

# Scaling Hidden Markov Models

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# Hidden Markov Models in NLP

- ▶ Simplest latent variable models for time series data
- ▶ Are thought to be very poor language models
- ▶ We show they are not!

## Scaling HMMs with Emission Sparsity

# Lessons from Large Neural Language Models

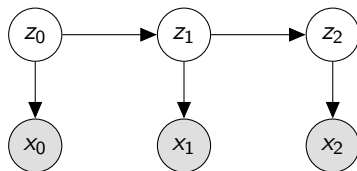
Large models perform better but are . . .

1. Slow to train
2. Prone to overfitting

We must overcome these issues when scaling HMMs

# HMMs

For times  $t$ , model states  $z_t \in [Z]$ , and tokens  $x_t \in [X]$ ,



We wish to optimize

$$p(x) = \sum_z p(x, z),$$

computed via the forward algorithm

### 3 Techniques for Training Large HMMs

- ▶ Block-sparse emission constraints

↑ Speed

- ▶ Compact neural parameterization

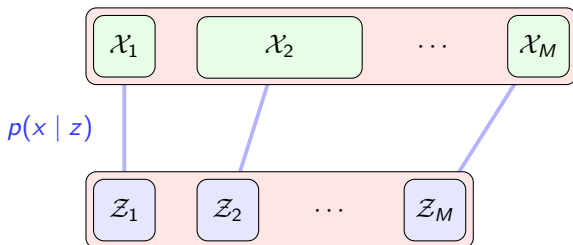
↑ Generalization

- ▶ State dropout

↑ Speed    ↑ Generalization

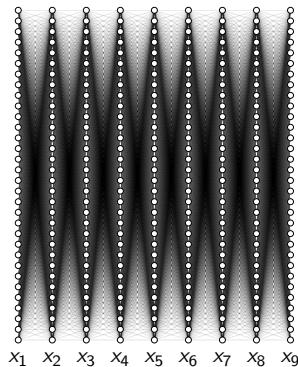
# Technique 1: Block-Sparse Emission Constraints

- ▶ Reduce cost of marginalization by enforcing structure
- ▶ Partition words and states jointly
- ▶ Words can only be emit by states in same group

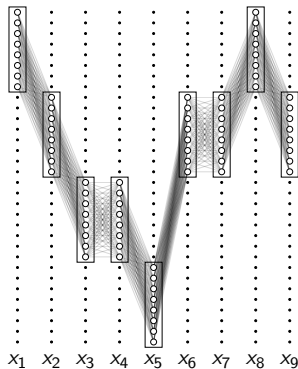


# Block-Sparse Emissions: Effect on Inference

Given each word  $x_t$ , only the states in the correct group can occur



(a) No constraints

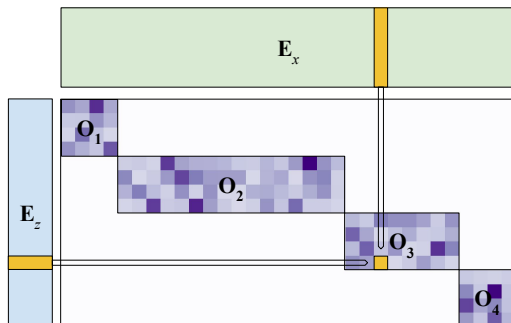


(b) Block-sparse emission



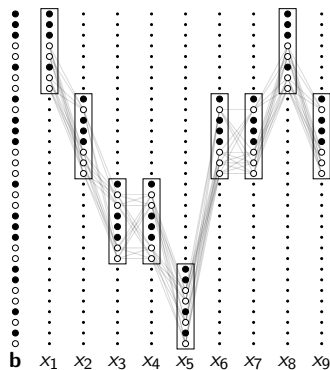
## Technique 2: Neural Parameterization

- ▶ A neural parameterization allows for parameter sharing
- ▶ Generate conditional distributions from state  $\mathbf{E}_z$  and token representations  $\mathbf{E}_x$



## Technique 3: State Dropout

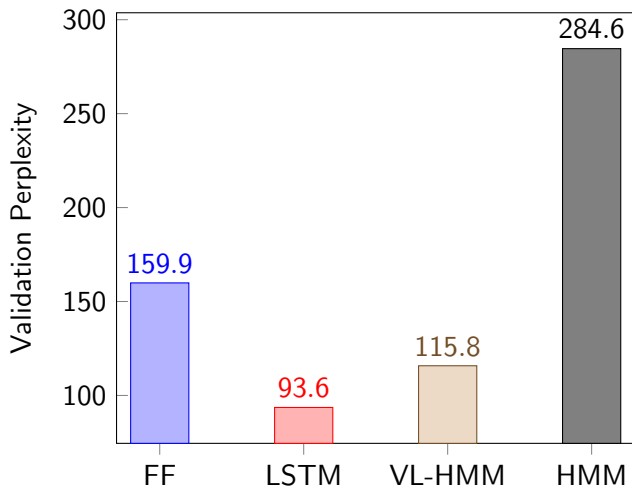
- ▶ State dropout encourages broad state usage
- ▶ At each batch, sample dropout mask  $\mathbf{b} \in \{0, 1\}^Z$



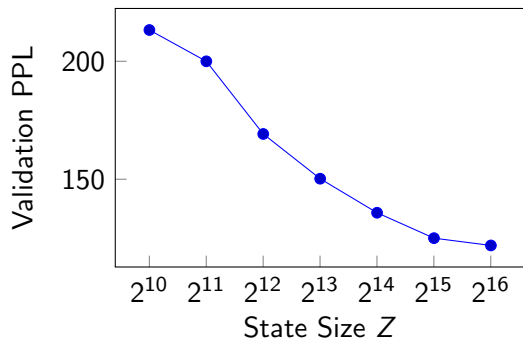
# Experiments

- ▶ Language modeling on Penn Treebank
- ▶ Baselines
  - ▶ Feedforward 5-gram model
  - ▶ 2-layer LSTM
  - ▶ A 900 state HMM (Buys et al 2018)
- ▶ Model
  - ▶  $2^{15}$  (32k) state very large HMM (VL-HMM)
  - ▶  $M = 128$  groups (256 states per type), obtained via Brown Clustering
  - ▶ Dropout rate of 0.5 during training

## Results on PTB Validation Data



## State Size Ablation



Validation perplexity on PTB by state size ( $\lambda = 0.5$  and  $M = 128$ )

## Other Ablations

Model	Param	Train	Val
VL-HMM ( $2^{14}$ )	7.2M	115	134
- neural param	423M	119	169
- state dropout	7.2M	88	157

## Scaling HMMs with Kernel Methods

# Embedded Structure Prediction

- ▶ The previous work relied on emission sparsity constraints
- ▶ Can we scale with weaker assumptions?
- ▶ Reduce the quadratic dependence of inference on number of states to linear with kernel trick



# Generalized Softmax

Focusing on the transition distribution,

- Softmax

$$p(z_t \mid z_{t-1}) = \frac{\exp(\mathbf{u}_{z_{t-1}}^\top \mathbf{v}_{z_t})}{\sum_z \exp(\mathbf{u}_{z_{t-1}}^\top \mathbf{v}_z)}$$

- Generalized Softmax

$$p(z_t \mid z_{t-1}) = \frac{K(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v})}{\sum_z K(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v}_z)} = \frac{\phi(\mathbf{u})^\top \phi(\mathbf{v})}{\sum_z \phi(\mathbf{u})^\top \phi(\mathbf{v}_z)},$$

for positive kernel  $K : \mathbb{R}^d \times \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$  and feature map  $\phi : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^f$

# Inference

- ▶ The key  $O(Z^2)$  step in the forward algorithm:

$$p(z_t \mid x_{<t}) = \sum_{z_{t-1}} p(z_t \mid z_{t-1}) p(z_t \mid x_{<t})$$

- ▶ In matrix form,

$$\gamma_t = \underbrace{\alpha_{t-1}}_{\mathbb{R}^Z} \underbrace{\Lambda}_{\mathbb{R}^{Z \times Z}},$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} [\gamma_t]_{z_t} &= p(z_t \mid x_{<t}) \\ [\alpha_{t-1}]_{z_{t-1}} &= p(z_{t-1} \mid x_{<t}) \\ [\Lambda]_{z_{t-1}, z_t} &= p(z_t \mid z_{t-1}) \end{aligned}$$

# Embedded Inference

- Use generalized softmax in transition distribution

$$[\Lambda]_{z_{t-1}, z_t} = p(z_t \mid z_{t-1}) \propto \phi(\mathbf{u}_{z_{t-1}})^\top \phi(\mathbf{v}_{z_t})$$

- In matrix form,

$$\gamma_t = \alpha_{t-1} \Lambda = \underbrace{\alpha_{t-1}}_{\mathbb{R}^Z} \underbrace{\text{diag}(d)}_{\mathbb{R}^{Z \times Z}} \underbrace{\phi(U)}_{\mathbb{R}^{Z \times f}} \underbrace{\phi(V)^\top}_{\mathbb{R}^{f \times Z}},$$

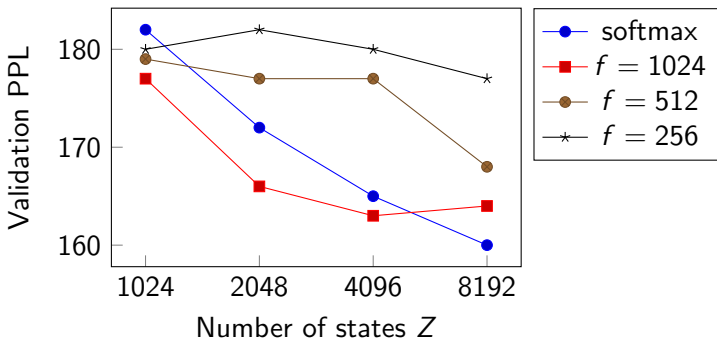
with stacked embeddings  $\phi(U), \phi(V)$  and normalizing constants  $d$

- Takes  $O(Zf)$  time from left to right!

# Experiments

- ▶ Language modeling on PTB
- ▶ Work directly with feature map  $\phi(\mathbf{x}) = \exp\left(W\mathbf{x} - \frac{\|\mathbf{x}\|^2}{2}\right)$ ,  
with learned  $W \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times f}$
- ▶ No dropout or sparsity constraints

## Results on PTB Validation



- ▶ Holding number of features fixed, perplexity mostly improves or remains the same with an increasing number of states
- ▶ Achieve similar performance as softmax with around 4:1 state to feature ratio (also holds for 8k and 16k states)

# Conclusion

- ▶ HMMs are competitive language models
- ▶ Introduced 4 techniques for tackling speed and overfitting
- ▶ A great time to revisit other discrete latent variable models

EOS

# Citations