training languages, a multilingual NMT system with zero-shot learning is still attractive as it lowers the cost of obtaining expensive parallel data, particularly when translating low-resource languages.

The success of zero-shot translation depends on the model's ability to learn language invariant features (Arivazhagan et al., 2019). Kim et al. (2019) believes the embedding layers is one of the critical components responsible for learning such generalized features in a multilingual NMT system. By contrast, Aji et al. (2020) concluded that sharing the embedding layer alone is not enough to transfer learning in zero-shot machine translation. No matter embedding layers are essential to zero-shot learning or not, they both showed that it would positively impact the multilingual model's transferability as long as the embeddings layers are aligned between the source language and the target language.

By far, researches on zero-shot learning in multilingual NMT have mostly been restricted to the limited scope of unseen language pairs. A majority of the previous studies of cross-lingual word embeddings in multilingual translation target zero-shot language pairs, not completely unseen languages. People exam on test sets whose languages on both the source or the target side of the translation are known to the system, but the paired combination remains unknown. For language pairs $A \to EN$ and $EN \to B$, they are all interested in the unseen language pair $A \to B$. There is less discussion about the multilingual NMT transferability on completely unknown languages that have never been in the training data.

This thesis studies the importance of word representation in the multilingual NMT transfer model based on the pre-trained cross-lingual word embeddings (Ammar et al., 2016; Bojanowski et al., 2016; Joulin et al., 2018; Ruder et al., 2019) and pushes it further than unseen language pairs — examining the transferability of a multilingual NMT when it is applied to a new test language.

Despite the debate on whether cross-lingual word embeddings are vital when transferring information in zero-shot translation, it is generally acknowledged that cross-lingual word embeddings are beneficial for the model's transferability. Thus we will use cross-lingual word embeddings as the source of transfer knowledge to the test languages and leave the translation model's shared parameters to model the interrelationships between the training languages.

We train a multilingual neural machine translation model using cross-lingual word embeddings from high resource languages and test the translation quality on other languages that are unknown to the model. We hypothesize that a multilingual NMT model trained with pre-trained cross-lingual word embeddings should transfer reasonably even to a completely unknown language. Although from the experiment results, cross-lingual word embeddings transfer only marginally between closely related languages. Our findings are in line with Aji et al. (2020) and indicate that some regularization is necessary to transfer the embedding layers between languages. Furthermore, when

using cross-lingual word embeddings as the only transferable knowledge source, the performance will be negatively affected by the transformed output vector space, which needs to be countered in the future.

The rest of the thesis is organized as below:

Chapter 2 talks about the background and previous works when working in the transferability of cross-lingual word embeddings scope, including information about cross-lingual word embeddings and multilingual neural machine translation. After that, Chapter 3 introduces our experiment method, whose result are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 gives out our conclusion. We also show sample outputs of our multilingual NMT model in Appendix A.

2. Background

2.1. Word Embeddings

2.1.1. Representing Words by Vectors

In Natural Language Processing, people need to represent words in the forms that are more efficient for computers to process. The idea started with statistical language modeling, which was introduced to machine translation in the early nighties (Brown et al., 1990), followed by Bengio et al. (2003) who powered statistical language modeling with neural networks.

To turn words into vectors, one could use a simple one-hot encoding. For a vocabulary V whose |V|=n, each word in the vocabulary can be uniquely represented in an n dimensional vector consist of only one high value 1 and n-1 low value os. Like in the example of $V=\{\text{water}, \text{hydrogen}, \text{oxygen}\}$ we could make $\vec{w}=[1,0,0], \vec{h}=[0,1,0]$ and $\vec{o}=[0,0,1]$. However, these one-hot vectors cannot capture any latent semantic information between different words, nor to reflect the inflections between stems and their variants.

Recent vectorized word representations (word embeddings) were learned by neural networks. Compared to the naive one-hot vectors, word embeddings contains affluent information that links words together. They are able to transfer the semantical similarity between words to the similarity between vectors. Given two sentences with the target words *oxygen* and *hydrogen*,

Oxygen is a kind of gas. Hydrogen is also a kind of gas.

the neural network would see from those similar context words and learn that the two target words *oxygen* and *hydrogen* have similar meanings. Hence it will produce two word embedding \vec{o} and \vec{h} with similar values, as seen in Figure 2.1.

Also, from a geometric prespective, we can observe a small angle between \vec{h} and \vec{o} . From the cosine similarity definition,

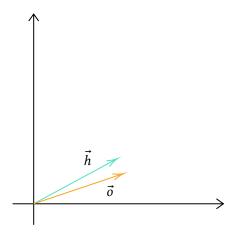


Figure 2.1.: Illustration of a vector space where $\vec{o} = \text{vec}(\text{oxygen})$ and $\vec{h} = \text{vec}(\text{hydrogen})$ are learned from two similar sentences.

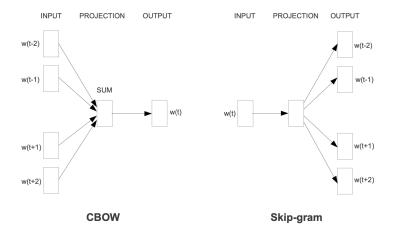


Figure 2.2.: The Skip-gram and the CBOW model (Mikolov, Le, et al., 2013). The Skip-gram model predicts contextual words based on the given center word, while the CBOW model predicts the center word from given context words.

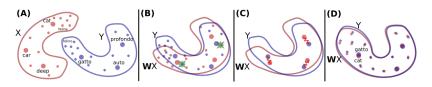


Figure 2.3.: Aligning bilingual vector spaces. (Conneau et al., 2017)

$$sim(x, y) = cos(\theta) = \frac{x \cdot y}{||x|| ||y||}$$

the smaller the angle θ between \vec{h} and \vec{o} is, the higher their cosine similarity is. In other words, when θ is zero, the cosine similarity $\text{sim}(x,y) \in [0,1]$ will also approach its upper bound one.

One of such algorithms to learn word embeddings from a large corpus of text is Word2Vec (Mikolov, Chen, et al., 2013; Mikolov, Sutskever, et al., 2013), which learns word representations through a Skip-gram model or a Continuous Bag of Words (CBOW) model. Both models are shown in Figure 2.2 and they have been continuously driving other word embedding algorithms such as fastText (Joulin et al., 2018).

2.1.2. Cross-lingual Word Embeddings

Learned from approaches like the Skip-gram model or the CBOW model, vectorized word representations tend to cluster words with similar semantics (Mikolov, Le, et al., 2013). It then becomes attractive to see whether we could fit two or more languages into the same vector space. Multilingual word embeddings in the same vector space are called cross-lingual word embeddings.

In the multilingual scenario, alignment in two different vector spaces is vital in order to make word embeddings from different languages comparable. Figure 2.3 illustrated the alignment method from Conneau et al. (2017). Suppose there is a set of word pairs $\{x_i, y_i\}$ where $i \in \{1, ..., n\}$, the two vector spaces were aligned by a rotation matrix $W \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times d}$ as shown in process (B), to optimize the objective function

 $^{^{1}}https://fasttext.cc/docs/en/unsupervised-tutorial.html\\$

$$\min_{W \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times d}} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \ell(Wx_i, y_i)$$

Here ℓ is the loss function and it is usually the square loss function $\ell(x,y) = ||x-y||^2$. Then W is further refined in process (C), where we choose frequent words as anchor points and minimize the distance between each correspondent anchor points by an energy function. After this, the refined W is then used to map all words in the dictionary during the inference process. We obtain the translation t(i) of a given source word i in the formula

$$t(i) = \underset{j \in \{1, \dots, N\}}{\arg\min} \, \ell(Wx_i, y_j)$$

In practice, people use lexicon as the most common parallel data to learn the alignment of multiple vector spaces, though there are other kinds of alignment using sentence or documents level data (Ruder et al., 2019). By using word-level information like a dictionary, we can start with a pivot language (usually English) and map each other monolingual word embeddings by looking the same word up in the dictionary (Mikolov, Le, et al., 2013). Sentence-level parallel data usually contains aligned sentence pairs from different languages (Hermann and Blunsom, 2013). Document-level information is usually a group of topic-aligned or class-aligned documents, such as articles from the same Wikipedia item in different languages (Vulić and Moens, 2013).

Recent development in word alignment has shown possibilities for less supervision and smaller seed data size to initiate the alignment process (Ruder et al., 2019). Though it is still unclear if cross-lingual word embedding alignment can run without parallel data or supervision (Dyer, 2019), there is evidence that even word embeddings from distant language pairs have similar geometric arrangements in vector spaces (Mikolov, Le, et al., 2013).

2.2. Multilingual Neural Machine Translation (NMT) Systems

2.2.1. Multilingual Neural Machine Translation

Neural Machine Translation (NMT) uses neural networks to learn the translation relationship between a source and a target language. It has outperformed the traditional statistical machine translation in some machine translation settings and has enabled some new possibilities in the field. One of these new applications is multilingual NMT. As shown in Figure 2.4, the system has an encoder and a decoder consisting of several layers of LSTM network spread parallelly on multiple GPUs. An attention module serves as the connection bridge between the encoder and the decoder. It emphasizes which part of the source sentence is more relevant to the current translation context, especially when translating long sentences (Wu et al., 2016). Multilingual NMT uses the same attentional encoder-decoder model but trains it on a multilingual corpus with additional artificial tokens to indicate the target language (M. Johnson et al., 2016).

The benefit of such a multilingual NMT system does not necessarily stop at better translation performance between common languages like English, French, or Spanish; it also leverages additional information from high resource languages to low resource languages, as a special form of transfer learning (Zoph et al., 2016).

Lakew et al. (2019) claim such form of transfer learning may happen both in the horizontal or vertical direction: In the horizontal direction, knowledge transfers from pre-trained data (such as word embeddings or language models) and is fine-tuned on

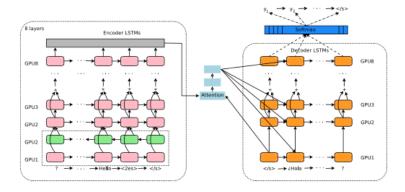


Figure 2.4.: Google's MNMT Architecture (M. Johnson et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016)

the test data in known languages; in the vertical direction, knowledge transfers from known language pairs to the test data in an unknown language.

In our experiments, we use information from our training languages and examine its transferability to the unseen test language. We do not apply any fine-tuning based on our test data and keep our test data entirely untouched by the multilingual NMT model. Our Methodology is thus vertical transfer learning, the same as zero-shot machine translation.

2.2.2. Zero-shot Machine Translation

Zero-shot translation stands for translation between language pairs invisible to the multilingual NMT system during the training time. For example, building a multilingual NMT system with German-English and French-English training language pairs while testing its performance on a German-French scenario. In 2016, M. Johnson et al. (2016) first published their result on a zero-shot MT system. Their multilingual MT system includes an encoder, a decoder, and an attention module. It requires no change to a standard NMT system except introducing an additional token at the beginning of each source sentence to denote the translation target language. Ha et al. (2016) also showed that their universal encoder and decoder model is capable of zero-shot MT. Translation between unseen language pairs is attractive, especially for low-resource language pairs. Compared with a pivot based system, zero-shot translation eliminates the need for a bridging language, or *interlingua*, as an intermediary of the source and target language. However, zero-shot translation still underperforms than pivot-based translation.

Two reasons could explain the gap between a zero-shot system and a pivot based system, language bias (Arivazhagan et al., 2019; Ha et al., 2016, 2017) and poor generalization (Arivazhagan et al., 2019). Language bias means that the MT system tends to decode the target sentence into the wrong language during inference, usually copying the source language or the bridging language (Ha et al., 2016). It could be the consequence of always translating all source languages into the bridging language, making the model difficult to learn to translate to the desired target language (Arivazhagan et al., 2019).

The other potential reason for the worse performance of a zero-shot system is poor generalization. When a zero-shot system is trained purely on the end-to-end translation objective, the model prefers to overfit the supervised translation direction features than learn more transferable language features. There is no guarantee that the model would discover language invariant representations as there is no explicit

incentive to learn language invariant features, resulting in the intermediate encoder representations are too specific to individual languages (Arivazhagan et al., 2019).

To fix these two problems, there has been work on improving the preprocessing process (Lakew et al., 2018), parameter sharing (Blackwood et al., 2018; Firat et al., 2016), additional loss penalty functions (Arivazhagan et al., 2019) and pre-training modules using external information (Baziotis et al., 2020). In some of the improvements, zero-shot system could achieve better performance than pivot based systems.

2.3. Cross-lingual Word Embeddings in Multilingual NMT

In terms of the application of cross-lingual word embeddings in a multilingual NMT system, there are some successful applications such as using the cross-lingual word embeddings as the embedding layer (Artetxe et al., 2017; Neishi et al., 2017), as the substitution of a supervised dictionary (Conneau et al., 2017), or as an external supplementary extension (Di Gangi and Federico, 2017). There are even cases where people successfully trained an MT system using very little or none parallel data (Conneau et al., 2017) and heavily rely on cross-lingual word embeddings.

Qi et al. (2018) look at cross-lingual word embeddings and their performance in a multilingual setting in detail. They find that cross-lingual word embeddings are useful in a multilingual NMT system, while in bilingual NMT systems, pre-trained word embeddings do not necessarily need to be aligned. Qi et al. (2018) attribute the BLEU score increase to the architecture design of the attentional encoder-decoder multilingual NMT system. As such multilingual NMT system uses a single encoder for all source languages, alignment in the word embeddings condenses various vector spaces of the source language into a unified vector space, helping the system learn a much-simplified transform from its input vector space to its output vector space.

3. Methodology

3.1. Experiment Settings

We chose English (EN), German (De), and French (FR) to be the training languages as these three languages are all considered to be high-resource languages. Selecting them as our training languages would enable a wider choice of available training resource for our experiments.

Let Z denote the set of corresponding candidate languages, the training language set is then $Z_{TRAIN} = \text{EN} \cup \text{DE} \cup \text{FR}$. For the test language set, we picked up Swedish (SV) as a low-resource language representation within the same language family of our training languages, Hungarian (HU), and Hebrew (HE) as another two low-resource language examples that do not belong to the same language group as our training languages. Therefore $Z_{TEST} = \text{SV} \cup \text{HU} \cup \text{HE}$.

For each experiment, we trained a basic multilingual NMT system using a training corpus C_{TRAIN} with all three training languages, including all six combinations from the cartesian product without duplicates. Here x and y are both training languages in the training set C_{TRAIN} .

$$C_{\text{TRAIN}} = \{x \times y \mid x, y \in Z_{\text{TRAIN}} \text{ and } x \neq y\}$$

During testing, the multilingual NMT system is tested on the test corpus with all three training languages and one of the test language. The test corpus consists of both translation directions of three different training language and that only test language.

$$C_{\text{TEST}} = \{(x, y) \cup (y, x) \mid x \in Z_{\text{TRAIN}} \text{ and } y \in Z_{\text{TEST}} \}$$

We use BLEU (Papineni et al., 2002) as one of our evaluation metrics, together with 1-4 word gram precison scores to better understand if the transferability only happens at word level or at phrase level.

3.1.1. Corpus and Preprocessing

we use the TED talk subtitle corpus from Qi et al. (2018) to train the multilingual NMT.¹ The whole corpus has roughly 2.7×10^6 sentences split into three parts, train, dev, test at the ratio of 0.95:0.025:0.025.

For preprocessing, since the original TED corpus is already tokenized by Moses (Koehn et al., 2007), we did not add additional tokenization steps. We turned all of the text into lower cases and applied a sentence length filter to remove all long sentences with more than 60 words. After that, when building the index to word (i2w) and the word to index (w2i) table for the pre-trained embeddings, we have also removed words that are less frequent than two times to stop the system from overfitting by low-frequency words.

All of the preprocess functions are built upon the built-in XNMT preprocess features (Neubig et al., 2018). After preprocessing, each of the training corpus has about 480000 sentences and the test corpus is about 70000 sentences across all languages combinations.

¹https://github.com/neulab/word-embeddings-for-nmt

Hyperparameter	Value
Beam size	5
Batch size	32
Dropout	0.1
Optimizer	Adam (Kingma and Ba, 2014)

Table 3.1.: Hyperparameter settings)

3.1.2. Neural Network

Our neural network is a modified version of the one from Qi et al. (2018), which is built with XNMT (Neubig et al., 2018). The only change is doubling the encoding layer to a 2-layer-bidirectional LSTM network, thus having more parameters to accommodate the additional information in a multilingual scenario. Everything else is the same as the original experiment settings, see Table 3.1. We use BLEU score (Papineni et al., 2002) as well as 1-4gram precison scores as our evaluation metrics. The initial learning starts at 0.0002 and decays by 0.5 when development BLEU score decreases (Denkowski and Neubig, 2017).

3.1.3. Embeddings

The embeddings used in the experiments are fastText aligned word embeddings.² They are based on the pre-trained vectors on Wikipedia using fastText (Bojanowski et al., 2016).³ The alignment is performed using RCSLS as in Joulin et al. (2018).

fastText is an extension of the original Word2Vec methods, which uses sub-words to augment low-frequency and unseen words. It also has a large collection of pre-trained embeddings for multiple languages out of the box, making it attractive to cross-lingual word embedding experiments like ours, since researchers can save effort on training and aligning cross-lingual word embeddings while concentrate on experiments themselves.

Each of the fastText word embedding file is language-specific and contains word embeddings in 300 dimensions. We concatenated different language files to build up cross-lingual word embedding files for the multilingual NMT system. The embeddings are forzen during the whole training so that they will remain the original alignment throughout the whole experiments. If there is a shared word with two different vector values in different language embedding files, the average value of both vectors will be used.

In our experiments, there will also be a different attempt where the system treats each word as a unique word even though they might share the same spelling. Both of the results will be available below in Section 4.1.

²https://fasttext.cc/docs/en/aligned-vectors.html

³https://www.wikipedia.org/

4. Results and Analysis

In the results shown in Table 4.1, Swedish, Hungarian and Hebrew all got unanticipated low BLEU scores. Even though Swedish is closer to the training languages, the expected high perfromance from Swedish did not appear in the experiment result. All of the three languages only achieved around 1 BLEU score. Also, since the system hardly translates any of the languages (as examples in A.1), it is hard to tell the relationship between language similarity and the model's performance. However, when it comes to random initialized embedding layers without pre-trained embeddings, cross-lingual word embeddings still provides better initialization than nothing. We see the translation model trained with cross-lingual embeddings performs substantially better (Avg BLEU=1.2) than a model trained with random initialized embeddings (BLEU=0.1).

By looking at individual 1-4 gram precision scores, all three languages had a significantly better unigram precision score than their bigram, trigram, and quadgram precision score. For example in Swedish its bigram precision score in Swedish was about half of its unigram scores. The precision score on trigrams and quadgrams are close to 0 on all languages, which again is a sign showing the multilingual NMT system has little transferability from known training languages to an unknown test language, and that transferability only happens at word level.

We have tried increasing the dropout rate to 0.3 in order to transfer more information from known languages to unknown languages, but we only observed small improvements (average 0.5 BLEU score increase). Since this technique improves the zero-shot performance at the cost of supervised translation directions Arivazhagan et al. (2019), we decided to explore other approaches in below.

4.1. The Effect of Source/Target Language Annotation

Inspired by Blackwood et al. (2018), the first improvement is to alter the way the target language annotation in the source sentences. In the original corpus building script, it will add a custom __{lang_id}__ token at the front of each source sentence, as suggested by M. Johnson et al. (2016). A sentence in the annotated source text whose target language is German would look like

__de__ and we struggle with how to deal with them .

Later two other tokens — a single source token and a source token together with a target token, were added into the experiments. Hence a sentence in English would look like this.

Language	BLEU	1gram	2gram	3gram	4gram
EN+DE+FR	29.22	0.57	0.34	0.24	0.16
SV	1.12	0.16	0.02	0.00	0.00
HU	1.12	0.18	0.02	0.00	0.00
HE	1.02	0.16	0.02	0.00	0.00

Table 4.1.: Initial results for SV, HU and HE on the baseline system (Target language annotation only, dropout=0.3, trained on mixed language branch corpus.)

Languages	TGT	SRC	Full
EN+DE+FR	29.22	17.59	28.73
SV	1.12	0.00	1.16
HU	1.12	0.00	1.12
HE	1.02	0.00	1.02

Table 4.2.: BLEU scores for different language annotations (Target only, source only and full annotation)

Language	BLEU	1gram	2gram	3gram	4gram
EN+DE+FR	1.12	0.16	0.02	0.00	0.00
EN+DE+DA	4.1	0.28	0.07	0.02	0.01
+NL	3.3	0.23	0.05	0.02	0.00
+NO	4.7	0.31	0.07	0.03	0.01

Table 4.3.: Results for language similarity tested on the Swedish language. Three other Germanic languages DA, NL and NO were added one by one into the training corpus.

__en__ and we struggle with how to deal with them .

When it needs to be translated into German, the annotation would then become

__en__ __de__ and we struggle with how to deal with them .

The results are in Table 4.2. Adding a source token together with the target token did not change the overall result much, but removing the target token had a negative impact on the final BLEU score. This observation is in line with previous claims and results (Blackwood et al., 2018; M. Johnson et al., 2016) that the multilingual NMT system requires a target token at the beginning of each sentence to help identify the target language.

Compared with Blackwood et al. (2018), our experiments with altered language annotation did not improved the model's transferability to unknown languages. Even though our target specified annotation also yields the best results, the multilingual NMT model still can not learn to output the correct language since the desired target token remains unseen to the system. Altering target token annotation is not effective in our experiments.

4.2. The Effect of Language Similarity

To deeper undetstand how and why Swedish benefited from its language similarity to our training languages, we have further designed experiments to see the effect of language similarity.

The additional experiments will still use Swedish as the test language while remove French as the training language to homogenize the training language set more towards Swedish. In the previous training language set, French is the only training language that is Romanic. By replacing French with Danish, all of the training languages are now Germanic, as well as the test language Swedish. We have also included two more Germanic languages to the training language set, Dutch (NL) and Norwegian (NO). We began with an experiment trained on English, German and Danish, and added the additional training languages one by one in the next two expriments. Everything else is the same. The results are shown in Table 4.3.

As the results shows, the system gained most improvements when Danish and Norwegian were added. Despite Dutch and Swedish are both Germanic languages, Dutch does not help the multilingual NMT system to learn how to translate from Swedish or into Swedish a lot. This confirms that close languages would benefit each other more than distant languages in a multilingual NMT systemn using pre-trained word embeddings (Qi et al., 2018).

Swedish, Danish and Norwegian have deep historical relationships to each other. As a result, these languages share many vocabularies as well as grammar and syntax rules. To study how much of such kind of benefit were brought by shared vocabluaries or their similar syntax, each word in the training corpus was tagged by its source language token to distinguish its origins. Punctuations are not distinguished among languages, which means they don't receive a language-specific token. The word embeddings also tagged to point it to the correct source word. A Swedish sentence that needs to be translated into German is then

```
__de__ <<sv>>och <<sv>>vi <<sv>>kämpar <<sv>>med <<sv>>dem .
```

The assumption behind the word origin token is that, if the result suffers when each word differs by its origin language, the multilingual NMT system would primarily translate by shared vocabularies between language; if its results still holds after the modification, it would primarily learn translation from shared syntax information instead.

The system has obtained 1.7 BLEU score on the EN+DE+DA to SV experiment. It showed that if each word is no longer allowed to be shared between languages the models's performance would dramatically decrease, hence most of the improvements were brought by the fact that Swedish, Danish and Norwegian have a large amount of common vocabluaries. On the other side, it also indicates that the system didn't learn too much syntactic information during training. Even though these languages have similar grammar structures, the system didn't catch it very well, otherwise we would see smaller BLEU score gap between the results as the close grammar relationship will be preserved in the embedding layer. The multilingual NMT system here primarily learns lexicon translation.

4.3. The Effect of the Transformed Vector Space

In addition to the role of language similarity between the training languages and the test languages, we also hypothesis that the poor transferability of our multilingual NMT model to unseen languages is due to transformed vector space in the translation model. After a series of linear opeartion from the neural network onto the word embeddings, the output vector space is no longer aligned with the input vector space. This is based on the hypothesis that our NMT system have already learned the genrally mapping between words in the source vector space and the ones in the target vector space, even though the correct word in the target word space hasn't been seen by the system during training. However since every cross-lingual word embeddings are grouped by their semantics, the correct target word should also be around the wrong output word.

By looking closely from the predicted translation in Table 4.1, we have observed the contrary — almost none of the words in the output text is translated to the correct word in the desired languages. They were either translated into one of the training languages, or were entirely copied from the source text. The BLEU score gains were from punctuations and a small collection of words shared between languages (e.g. property nouns).

Language	BLEU	1gram	2gram	3gram	4gram
$EN+DE+DA \rightarrow SV$	0.65	0.14	0.01	0.00	0.00
$SV \rightarrow EN+DE+DA$	6.00	0.33	0.08	0.03	0.01

Table 4.4.: Results for individual translation direction between EN+DE+DA and SV.

Taking a step further, when analyzing both translation directions there are other traces to support our transformed vector space hypothesis. We have conducted comparisions on both directions on the Swedish language experiment, as shown in Table 4.4. When translating from SV to the combined EN+DE+DA text, we could achieve almost 6 BLEU scores, which is much better than the nearly zero score when translating from the other direction. Also compared to the combined precision scores on the same experiment from Table 4.3, the results of the translation direction EN+DE+DA \rightarrow SV contributed almost nothing to the combined translation performance. We present the sample output of both directions in Appendix A.2.

Thus, it is highly possible to suspect the output vectors from the model's decoder have been altered and are no longer in the same vector space as the input word embeddings. In this case, the transformed vector space has also made less sense to search for the correct word vector neighbours close to the predicted ouput vector in the output vector space. However, there opens a new possible to translate from completely unknown languages to known languages. We could perform a lexicon replacement based on the Euclidean distance between words in the unknown language and one of the known languages, then feed the processed text into a translation model which has already been trained on known languages. During the whole process, the unknown language remains untouched by the translation model hence it still qualifies as zero-resource translation. We will discuss the lexicon replacement process below.

4.3.1. Lexicon Replacement By Euclidean Distance

Suppose we have a vector space S that contains cross-lingual word embeddings in the unknown language and the known languages, respectively. We donate them as W_x and W_k . For each $w_x \in W_x$, there exists at least one mapping to a target word in the known languages $w_k \in W_k$. We are looking for that specific w_k that are with in a specific radius of the original w_s . The distance should still be relatively small so that w_s and w_k are both considered to be an effective translation of each other.

In theory, to determine the nearyby neighbour w_k , we can use different kinds of metrics. Here we have chosen to use the Euclidean distance where determines the distance between w_s and w_k as

$$d(w_s, w_k) = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (w_{s_i} - w_{k_i})^2}$$
(4.1)

The distance d is a variable here and its value needs to be determined as well. Hence there are experiments to test the distance argument d by different experiments, ranging from d = 0.25 to d = 5.

The algorithm is described in Algorithm 1.

Performing a distance query on a vector space that has more than 3×10^6 vectors is slow, especially when all these vectors are considered to be high dimensional vectors. The code was implemented with SciPy (Virtanen et al., 2019). There are algorhrims like KD-tree (Maneewongvatana and Mount, n.d.) that could reduce the calcualtion time for low-dimensional vectors, but for vectors that are higher than 20

```
Input: hypothesis H, source language embeddings E_s, target language
       embeddings E_t, distance threshold D
Result: Updated hypothesis H' with words being replaced by their neighbors in
       the desired language
Build kd-tree T from E_s for l \in H do each line l in the source hypothesis H
   for w \in l do each word w in line l
       if w is a punctuation then
           skip w;
       else if w is an unknown word then
           skip w;
       else
           query distance d(w, w') for w in T;
           if d < D then
              replace w with the correspoding w'
           end
       end
   end
end
```

Algorithm 1: Pesudo code for output hypothesis word substitution. Each word in the NMT output hypothesis that are not in the desired language will be replaced by its cloeset neighbour in that language.

dimensions it is not necessarily faster than brutal force. On the other hand, based on the Johnson–Lindenstrauss theorem (W. B. Johnson and Lindenstrauss, 1984), a vector space should have at least more than 300 dimensions to distinguish 1×10^6 vectors in it. As the aligned vector space in fastText contains more than 3×10^6 words, the dimensions could not be compressed any more or you are at risk of not be able to distinguish each word. All in all, the script is slow at substitute every word in the output hypothesis into the correspoding one in the desired language.

We have performed the lexicon replacement experiment on the SV \leftrightarrow EN+DE+DA text from the same TED text corpus (Qi et al., 2018), feeded into an already trained translation model based on the NO \leftrightarrow EN+DE+DA corpus, using NO as the pivot language. When applying the previously mention Algorithm 1 on the SV \leftrightarrow EN+DE+DA text, we replace all of the source text started without the target language token __SV_. In other words, we translate all of the source sentence in Swedish to Norwegian first, leaving all of the other source sentences (sentences in EN, DE or DA) untouched. The target translation reference is also remained as is.

The BLEU scores are shown in Table 4.5. In order to demostate the difference of applying the same algorithm on the input and the output vector space, we have also selected result from d = 0 to d = 4 and compared them with the results when Algorithm 1 was performed on the output vector space. The comparision is in Figure 4.1.

From both Table 4.5 and Figure 4.1, we can see a noticeable improvement over the baseline result as the BLEU score doubled. Even compared with the SV \leftrightarrow EN+DE+DA model, the result from the lexicon replacement experiment is still leading ahead for about 2 BLEU scores. Thus it demostrates that our lexicon replacement hypothesis is effective within the input vector space.

¹As descibed on the API document, "High-dimensional nearest-neighbor queries are a substantial open problem in computer science.", https://docs.scipy.org/doc/scipy/reference/generated/scipy.spatial. KDTree.html

d value	BLEU	1gram	2gram	3gram	4gram
$SV \leftrightarrow EN+DE+DA$	4.1	0.28	0.07	0.02	0.01
No replacement	2.99	0.27	0.05	0.02	0.00
0.25	2.99	0.27	0.05	0.02	0.00
0.5	2.99	0.27	0.05	0.02	0.00
1	6.18	0.34	0.10	0.04	0.01
2	6.17	0.34	0.10	0.04	0.01
3	6.17	0.34	0.10	0.04	0.01
4	6.17	0.34	0.10	0.04	0.01
0	6.00	0.33	0.08	0.03	0.01

Table 4.5.: Results for the lexicon replacement experiments with different d thresholds. Tested on SV text using NO as the pivot language on the NO \leftrightarrow EN+DE+DA translation model. d = 0 stands for no threshold control (replace every word).

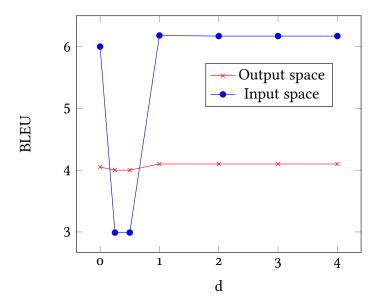


Figure 4.1.: BLEU scores for the lexicon replacement algorithm applied on both the input and the output vector space.

Moreover, the value d will affect the translation model. As we increase d from 0.5 to 1 we see a big translation quality improvement. On the other side, increasing d after d=1 will have no positive impact on the model's performance. When we set d=0 to remove the threshold control its performance even dropped around 0.2 points, mostly due to the lowered bigram precison score. We conclude that there is a sweet spot for the d value, though its accurate value needs to be fine tuned to adapt different source and pivot language combinations.

Finally, when comparing the results of lexicon replacement on the input vector space and the results on the output vector space, we confirmed the output vector space did changed during the translation training process by the model's neural network. Unlike the input vector space, excuting lexicon replacement on the output space does not have a leap on the BLEU score no matter how the distance threshold d changes. Hence it is not worth to perform operations like lexicon replacement on the output vector space.

5. Conclusion and Future Work

In this thesis, we have explored the transferring and generalizability of cross-lingual word embeddings on unknown languages. From the achievement of zero-shot machine translation, we took a step further and expected moderate performance from those word embeddings as if they would transfer knowledge learned from the test languages onto other completely unknown languages. However, our experiment results suggested that only slight knowledge transfer happened between closely related languages, which echoes back to some of the findings that the embedding layer along in a multilingual NMT system is not enough to handle the knowledge transfer (Aji et al., 2020).

To increase cross-lingual word embeddings' transferability in a multilingual NMT architecture similar to M. Johnson et al. (2016), there should be some additional alignment in the output vector space between the source and the target languages. During the training process, the neural network has never seen any positive examples from the test language. Therefore its output weight on the test language has been continuously deducted, which resulted in a transformed output vector space. Such output space is no longer aligned with the input vector space, hence connections between different languages solely rely on shared vocabularies. As a result, only very similar languages such as Swedish, Norwegian and Danish benefited in our experiments.

As we have demonstrated in our lexicon replacement experiments, a solution to align the deviated input and output embedding spaces is to add regularization to the multilingual model's loss function base on the divergence of the two vector spaces. Another potential solution to be explored is to supplement the translation model with language level information such as language embeddings (Littell et al., 2017; Malaviya et al., 2017) together with the cross-lingual embeddings. Language level information could also answer more questions remained in our study. Together with some previous studies (Aji et al., 2020; Qi et al., 2018), we believe the transferability of cross-lingual word embeddings is related to the similarity between the source and the target language, but how to measure the language similarity and link it to the transferability of the embedding layers could be an exciting topic.

Finally, it is worth exploring how other sets of embeddings would enhance the transferability of cross-lingual word embeddings. For example, to try the multilingual contextualized cross-lingual embeddings Devlin et al. (2019) and see if it would benefit the transferability by adding contextual information, or the multilingual sub-word embeddings Heinzerling and Strube (2017) if it would perform better by aligning more words between different languages.

A. Example Output from the Multilingual NMT Model

A.1. Example Output from the Initial Experiment

This sample output is taken from the SV \leftrightarrow EN+DE+FR experiment, described in Section 3.1. Its perfromance result is in Table 4.1.

We haved sampled 20 sentences from the output file. Each of the languages (SV, EN, DE and FR) as the target translation language has 5 examples.

Seg. id	Score	Segment comparison: Deletion Insertion Shift
		Src:sv by the end of this year , there 'll be nearly a billion people on this planet that actively use social networking sites .
1	211/273= 77 %	MT: en fin de cette année , il y aura presque un milliard de personnes sur cette planète qui utilisent activement les sites de réseaux sociaux .
		Ref: i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
		Src:sv the one thing that all of them have in common is that they 're going to die .
2	123/141= 87 %	MT: the one thing that all of them are in common is that they 're going to . Ref: det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
		Src:sv while that might be a somewhat thought , i think it has some really profound implications that
3	208/226= 92 %	are worth exploring. MT: je pense que c'est un peu , je pense qu'il y a des implications très profondes qui sont .
	926	Ref: trots att det kan vara en något morbid tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
		Src:sv what first got me thinking about this was a blog postearlier this year by derek k. miller , who was a science and technology journalist who died of cancer .
4	^{269/355=} 768	ce qui m' a dit , ce qui m' a fait réfléchir , c' était un blog de blog MT: avant cette année par derek 26 miller , qui était un journaliste scientifique et de technologie qui est mort du cancer .
		det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare Ref: i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och teknikjournalist som dog i cancer .
	175/219= 80%	Src:sv and what miller did was have his family and friends write a post that went out shortly after he
5		MT: et ce que miller a fait , il y avait sa famille et amis , écrire un post qui a duré peu après qu' il est mort .
		Ref: det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
		Src:en i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
6	244/305= 80%	MT: now , i 've been able to the following line of conventional income , which is , which are of the lower planet , including , , internet .
		Ref: by the end of this year , there 'll be nearly a billion people on this planet that actively use social networking sites .
		Src:en det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
7	139/163=	MT: now , as common as the , , , , , .
	85%	Ref: the one thing that all of them have in common is that they 're going to die .
		Src:en trots att det kan vara en något tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
8	223/271= 82 %	MT: can actually be able to make , making sure that it would be used to think of the , , , .
		Ref: while that might be a somewhat morbid thought , i think it has some really profound implications that are worth exploring .

		Src:en det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och som dog i cancer .
9	391/427= 92 %	now , you know , it 's common about the that i 've been doing right now in terms of that i do right now , and av : dan k kong , he said ,
		what first got me thinking about this was a blog post authored earlier this Ref: year by derek k. miller , who was a science and technology journalist who died of cancer .
		Src:en det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
10	225/271= 83 %	MT: so miller , he saw 's 's bad samaritan , and he said , " he said , " he said , " i had an of earlier earlier earlier , by the end of hans .
		Ref: and what miller did was have his family and friends write a post that went out shortly after he died .
		Src:de i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
11	194/239= 81 %	MT: ich ford , , die , die planet , die die im internet .
		Ref: zum ende dieses jahres wird es nahezu eine milliarde menschen auf diesem planeten geben , die aktiv soziale netzwerke nutzen .
	102/106=	Src:de det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
12	96%	MT: .
		Ref: was sie alle eint , ist , dass sie sterben werden .
		Src:de trots att det kan vara en något tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
10	228/263=	MT: können auch sein , die .
13	87%	das scheint ein morbider gedanke zu sein , doch ich finde , er liefert Ref: einige ziemlich profunde implikationen , die eine nähere betrachtung rechtfertigen .
		Src:de det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och som dog i cancer .
14	270/328=	MT: , die , die ich , gestern derek miller , im .
	82%	ich denke darüber nach , seit ich dieses jahr einen blog-eintrag von derek Ref: k. miller gelesen habe , der wissenschafts- und technologiejournalist war und der an krebs gestorben ist .
		Src:de det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
15	184/244= 75 %	MT: miller machte die schlechte frau , die , die , die ein .
	, 5 0	Ref: und miller brachte seine familie und freunde dazu , einen eintrag zu schreiben , der kurz nach seinem tod veröffentlicht wurde .
		Src:fr i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
16	^{265/336=} 79 %	j' ai pris la place de la ligne de ligne de la ligne de données , qui les MT: choses en ligne , en gros la planète de la planète , qui l'internet de l' internet .
		Ref: d'ici la fin de cette année , il y aura près d'un milliard de personnes sur cette planète qui utilisent activement les sites de réseaux sociaux .

		Src:fr det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
17	151/193= 78%	MT: la plupart des gens qui ont eu lieu en train de départ , les l'utilisation des de .
		Ref: la chose qu' elles ont toutes en commun est qu' elles vont mourir .
		Src:fr trots att det kan vara en något tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
18	265/313= 85 %	MT: les peuvent être en , en fait , en fait , en fait , les taux de les d'une certaine façon d'une autre manière .
		Ref: alors que ça pourrait être une pensée quelque peu morbide , je pense qu' elle a de très profondes implications qui valent d'être explorées .
		Src:fr det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och som dog i cancer .
19	346/419= 83 %	une fois , l' automne ordinaire , en fait , , en train de faire face à l' MT: origine des classiques , des , j' ai parlé , le titre d' un chien , en le chien connu du cancer .
		ce qui m' a fait penser à ça au départ est une entrée d' un blog écrite il Ref: y a quelques mois par derek k. miller , qui était un journaliste scientifique et technologique qui est mort du cancer .
		Src:fr det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
20	238/286=	MT: le miller a fait de l' origine des de mauvaises , qui les gens qui ont suivi l' impression d' une étude d' origine de l' origine de hans .
		Ref: miller a demandé à sa famille et ses amis d'écrire une entrée qui a été mise en ligne peu après sa mort .

A.2. Example Output from the Directional Translation Experiment

This sample output is taken from the SV \leftrightarrow EN+DE+DA experiment, described in Section 4.2. Its perfromance result is in Table 4.3.

We haved sampled 20 sentences from the output file. Each of the languages (SV, EN, DE and DA) as the target translation language has 5 examples.

Seg. id	Score	Segment comparison: Deletion Insertion Shift
		Src:sv by the end of this year , there 'll be nearly a billion people on this planet that actively use social networking sites .
1	196/252= 78 %	MT: am ende dieses jahres wird es fast eine milliarde menschen auf diesem planeten geben , die aktiv soziale nutzen .
		Ref: i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
		Src:sv the one thing that all of them have in common is that they 're going to die .
2	72/119= 61 %	MT: det ene af dem alle har i fælles er at de vil dø .
	010	Ref: det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
		Src:sv while that might be a somewhat thought , i think it has some really profound implications that are worth exploring .
3	157/237= 66%	MT: mens det måske er en smule tanke , tror jeg , at det har nogle virkelig dybe der er værd at udforske .
		Ref: trots att det kan vara en något morbid tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
		Src:sv what first got me thinking about this was a blog postearlier this year by derek k. miller , who was a science and technology journalist who died of cancer .
4	186/323= 58%	hvad først fik mig til at tænke over dette var en tidligere dette år af MT: derek kenobi miller , som var en videnskab og journalist der døde af kræft
		<pre>det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare Ref: i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och teknikjournalist som dog i cancer .</pre>
		Src:sv and what miller did was have his family and friends write a post that went out shortly after he
5	117/214= 55 %	og hvad miller gjorde var , at hans familie og venner skriver en der gik ud efter , efter han døde .
		Ref: det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
		Src:en i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
6	169/240= 70%	MT: in the early years , it happens to be a of planet as active in the internet .
		Ref: by the end of this year , there 'll be nearly a billion people on this planet that actively use social networking sites .
		Src:en det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
7	93/167=	MT: it like regular beings who have the evidence that they 're going to be .
	56%	Ref: the one thing that all of them have in common is that they 're going to die
		Src:en trots att det kan vara en något tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
8	204/284= 72 %	MT: the of that can prove a thought , i 'm sure that this has consistent consequences , which represents the of the .
		Ref: while that might be a somewhat morbid thought , i think it has some really profound implications that are worth exploring .

		Src:en det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och som dog i cancer .
	203/322=	MT: what struck me was the of the , the was the in the year , av derek 's miller , a , who was in cancer .
9	63%	what first got me thinking about this was a blog post authored earlier this Ref: year by derek k. miller , who was a science and technology journalist who died of cancer .
		Src:en det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
10	185/245= 76%	the miller was doing his fear of his bad samaritan , and the meeting of the was the conversation as the beginning of his accident .
		Ref: and what miller did was have his family and friends write a post that went out shortly after he died .
		Src:de i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
11	179/257= 70 %	MT: ich habe jahre , die einen auf dem planeten , wie die aktiven des internets
	70%	Ref: zum ende dieses jahres wird es nahezu eine milliarde menschen auf diesem planeten geben , die aktiv soziale netzwerke nutzen .
		Src:de det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
12	90/135= 67 %	MT: es ist die , wie menschen die haben , die sie werden .
	6/8	Ref: was sie alle eint , ist , dass sie sterben werden .
		Src:de trots att det kan vara en något tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
13	232/277= O 1 &	MT: , dass es ein , ist , dass es eine solche folgen hat , die die des .
	84%	das scheint ein morbider gedanke zu sein , doch ich finde , er liefert Ref: einige ziemlich profunde implikationen , die eine nähere betrachtung rechtfertigen .
		Src:de det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och som dog i cancer .
14	221/322=	MT: es hat mich , die mich , dass die im jahr alt war , derek e. miller , ein als hund im krebs .
	05%	ich denke darüber nach , seit ich dieses jahr einen blog-eintrag von derek Ref: k. miller gelesen habe , der wissenschafts- und technologiejournalist war und der an krebs gestorben ist .
		Src:de det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
15	168/248=68%	MT: das miller machte sich , dass er schlechte , , wie die kurz nach seinem kopf .
		Ref: und miller brachte seine familie und freunde dazu , einen eintrag zu schreiben , der kurz nach seinem tod veröffentlicht wurde .
		Src:da i slutet av detta år kommer det finnas närmare en miljard människor på denna planet som aktivt använder sociala nätverk på internet .
16	166/236= 70%	MT: jeg år efter at en på planet som aktivt på internettet .
		Ref: når dette år er ovre vil der være næsten én milliard mennesker på denne planet som aktivt bruger sociale netværkssider .
		Src:da det enda alla dessa människor har gemensamt är att de kommer att dö .
17	91/120= 76 %	MT: det som har de kommer til .
		Ref: den ting de alle har til fælles er at de alle dør .

18	184/255= 72 %	Src:da trots att det kan vara en något tanke , tycker jag det har några djupgående konsekvenser som är värda att utforska .
		MT: , at det kan en , så vi l det mig konsekvenser som .
		Ref: selvom det måske er en temmelig morbid tanke , mener jeg at det har nogle meget vidtrækkende konsekvenser som er værd at undersøge .
19	170/306= 56 %	Src:da det som först fick mig att tänka på detta var ett blogginlägg från tidigare i år , av derek k miller , en vetenskaps- och som dog i cancer .
		$_{\mbox{MT:}}$ det som fik mig til at hus ke , var i $\mbox{\mbox{\it ar}}$, derek k miller , en som $hund$ i kræft .
		det som først fik mig til at tænke over dette var et blog-indlæg forfattet Ref: af derek k. miller tidligere i år , en journalist indenfor videnskab og teknologi , som døde af kræft .
	112/206= 54 %	Src:da det miller gjorde var att han bad familj och vänner skriva ett inlägg som publicerades kort efter hans död .
20		MT: det miller gjorde var han dårligt , som kort efter hans .
		Ref: hvad miller gjorde var at få hans familie og venner til at skrive et indlæg som udkom kort efter hans død .

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