

# Scaling Hidden Markov Models

April 28, 2021

# Latent Variables Models in NLP

- ▶ NLP benchmarks are dominated by fully observed models
  - ▶ Transformers
  - ▶ Previously, Recurrent Neural Networks
- ▶ We instead explore latent variable models

# Latent Variable Models: Motivation

- ▶ LVMs posit a generative process involving unseen variables
- ▶ Maintain uncertainty over latent representations, rather than just output correlations
- ▶ Often improves interpretability and controllability
- ▶ Bottlenecked by the computational complexity of inference

# Research Question

To what extent is the performance of tractable latent variable models limited by scale and choices in parameterization?

**This work:** Scale hidden Markov models (HMMs) on language modeling using techniques drawn from recent advances in neural networks

# Language Modeling

How now, brown \_\_\_\_\_

- ▶ Given the words seen so far, predict the next word
- ▶ Language requires modeling long-range phenomena

# 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 better than previously thought, once scaled

## Background: Hidden Markov Models

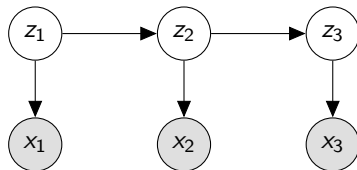
# Hidden Markov Models (HMMs)

- ▶ Classical models for unsupervised per-word tag induction
  - ▶ Part-of-speech induction
  - ▶ Word alignment for translation
- ▶ Admits tractable exact inference
  - ▶ Strong conditional independence assumptions
  - ▶ Finite set of discrete latent states



# Hidden Markov Models (HMMs)

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



This yields the joint distribution

$$p(x, z) = \prod_t p(x_t | z_t) p(z_t | z_{t-1})$$

with

start state	$p(z_1),$
transitions	$p(z_t   z_{t-1}),$
and emissions	$p(x_t   z_t)$

represented as vectors and matrices

# Inference

Given observed  $x = (x_1, \dots, x_T)$  We wish to maximize

$$p(x) = \sum_{z_1} \cdots \sum_{z_T} p(x, z) = \alpha_1^\top \Lambda_2 \Lambda_3 \cdots \Lambda_T \mathbf{1},$$

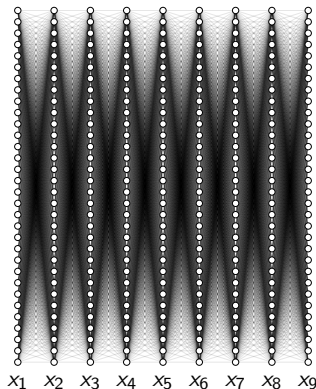
where we have the

$$\begin{aligned} \text{start,} \quad & [\alpha_1]_{z_1} = p(x_1 \mid z_1)p(z_1), \\ \text{and transition operators,} \quad & [\Lambda_t]_{z_{t-1}, z_t} = p(x_t \mid z_t)p(z_t \mid z_{t-1}) \end{aligned}$$

The result of each matvec has the alphas of the forward algorithm, i.e.  $\alpha_3 = \alpha_1 \Lambda_2 \Lambda_3$  has entries corresponding to  $p(z_3, x_{1:3})$

# Inference

$$p(x) = \alpha_1^\top \Lambda_2 \cdots \Lambda_T \mathbf{1}$$



- ▶ Each node corresponds to a state
- ▶ Each edge to an entry in the transition operator matrix

## Scaling HMMs

# 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

### 3 Techniques for Training Large HMMs

- ▶ Compact neural parameterization

↑ Generalization

- ▶ State dropout

↑ Speed    ↑ Generalization

- ▶ Block-sparse emission constraints

↑ Speed

- ▶ Will cover a fourth in the second part of this talk

## Technique 1: Neural Parameterization

- ▶ The transition and emission matrices have  $Z^2$  and  $ZX$  entries
- ▶ Causes the number of parameters to explode as the state size increases
- ▶ We instead use a low-dimensional decomposition of all conditional distributions that greatly reduces the number of parameters

# Neural Parameterization: Softmax

For both the transition and emission matrices, we use a softmax parameterization, which assumes a nonlinear  $D$ -dimensional decomposition

$$W \propto \exp \left( U \times V^T \right)$$

with embeddings  $U \in \mathbb{R}^{Z \times D}$ ,  $V \in \mathbb{R}^{Z \times D}$  or  $\mathbb{R}^{X \times D}$

- Can further parameterize  $U$  or  $V = \text{MLP}(E_u)$



## Technique 2: State Dropout

- ▶ Dropout is a common technique for regularizing neural networks
  - ▶ Reduces a network's reliance on a particular neuron
- ▶ Extend dropout to the states of an HMM
  - ▶ Encourage broad utilization of all states

# State Dropout

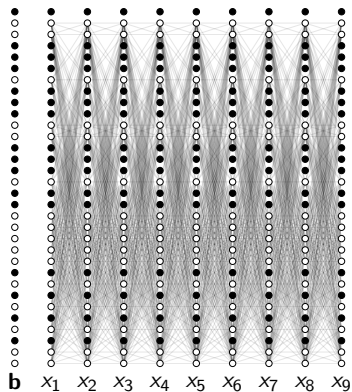
- ▶ At each batch, sample dropout mask  $\mathbf{b} \in \{0, 1\}^Z$
- ▶ Compute distributional parameters by indexing into embeddings  $U, V$

$$\left( \mathbf{b} \circ \begin{array}{|c|} \hline U_{\text{trans}} \\ \hline \end{array} \right) \times \left( \mathbf{b} \circ \begin{array}{|c|} \hline V_{\text{trans}} \\ \hline \end{array} \right)^{\top} \quad \left( \mathbf{b} \circ \begin{array}{|c|} \hline U_{\text{emit}} \\ \hline \end{array} \right) \times \begin{array}{|c|} \hline V_{\text{emit}}^{\top} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

(a) Unnormalized transition logits

(b) Unnormalized emission logits

# State Dropout: Inference



- ▶ Shaded nodes depict dropped states
- ▶ Ignore dropped states during inference

## Technique 3: Block-Sparse Emission Constraints

- ▶ Reduce cost of marginalization by enforcing structure
- ▶ Only allow each word to be emit by a subset of states
- ▶ Cost of inference is quadratic in the size of the largest subset due to sparsity

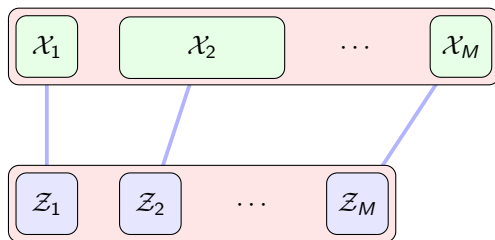
# Block-Sparse Emission Constraints: Alignment

Start with a joint partitioning of both states and words

Indices  $m \in [M]$

State partitions  $\mathcal{Z}_m$

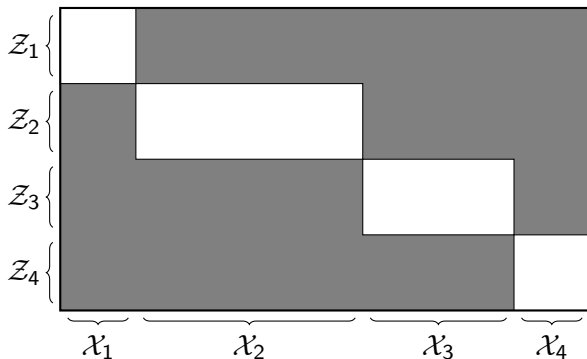
Word partitions  $\mathcal{X}_m$



# Block-Sparse Emission Constraints

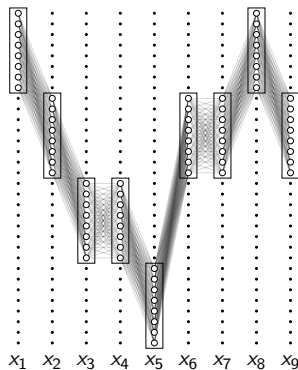
Given the unnormalized emission logit matrix,

- ▶ Mask out state-word entries in matrix
- ▶ Normalize rows across words in aligned partition

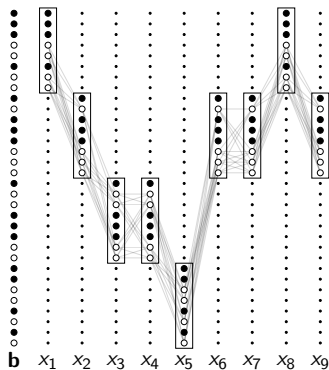


# Block-Sparse Emissions: Inference

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



(a) Block-sparse emission



(b) With state dropout

# Method Recap

- ▶ Compact neural parameterization

↑ Generalization

- ▶ State dropout

↑ Speed    ↑ Generalization

- ▶ Block-sparse emission constraints

↑ Speed

- ▶ A fourth after experiments

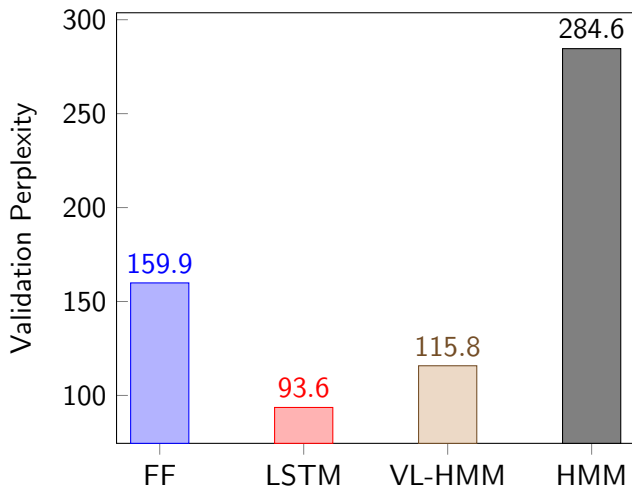


## Experiments

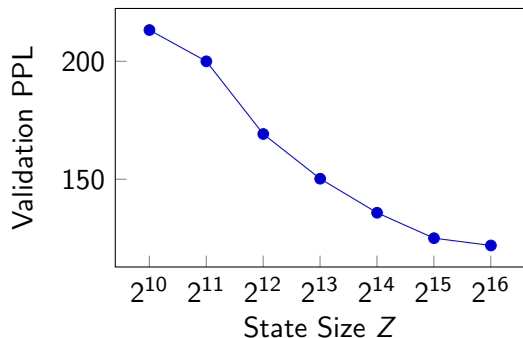
# Experiments

- ▶ 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

# Discussion

- ▶ Greatly scaled the state size of HMMs
- ▶ Performance improved with increasing state size
- ▶ Still a large gap between RNNs and HMMs
- ▶ Does the emission sparsity constraint improve computation complexity at the price of accuracy?

# Speeding up HMMs with Low-Rank Decompositions

# Fast Inference with Low-Rank Decompositions

- ▶ The previous approach relied a pre-specified emission sparsity constraint
- ▶ Can we scale inference with a weaker constraint?
- ▶ Exploit structure in the transition matrix to speed up inference



# Inference

Start by unpacking inference to reveal the most expensive step

$$p(x) = \alpha_1^\top \Lambda_2 \Lambda_3 \cdots \Lambda_T \mathbf{1}$$

with

$$\begin{aligned} \text{start,} \quad & [\alpha_1]_{z_1} = p(x_1 \mid z_1)p(z_1), \\ \text{and transition operators,} \quad & [\Lambda_t]_{z_{t-1}, z_t} = p(x_t \mid z_t)p(z_t \mid z_{t-1}) \end{aligned}$$

# Inference

Decompose transition operators into transition matrix  $A$  and emission matrix  $O$

$$\begin{aligned} p(x) &= \alpha_1^\top \Lambda_2 \cdot \Lambda_T \mathbf{1} \\ &= \alpha_1^\top (A \operatorname{diag}([O]_{\cdot, x_2})) \cdots \Lambda_T \mathbf{1} \\ &= \alpha_1^\top A \operatorname{diag}([O]_{\cdot, x_2}) \cdots A \operatorname{diag}([O]_{\cdot, x_T}) \mathbf{1} \end{aligned}$$

where the most expensive steps are the matrix-vector products  $\alpha_t^\top A$ , which take  $O(Z^2)$  computation

# Fast Matrix-Vector Products

- ▶ Goal is to reduce the naive matvec complexity of  $O(Z^2)$
- ▶ Various methods
  - ▶ Sparsity (nnz entries)
  - ▶ Fast Fourier Transform ( $Z \log Z$ )
  - ▶ Low-Rank decomposition ( $ZR$ )
- ▶ We utilize low-rank decompositions

# Low-Rank Factorization

Factor transition matrix  $A$  into product of skinny matrices

$$\boxed{\alpha^\top} \times \boxed{A} = \boxed{\alpha^\top} \times \boxed{U} \times \boxed{V^\top}$$

resulting in two matrix-vector products of cost  $O(ZR)$  each

- ▶ Constraint: Entries of  $A$  must be nonnegative
- ▶ Solution: Use a nonnegative matrix factorization (NMF)

$$A = \phi(U)\phi(V)^\top,$$

with  $\phi : \mathbb{R}^D \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$

## Method Recap

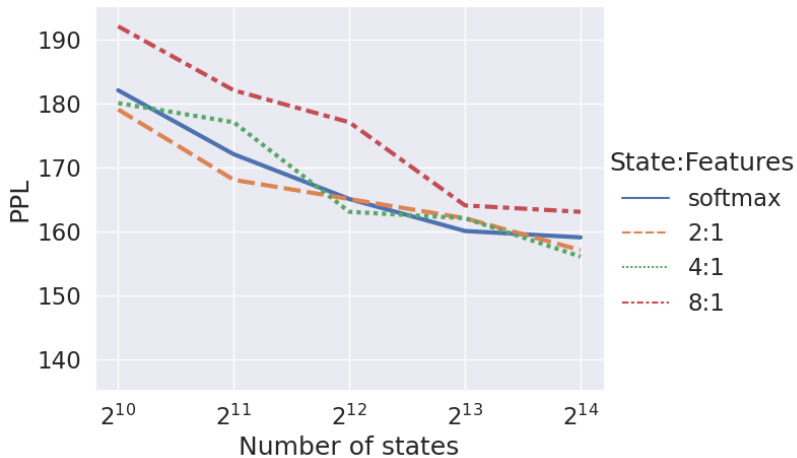
- ▶ Target key  $O(Z^2)$  matvec step in inference
- ▶ Use NMF to reduce cost to  $O(ZR)$
- ▶ How small can  $R$  be relative to  $Z$  without sacrificing accuracy?

## Experiments

# Experiments

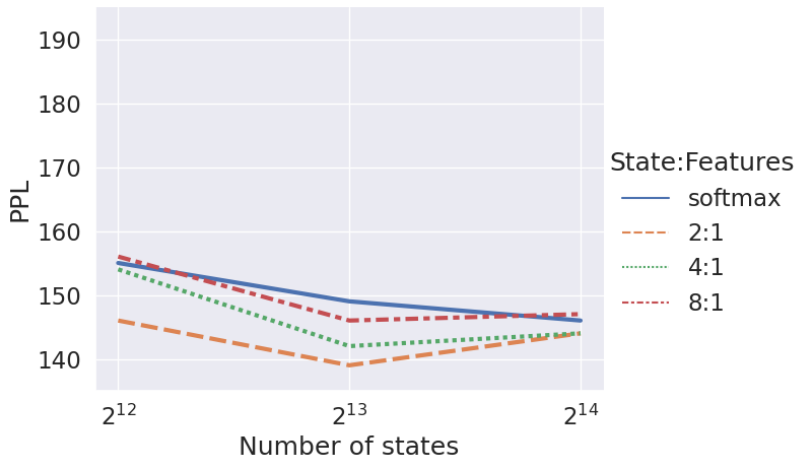
- ▶ Language modeling on PTB
- ▶ Feature map  $\phi(\mathbf{x}) = \exp(W\mathbf{x})$ , with learned  $W \in \mathbb{R}^{D \times R}$
- ▶ No sparsity constraints

Asdf

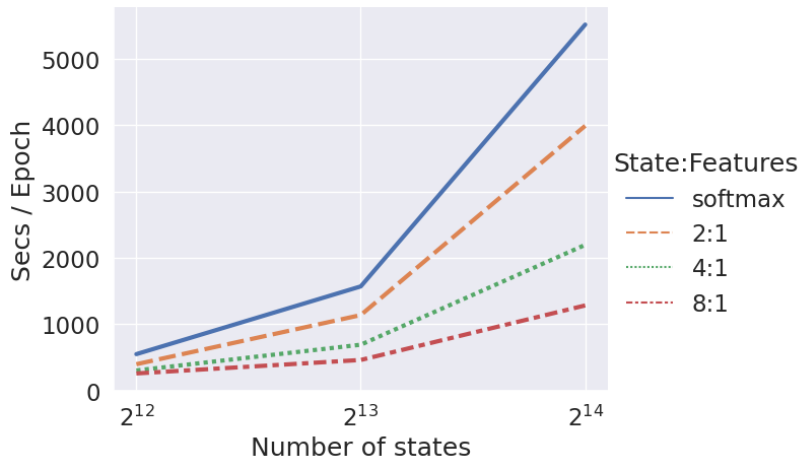




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# Conclusion

- ▶ Hopeful that HMMs can be competitive language models
- ▶ Introduced 4 techniques for tackling speed and overfitting
- ▶ Future work will extend to other discrete latent variable models

EOS

# Citations

# Generalized Softmax

- 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  $\phi : \mathbb{R}^D \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^R$

# Generalized Softmax: Inference

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

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

- ▶ In matrix form,

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

where we have the probability of the

current state,	$[\gamma_t]_{z_t} = p(z_t \mid x_{<t}),$
last state,	$[\alpha_{t-1}]_{z_{t-1}} = p(z_{t-1} \mid x_{<t}),$
transition probability,	$[\Lambda]_{z_{t-1}, z_t} = p(z_t \mid z_{t-1})$

## Generalized Softmax: Inference

- ▶ Use generalized softmax in transition distribution

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

- ▶ Allows us to apply associative property of matrix multiplication

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

with stacked embeddings  $\phi(U), \phi(V) = [\phi(\mathbf{v}_1), \dots, \phi(\mathbf{v}_Z)]$   
and normalizing constants  $d$

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