

Challenges and Remedies for Context-Aware Neural Machine Translation

Lorenzo Lupo



Outline

1. Introduction

2. Multi-encoding approaches

- a. Lupo, L., Dinarelli, M. and Besacier, L., **Divide and Rule: Effective Pre-Training for Context-Aware Multi-Encoder NMT**, ACL 2022.

3. Concatenation approaches

- a. Lupo, L., Dinarelli, M. and Besacier, L., **Focused Concatenation for Context-Aware NMT**, WMT 2022.
- b. Lupo, L., Dinarelli, M. and Besacier, L., **Encoding Sentence Position in Context-Aware NMT with Concatenation**, Insights 2023.

4. Conclusions

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4. **Conclusions**

Context-aware NMT: why?

ENGLISH



FRENCH

Good morning Mr. President, how are you today?



Bonjour Monsieur le Président, comment allez-vous
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trial date: November 2022

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Context-aware NMT: why?

Research showed that a crucial challenge for neural machine translation (NMT) **to reach human quality** is the ability to **exploit inter-sentential context** - the preceding or following sentences in the same document
[Läubli et al., 2018; Toral et al., 2018; Castilho et al., 2020]

Context-aware NMT: what?

Source document

$$X = \{x^1, x^2, \dots, x^{|X|}\}$$

Target document

$$Y = \{y^1, y^2, \dots, y^{|Y|}\}$$

Context-aware NMT: what?

Problem

$$P_{\theta}(Y|X) = \prod_{j=1}^{|X|} \prod_{t=1}^{|y|} P_{\theta}(y_t^j | y_{<t}^j, \mathbf{x}^j, context)$$

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- All the available sentences in the parallel document.
- The parallel document and its meta-data:
 - author's information;
 - date of the writing;
 - domain of the writing;
 - visual context.

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- A few neighbouring sentences.

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Most existing approaches use a few preceding sentences [Maruf et al., 2021], where most of the disambiguating information is present [Castilho et al., 2020].

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Training corpus

$$\mathcal{C} = \{(X^1, Y^1), (X^2, Y^2), \dots, (X^D, Y^D)\}$$

Training objective

$$\operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_{d \in \mathcal{C}} -\log P_{\theta}(Y^d | X^d)$$

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Context-aware NMT: how? [Kim et al., 2019]

Concatenation

Multi-encoding

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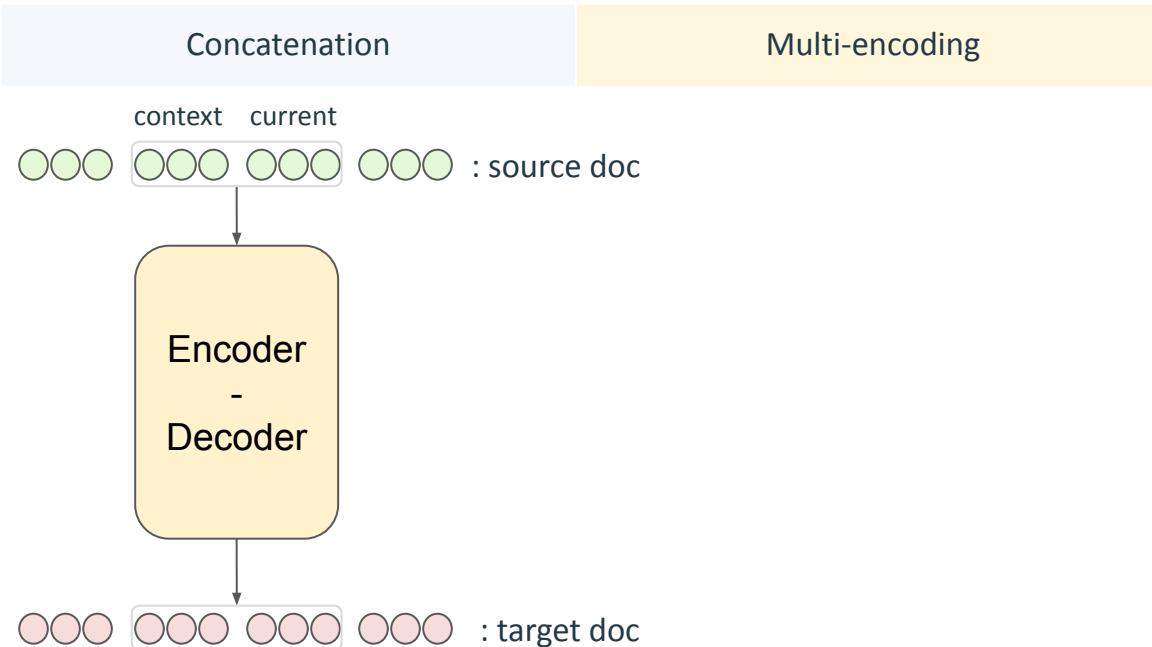
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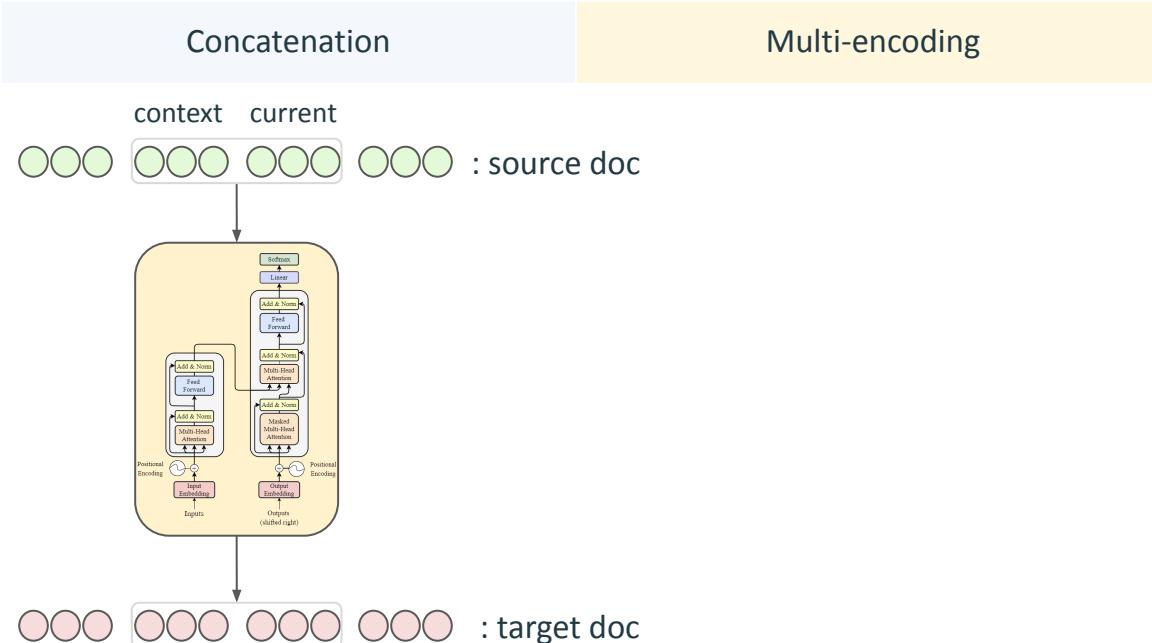
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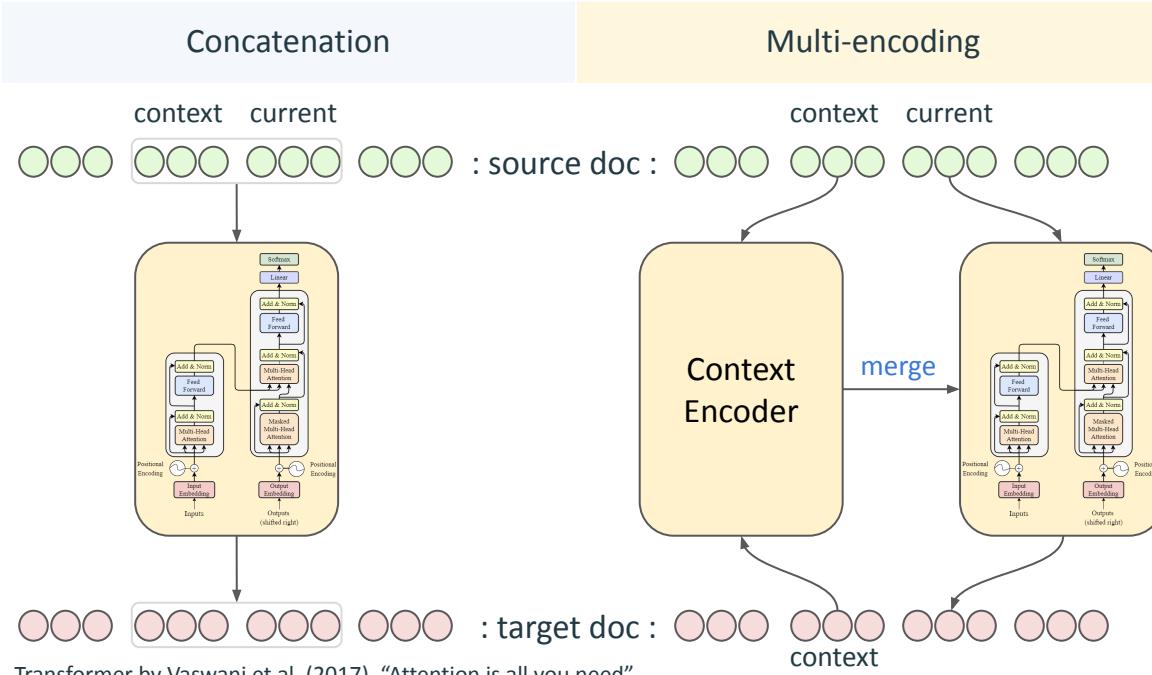


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Transformer by Vaswani et al. (2017), “Attention is all you need”.

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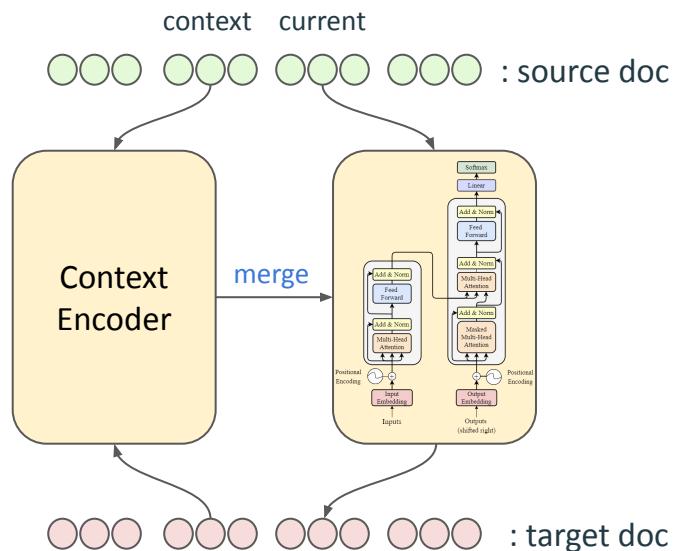
Objectives

1. **Identify challenges** in both multi-encoding and concatenation approaches.
2. **Propose remedies** to tackle the challenges identified.
3. **Improve understanding** through the analysis of the proposed solutions.

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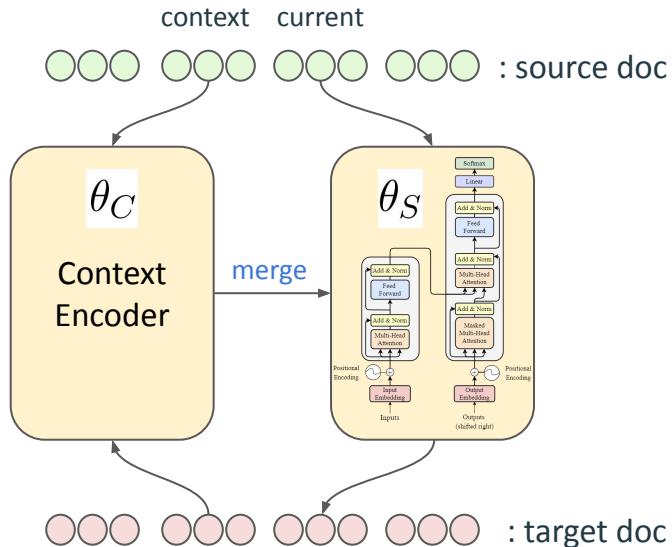
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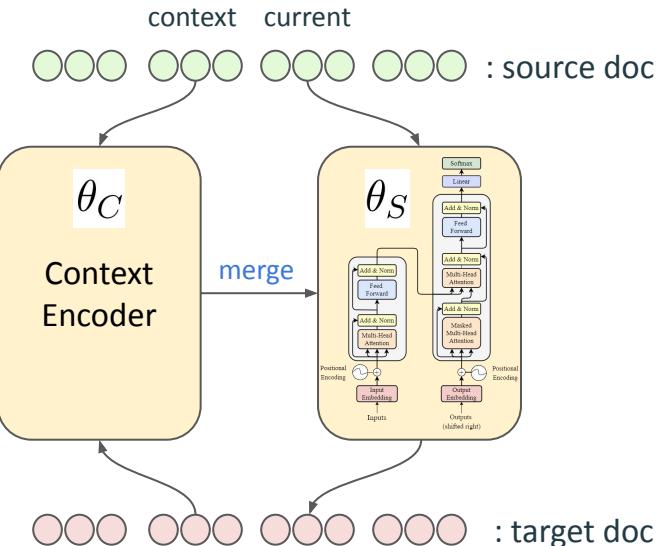
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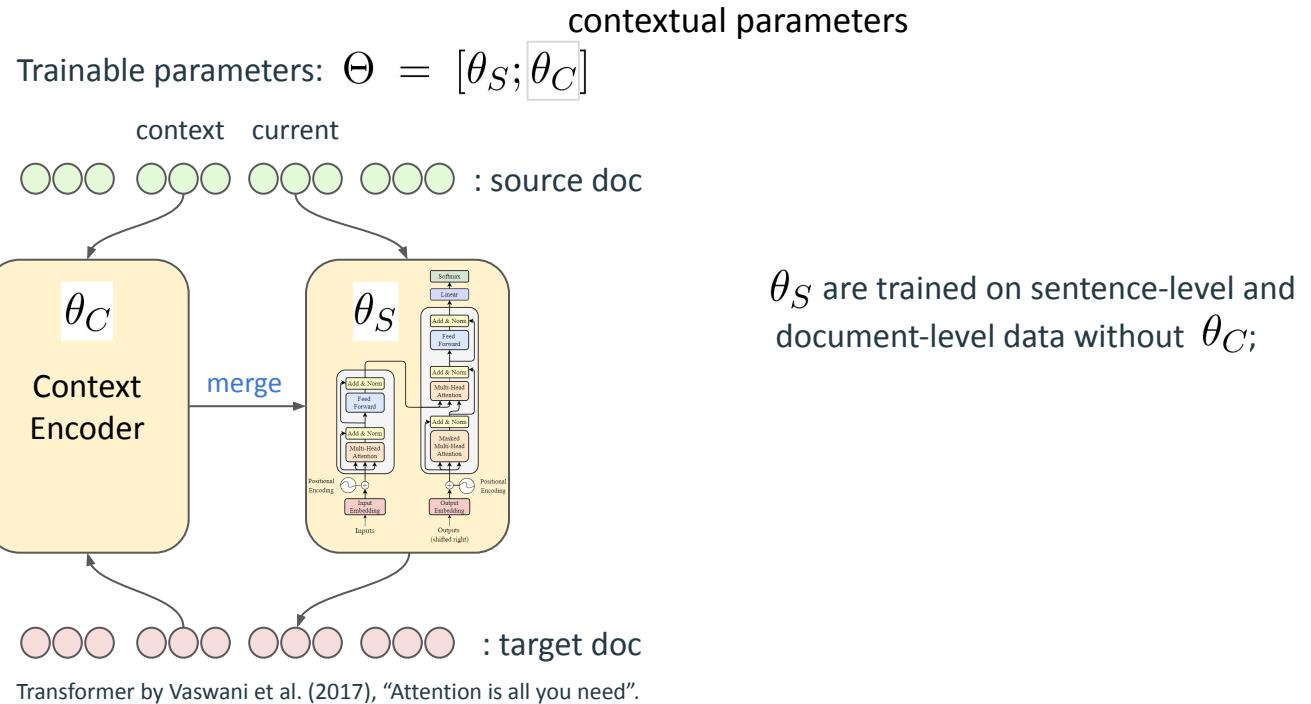
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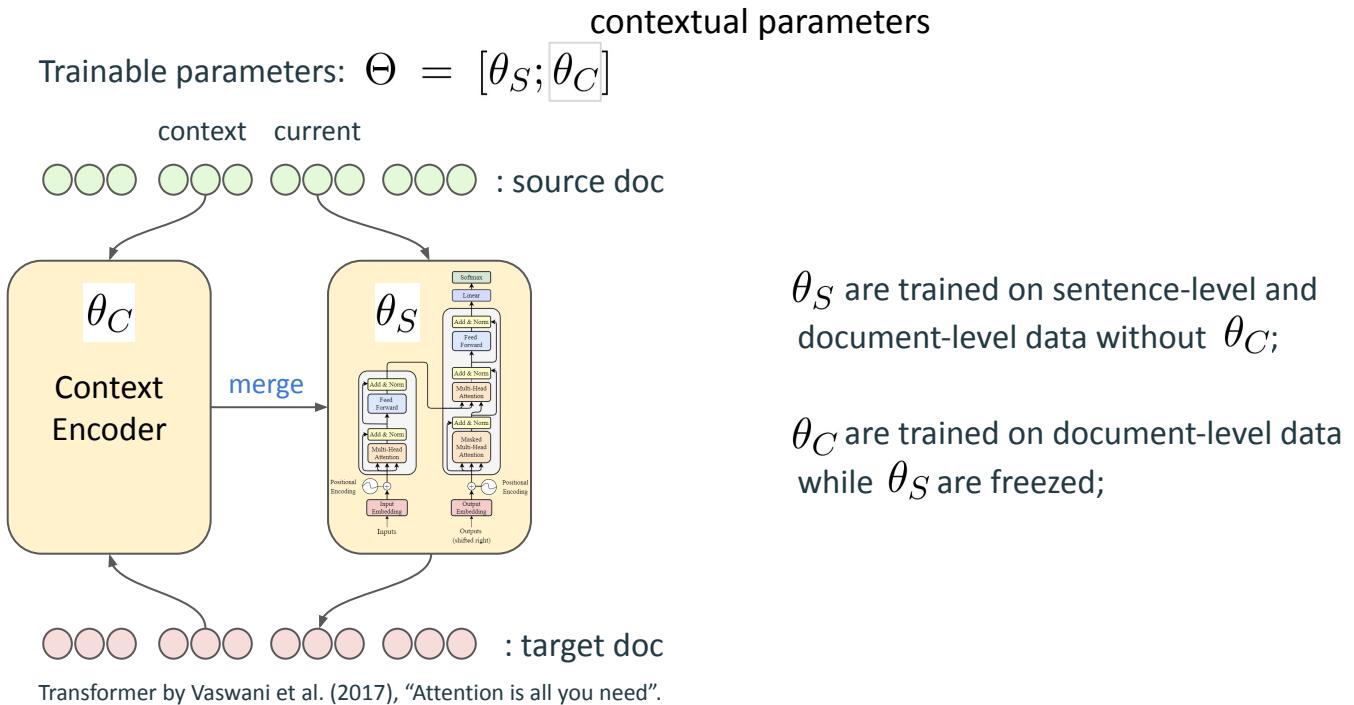


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Multi-encoding approaches



Multi-encoding approaches



Multi-encoding approaches

Strengths	Weaknesses
Efficient generation and processing with self-attention.	More parameters.
Self-attention is not <i>distracted</i> by context [Bao et al., 2021]: it can focus on intra-sentential linguistic relationships, which are the most important.	Kim et al. (2019), Li et al. (2020) and Lopes et al. (2020) found multi-encoding approaches to underperform context-agnostic NMT.

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Trivial solution: more data?

However:

- Document-level parallel data are scarcely available.
- **Inefficient** because of the double challenge of sparsity.

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We propose a solution that addresses the double challenge of sparsity **directly**:

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Good morning Mr. President, how are you today ?

y_j

Bonjour Monsieur le Président, comment allez-vous aujourd' hui ?

$$\forall (x_j, y_j) \in C_{\text{train}}$$

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Proof of concept

How does the distribution of pronominal antecedents change when sentences are split in a half?



Density of pronominal antecedents by distance;
Opensubs18. $\text{Density} = \text{occurrences} / \# \text{tokens to attend}$.

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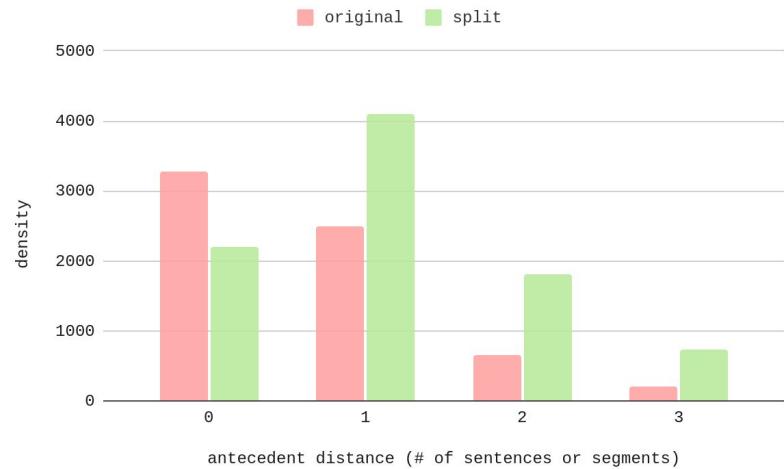


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2. **Denser cases of pronominal antecedents** because training sequences become shorter:
 - reduced sparsity of relevant context.



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Experimental Setup

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base: Transformer-base with parameters θ_S ;

K1: current sentence + 1 past **source context** sentences;

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3 language pairs: English → Russian/German/French.

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BLEU on test set.

[Papinei et al., 2020]

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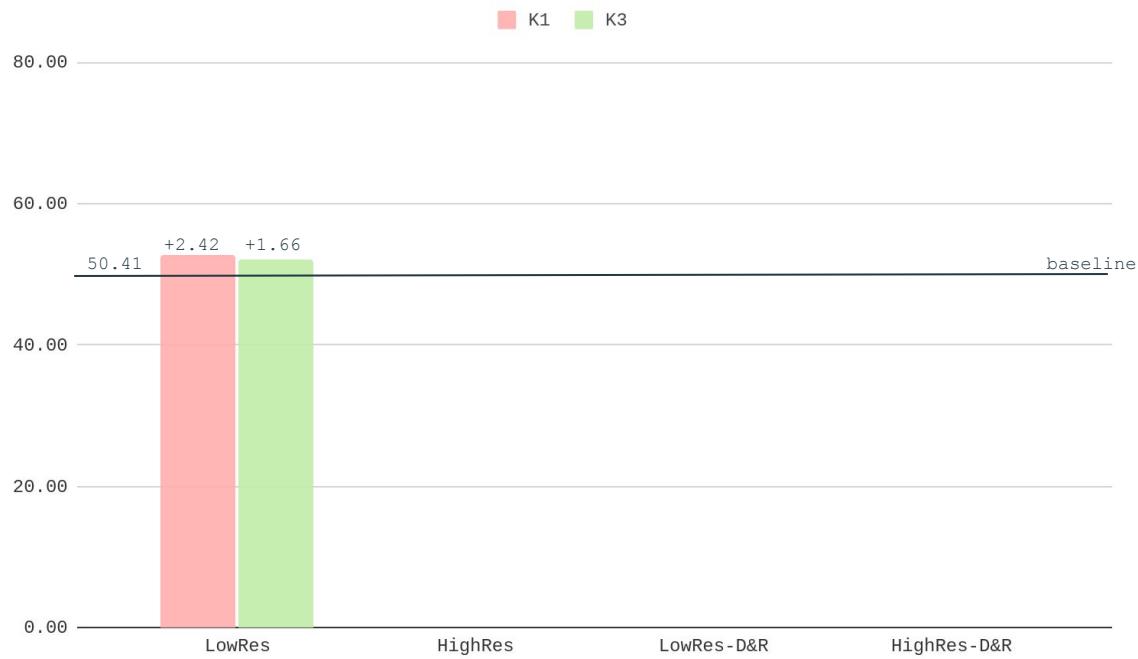
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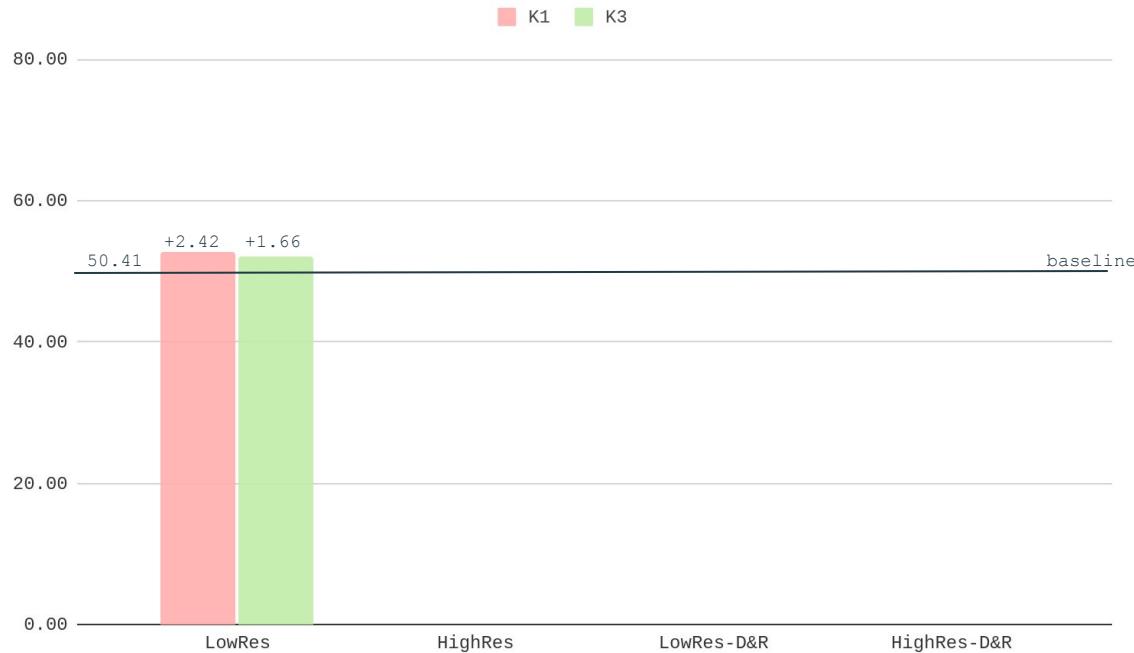
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- + Accuracy on **contrastive test sets** for the evaluation of discourse phenomena disambiguation.
 - **ContraPro** (En-De/Fr): anaphoric pronouns [Muller et al., 2018; Lopes et al., 2020].
 - **Voita** (En-Ru): verb-phrase ellipsis [Voita et al., 2019].



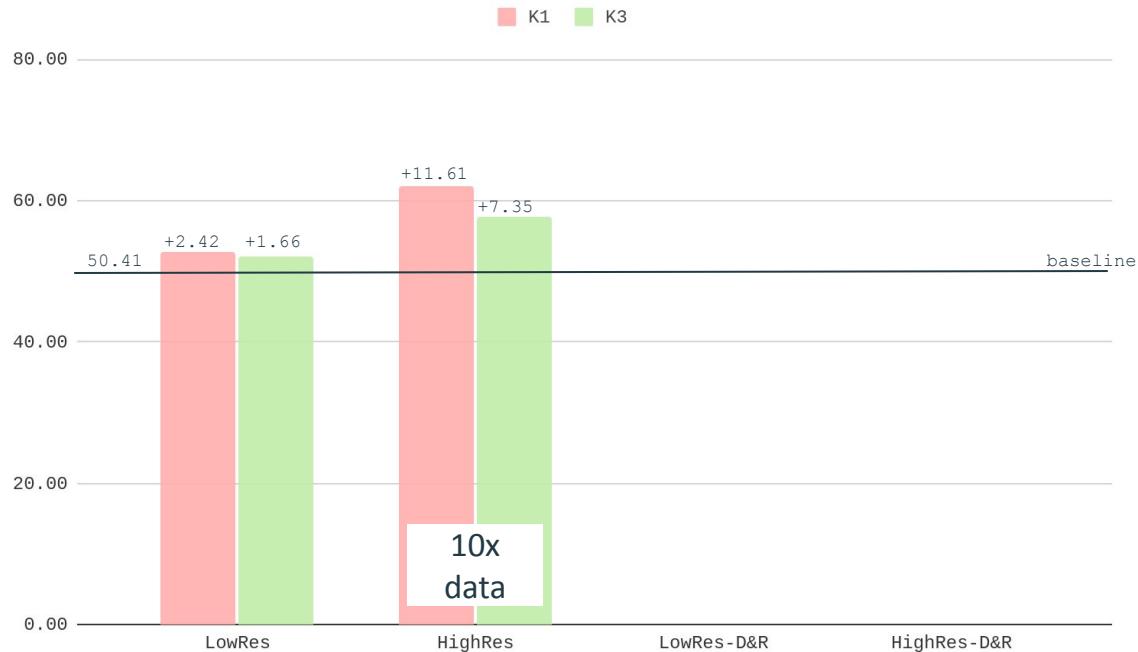
Accuracy on contrastive test sets for the translation of discourse phenomena, averaged across
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Low Res is not enough



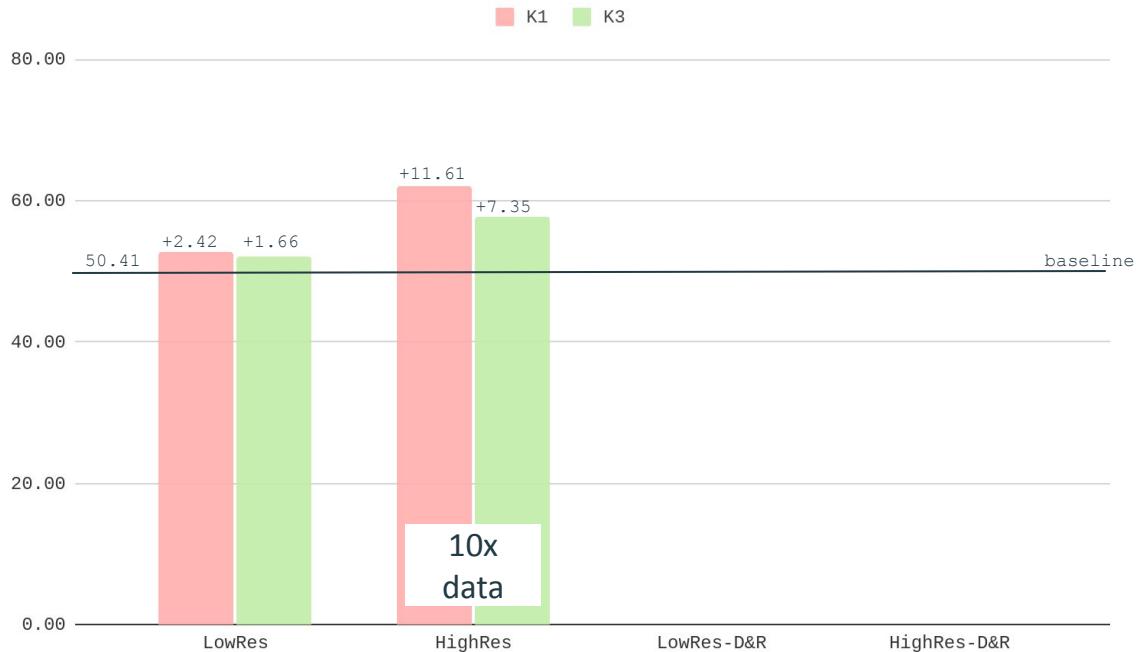
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Many works in the literature trained and compared multi-encoding models on IWSLT.

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Divide and Rule is an **efficient solution**



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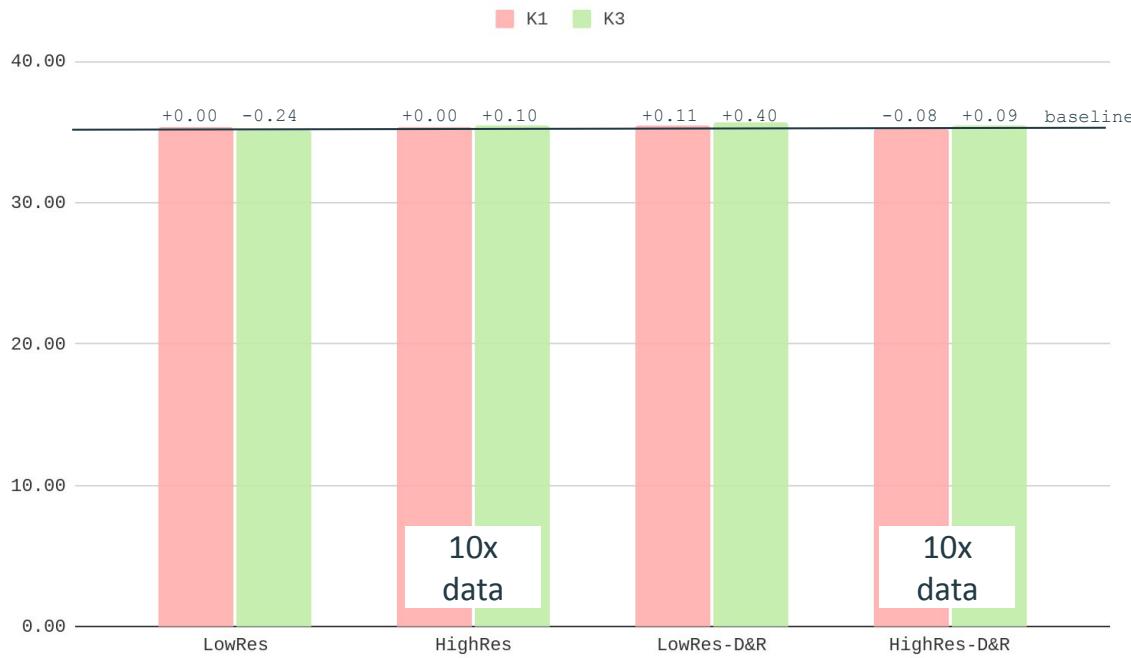


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BLEU is virtually constant across the training settings.

→ Average translation quality is constant while the modeling of inter-sentential discourse phenomena is improving.

Where to split?

Middle

Good morning Mr. President , how are you today ?

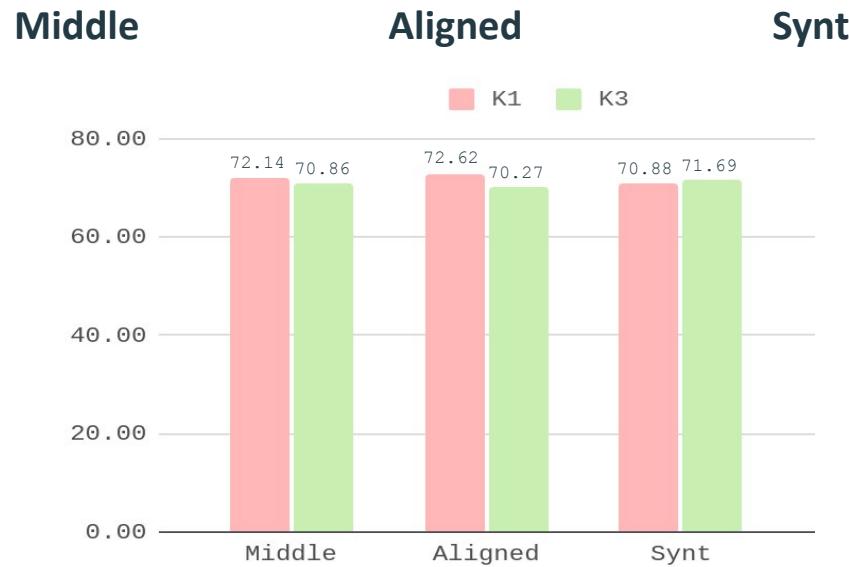
Bonjour Monsieur le Président , comment allez-vous aujourd' hui ?



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Where to split?



Accuracy on targeted test sets for the translation of coreferential pronouns, averaged across En → De/Fr language pairs

Where to split?

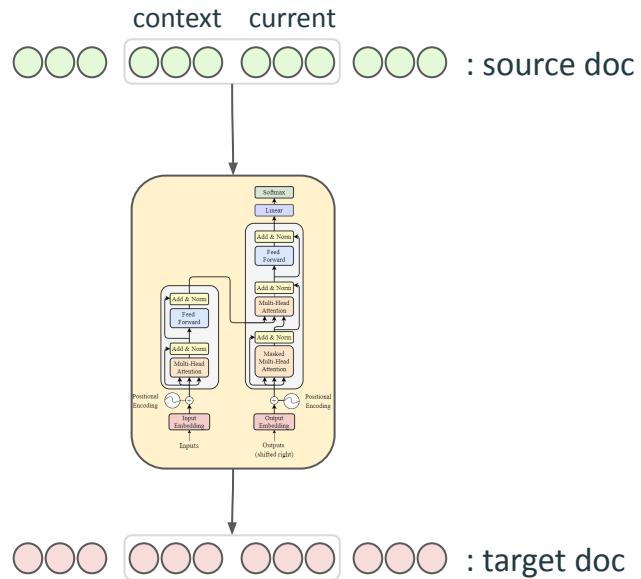


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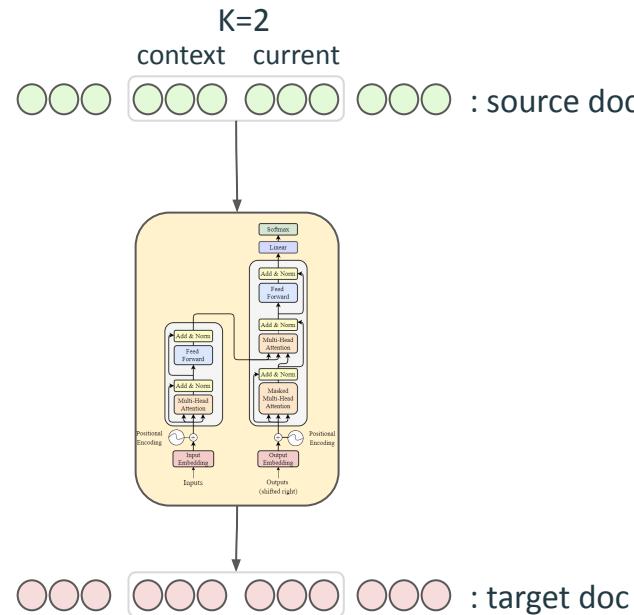
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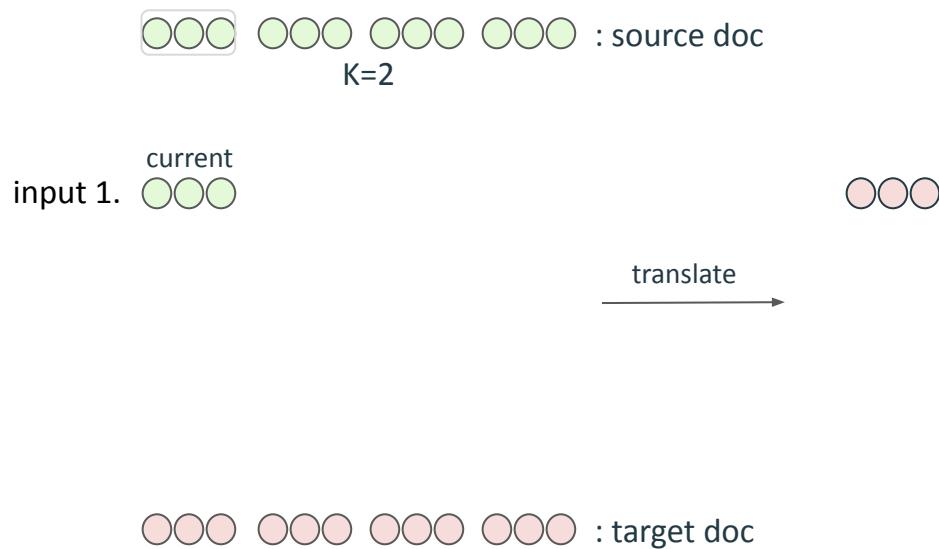
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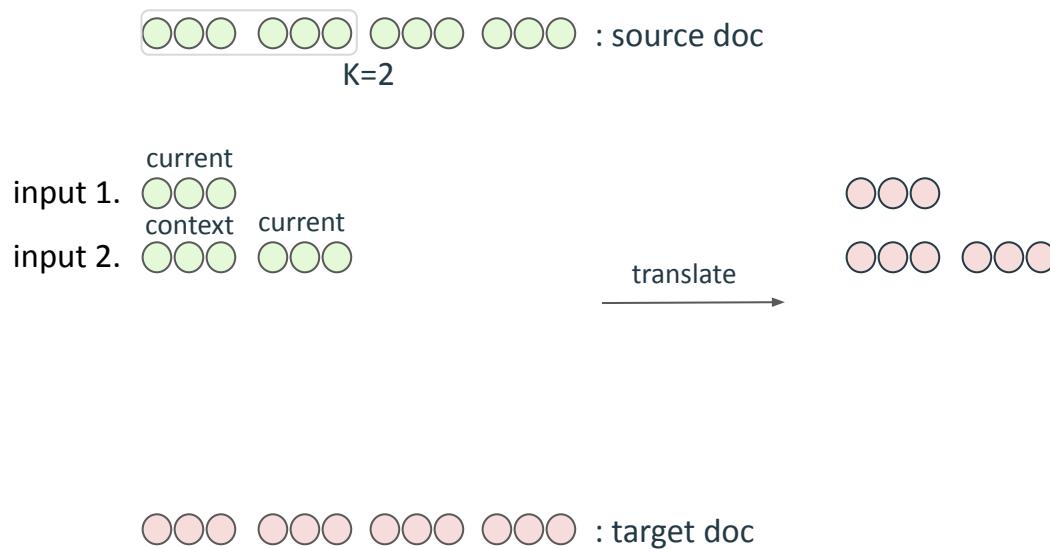
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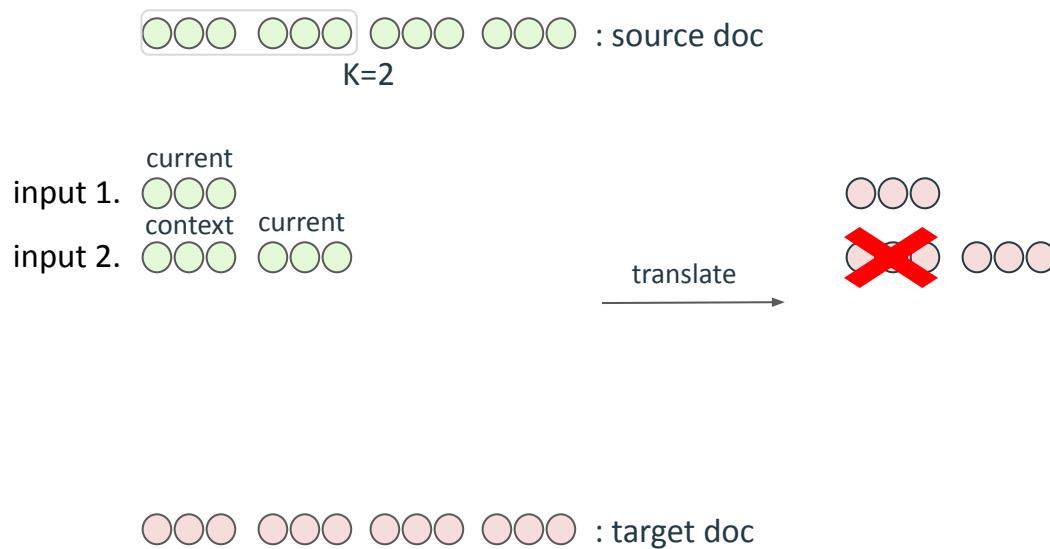
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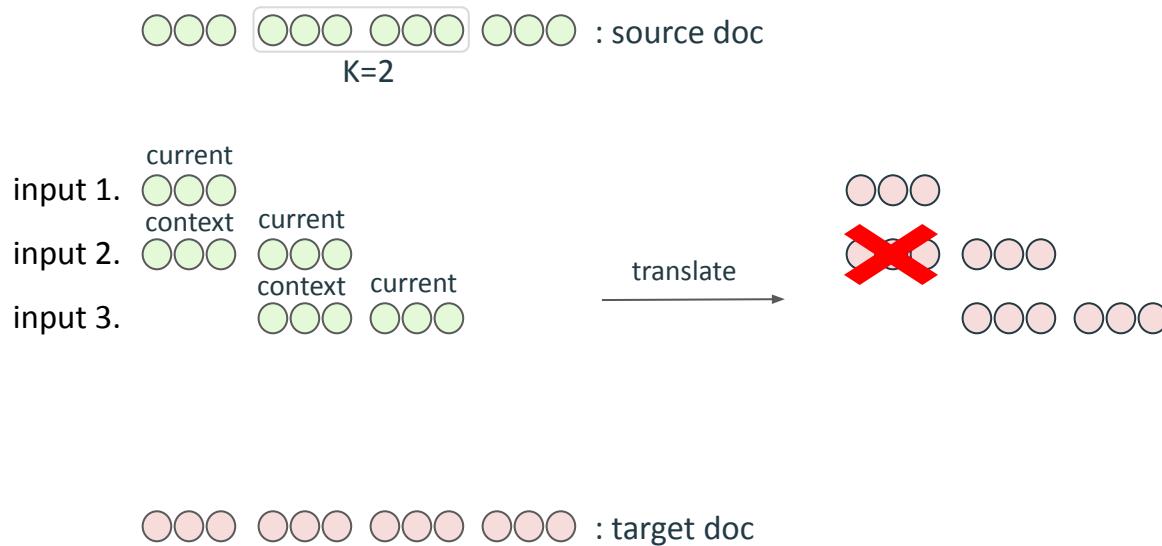
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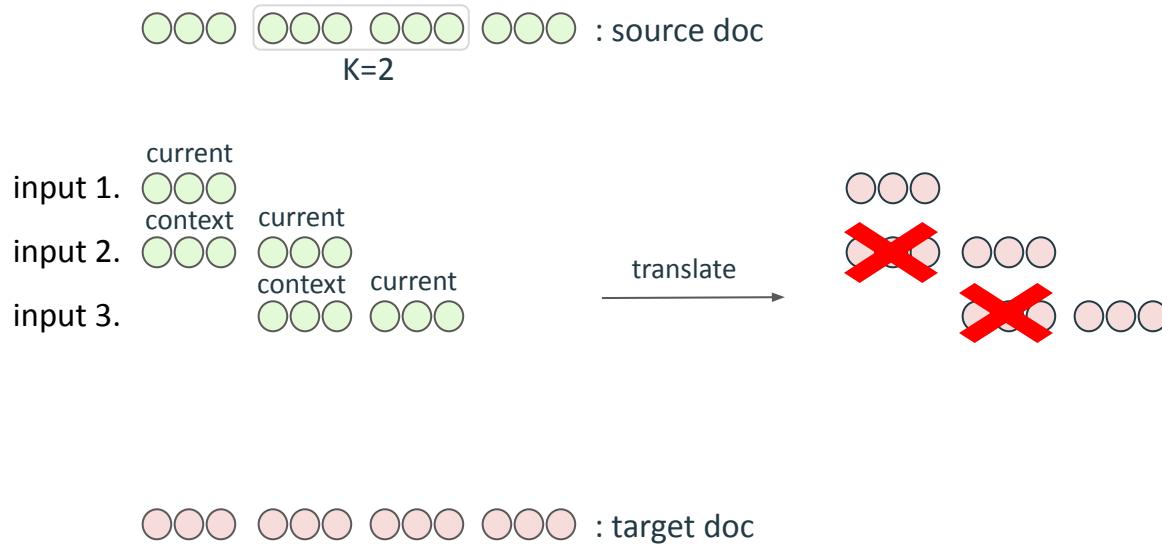
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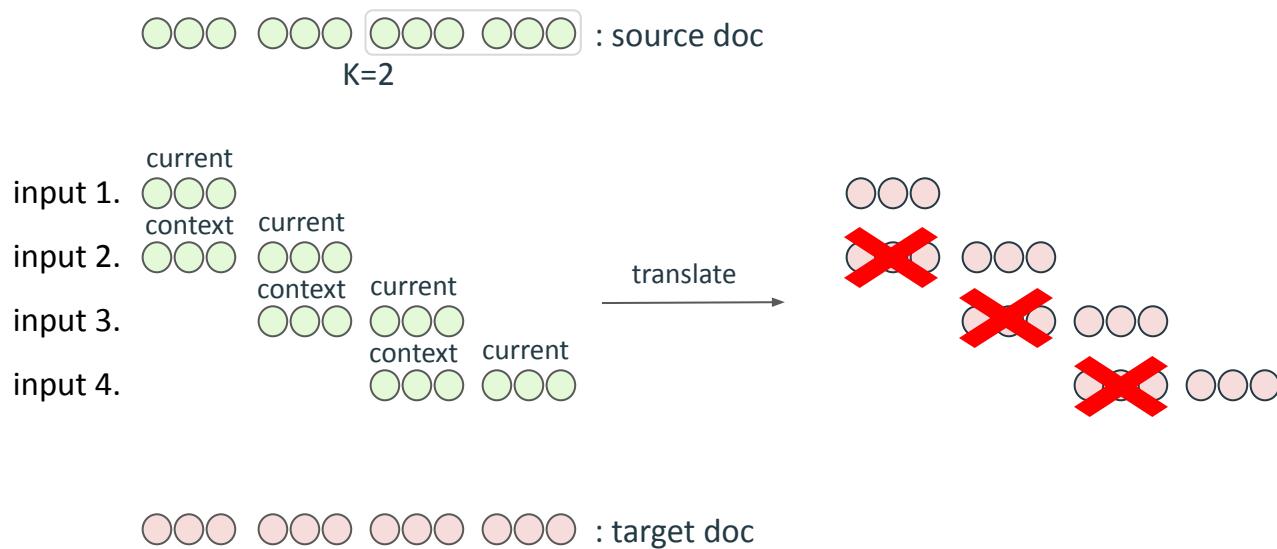
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Training example

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{x}_K^j &= \mathbf{x}^{j-K+1} \mathbf{x}^{j-K+2} \dots \mathbf{x}^{j-1} \mathbf{x}^j \\ \mathbf{y}_K^j &= \mathbf{y}^{j-K+1} \mathbf{y}^{j-K+2} \dots \mathbf{y}^{j-1} \mathbf{y}^j\end{aligned}$$

Conventional objective

$$\mathcal{L}(\mathbf{x}_K^j, \mathbf{y}_K^j) = \sum_{t=1}^{|\mathbf{y}_K^j|} -\log P(y_{K,t}^j | \mathbf{y}_{K,<t}^j, \mathbf{x}_K^j)$$

Concatenation approaches: SlidingKtok

Strengths	Weaknesses
No extra learnable parameters added to the standard Transformer architecture.	Attention can be <i>distracted</i> by context instead of focusing on local relationships between tokens, which are the most important [Bao et al., 2021].
Since current and context sentences belong to the same sequence, inter-sentential token contextualization can be treated in the same way as intra-sentential contextualization .	Even though we only keep the translation of the current sentence after generation, the standard translation objective function is not focused on predictions of the current sentence.

Concatenation approaches: SlidingKtok

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Concatenation approaches: remedies

1. **Context discounting** in the training objective.
2. **Encoding sentence position** into token representations.

Remedy 1: context discounting

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Remedy 1: context discounting

Training example

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{x}_K^j &= \mathbf{x}^{j-K+1} \mathbf{x}^{j-K+2} \dots \mathbf{x}^{j-1} \mathbf{x}^j \\ \mathbf{y}_K^j &= \mathbf{y}^{j-K+1} \mathbf{y}^{j-K+2} \dots \mathbf{y}^{j-1} \mathbf{y}^j\end{aligned}$$

Conventional objective

$$\mathcal{L}(\mathbf{x}_K^j, \mathbf{y}_K^j) = \sum_{t=1}^{|\mathbf{y}_K^j|} -\log P(y_{K,t}^j | \mathbf{y}_{K,<t}^j, \mathbf{x}_K^j)$$

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Context-discounted objective

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{L}_{CD}(\mathbf{x}_K^j, \mathbf{y}_K^j) &= CD \cdot \mathcal{L}_{context} + \mathcal{L}_{current} \\ &= CD \cdot \mathcal{L}(\mathbf{x}_K^j, \mathbf{y}_{K-1}^{j-1}) + \mathcal{L}(\mathbf{x}_K^j, \mathbf{y}^j)\end{aligned}$$

$$0 \leq CD < 1$$

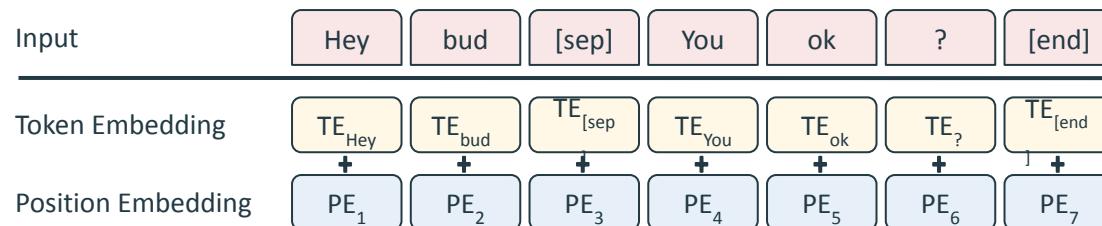
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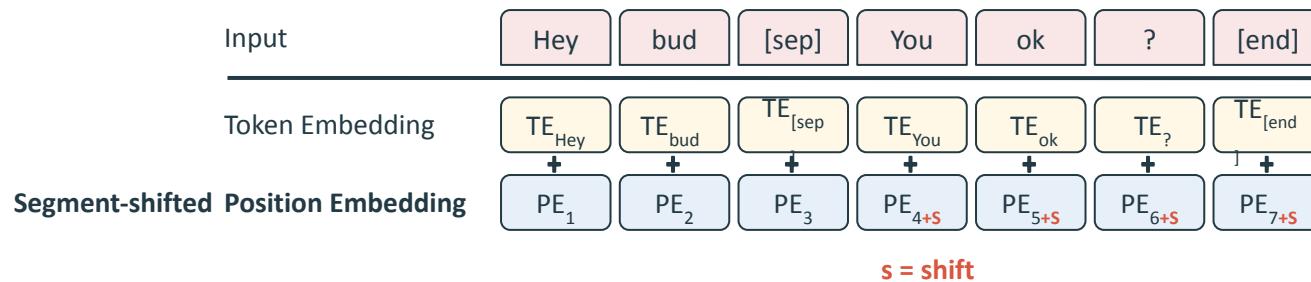
Remedy 2: encoding sentence position

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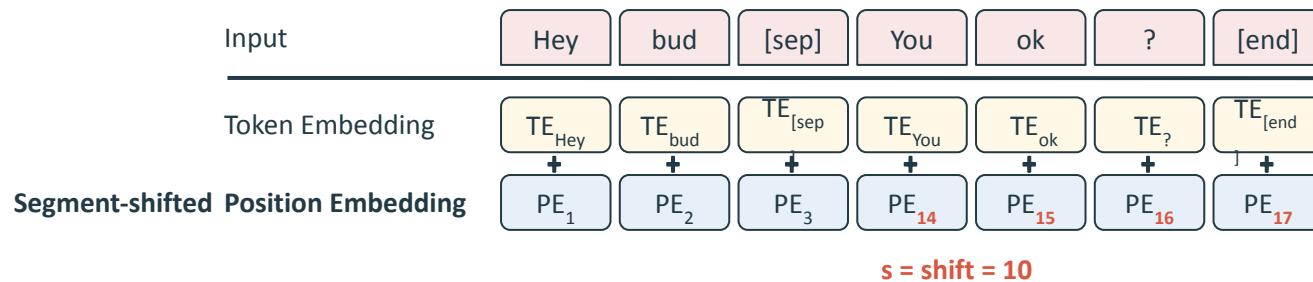
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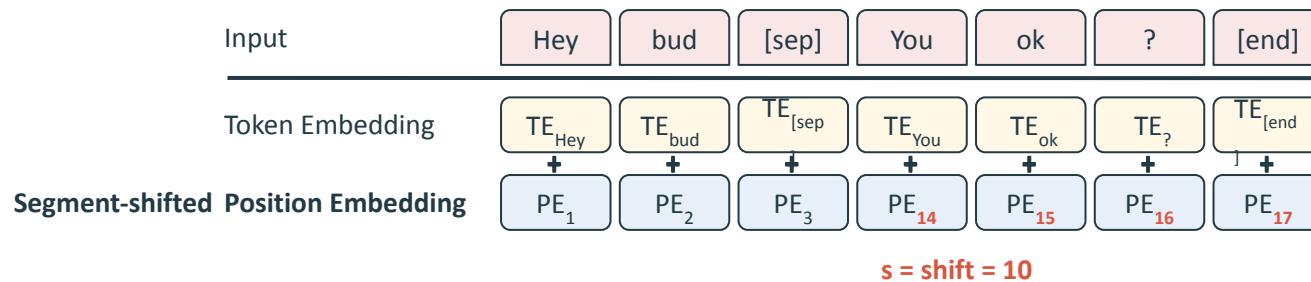
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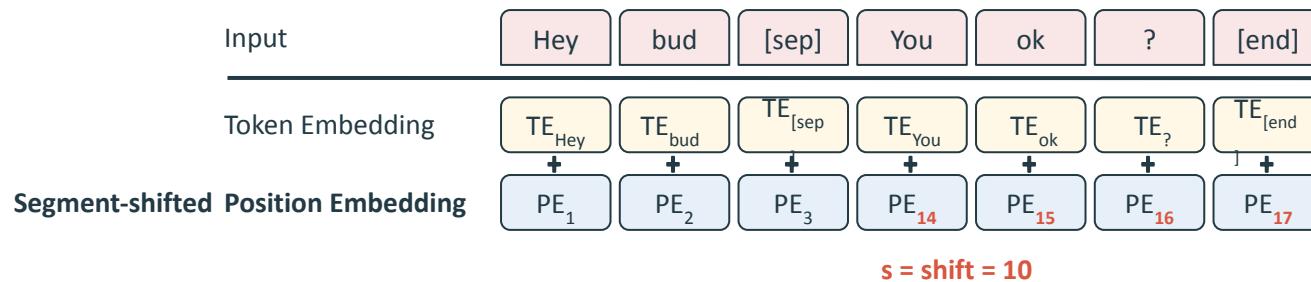
Remedy 2: encoding sentence position



How big should be the **shift**?

- Average sentence length (in the corpus)
- Average sentence length (in the concatenated sequence)
- Big shift: shift \gg average sentence length

Remedy 2: encoding sentence position



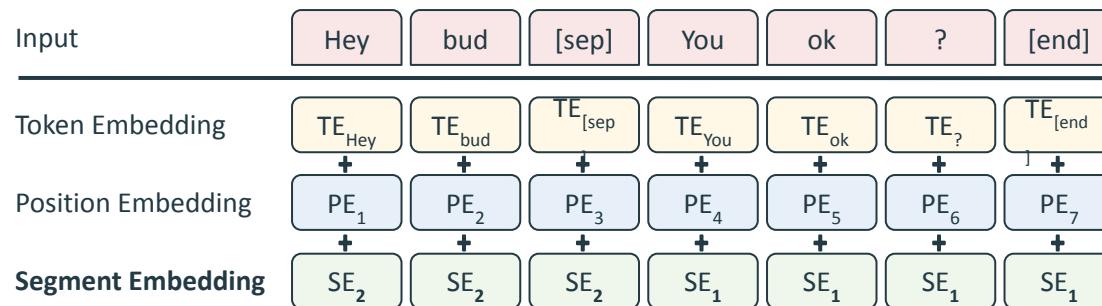
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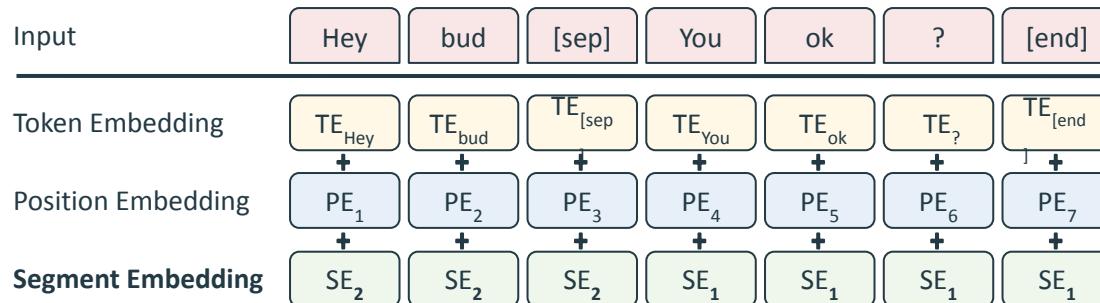
Remedy 2: encoding sentence position

1. **Context discounting** training objective.
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 - b. **Segment embeddings** [Devlin et al., 2019].

Remedy 2: encoding sentence position

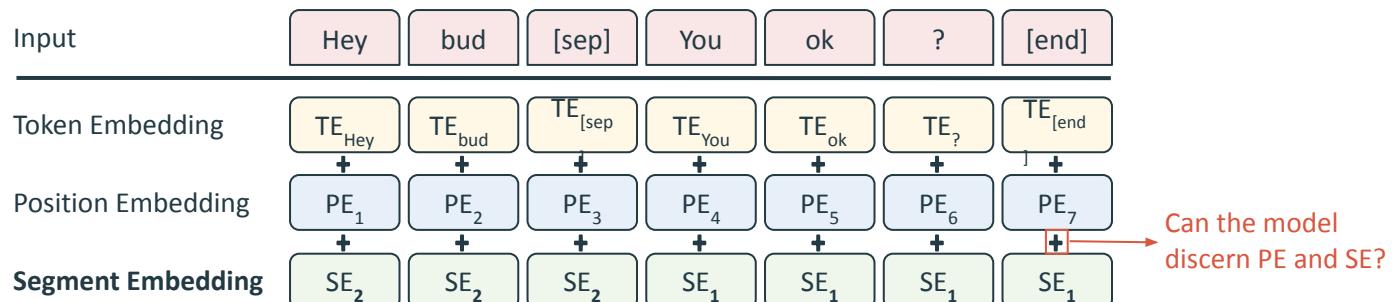


Remedy 2: encoding sentence position



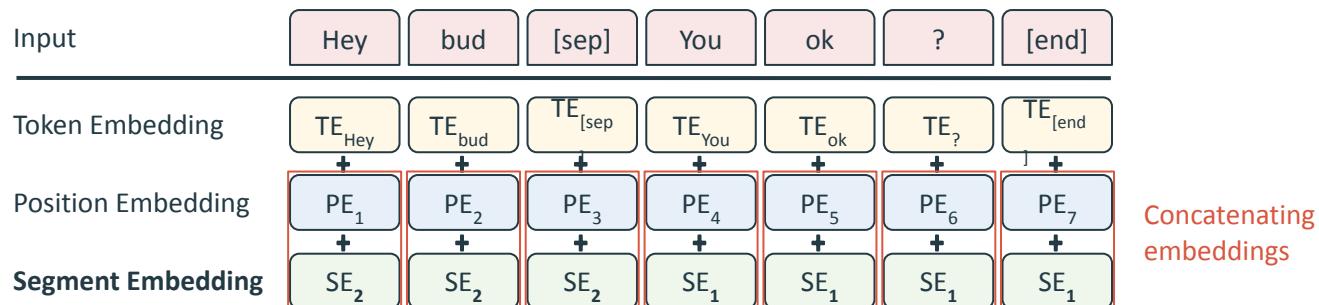
- One-hot.
- Learned [Devlin et al., 2019].
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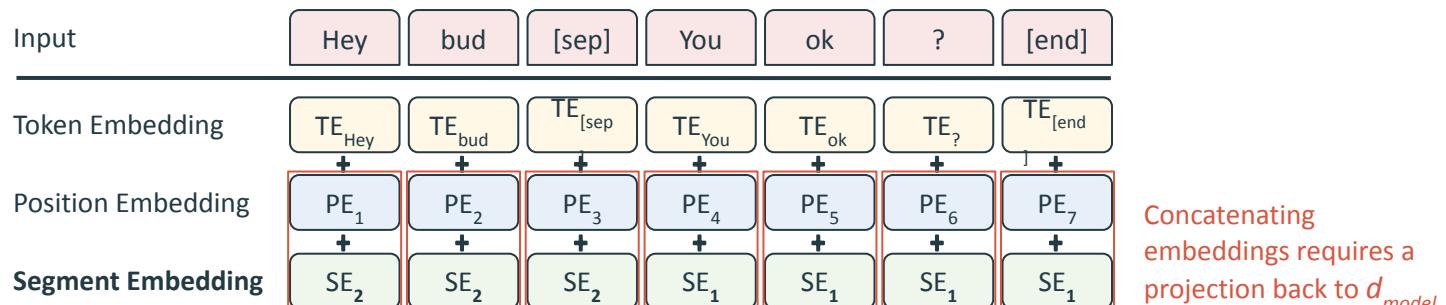
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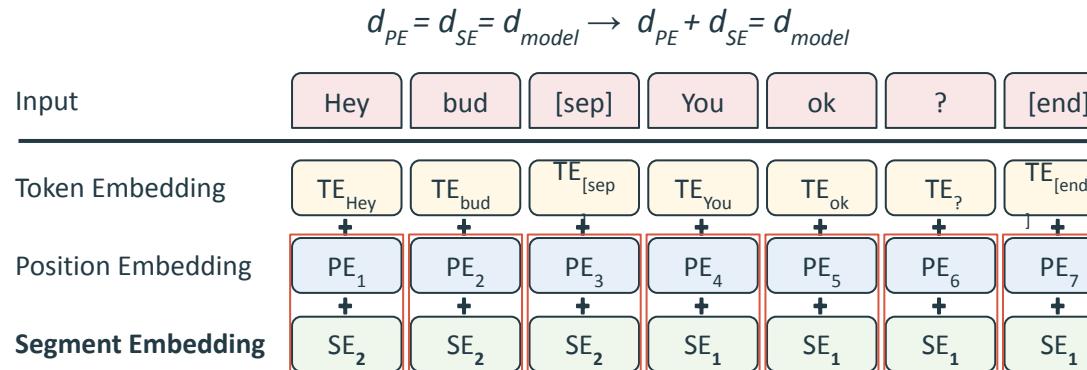
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Remedy 2: encoding sentence position

1. **Context discounting** training objective.
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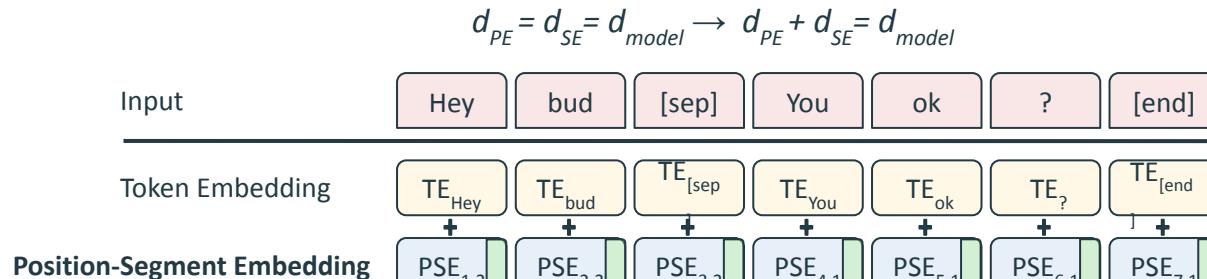
To avoid another linear projection, we propose to reduce the dimensionality of PE and SE:



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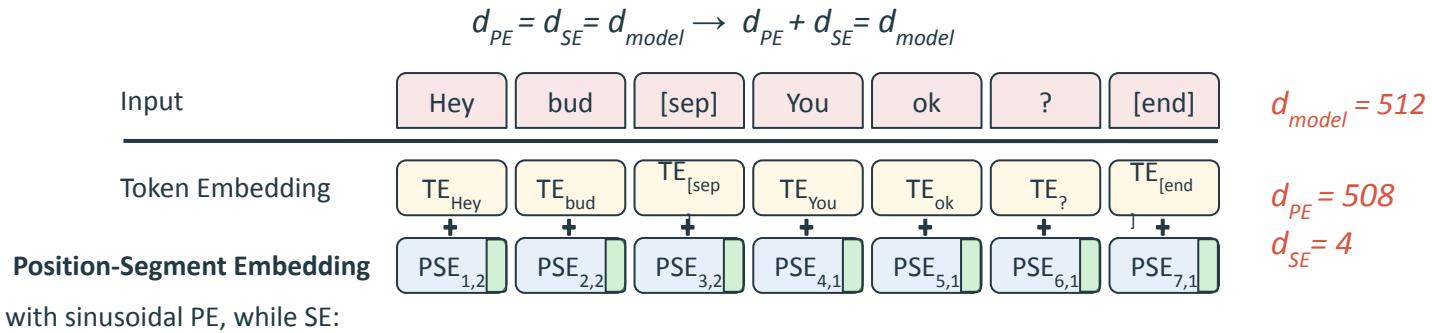


with sinusoidal PE, while SE:

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Remedy 2: encoding sentence position

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Experimental Setup

Models

base: context-agnostic Transformer-base.

s4to4: sliding4to4 concatenation approach.

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English → Russian [Voita et al., 2019]

- 6M sentence pairs from OpenSubtitles18;
- short documents of 4 sentences each.

English → German [Cettolo et al., 2012]

- 0.2M sentence pairs from IWSLT17;
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Evaluation

BLEU [Papinei et al., 2020]

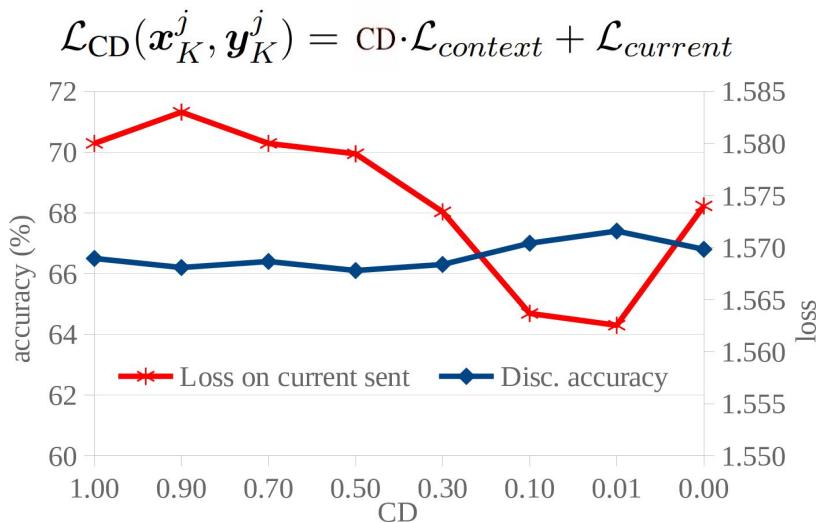
Accuracy on contrastive test sets for the disambiguation of discourse phenomena:

- + **ContraPro** (En-De): coreferential pronouns [Muller et al., 2018].
- + **Voita** (En-Ru): deixis, lexical cohesion, noun phrase ellipsis, verb-phrase ellipsis [Voita et al., 2019].

Context discounting: preliminary analysis

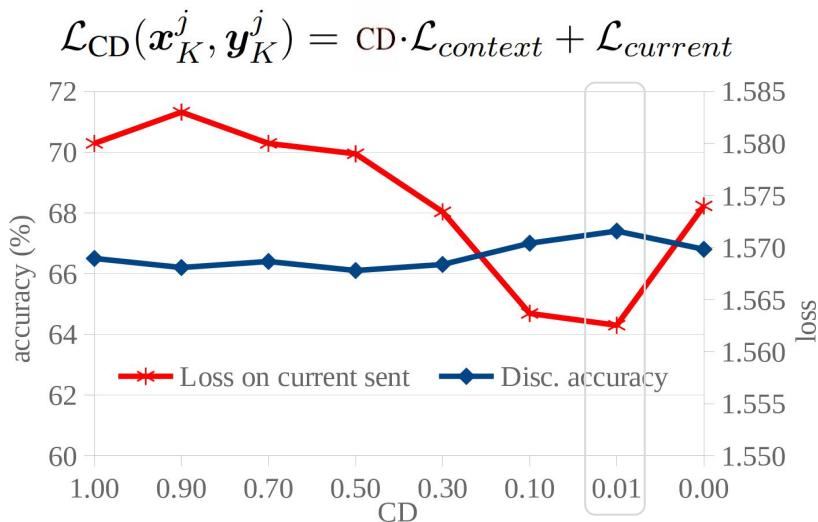
$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{CD}}(\mathbf{x}_K^j, \mathbf{y}_K^j) = \text{CD} \cdot \mathcal{L}_{\text{context}} + \mathcal{L}_{\text{current}}$$

Context discounting: preliminary analysis



Evaluation of **En**→**Ru** s4to4 trained with various levels of context discounting.

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Context discounting: main results

	System
baselines:	base
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Context discounting: main results

En→Ru	
System	BLEU
baselines:	base 31.98
	s4to4 32.45
	s4to4 + CD 32.37

En→De	
	BLEU
base	29.63
s4to4	29.48
s4to4 + CD	29.32

Context discounting: main results

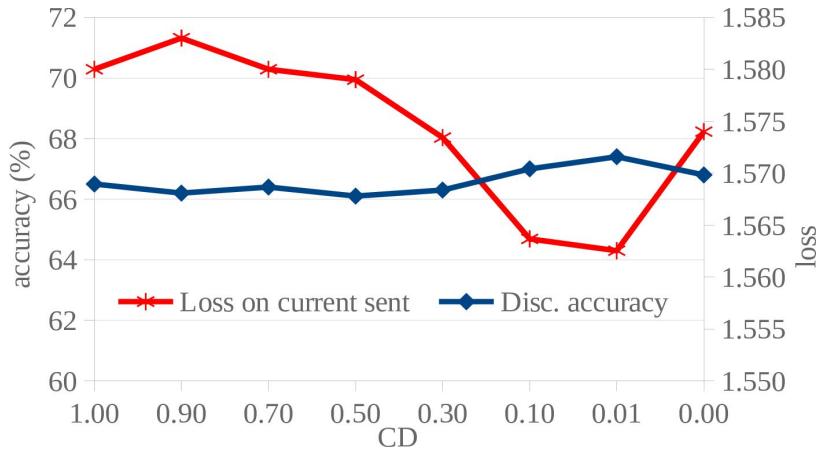
En→Ru			
	System	BLEU	Voita
baselines:	base	31.98	46.64
	s4to4	32.45	72.02
	s4to4 + CD	32.37	73.42* (+1.40 accuracy)

En→De			
	BLEU	ContraPro	
base	29.63	37.27	
s4to4	29.48	71.35	
s4to4 + CD	29.32	74.31* (+2.96 accuracy)	

Context discounting: main results

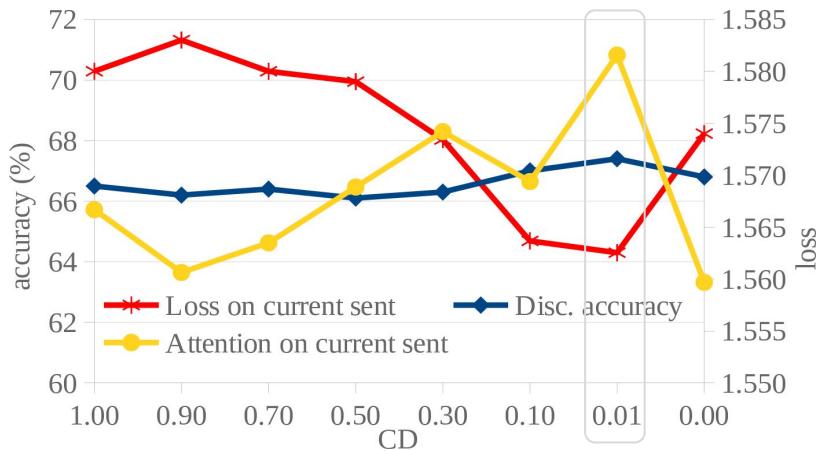
En→Ru							
baselines:	System	BLEU	Voita	Deixis	Lex co.	Ell. inf	Ell. vp
	base	31.98	46.64	50.00	45.87	51.80	27.00
	s4to4	32.45	72.02	85.80	46.13	79.60	73.20
	s4to4 + CD	32.37	73.42*	87.16*	46.40	81.00	78.20*
En→De							
	System	BLEU	ContraPro	d=1	d=2	d=3	d>3
	base	29.63	37.27	32.89	43.97	47.99	70.58
	s4to4	29.48	71.35	68.89	74.96	79.58	87.78
	s4to4 + CD	29.32	74.31*	72.86*	75.96	80.10	84.38

Context discounting: analysis



Evaluation of **En**→**Ru** s4to4 trained with various levels of context discounting.

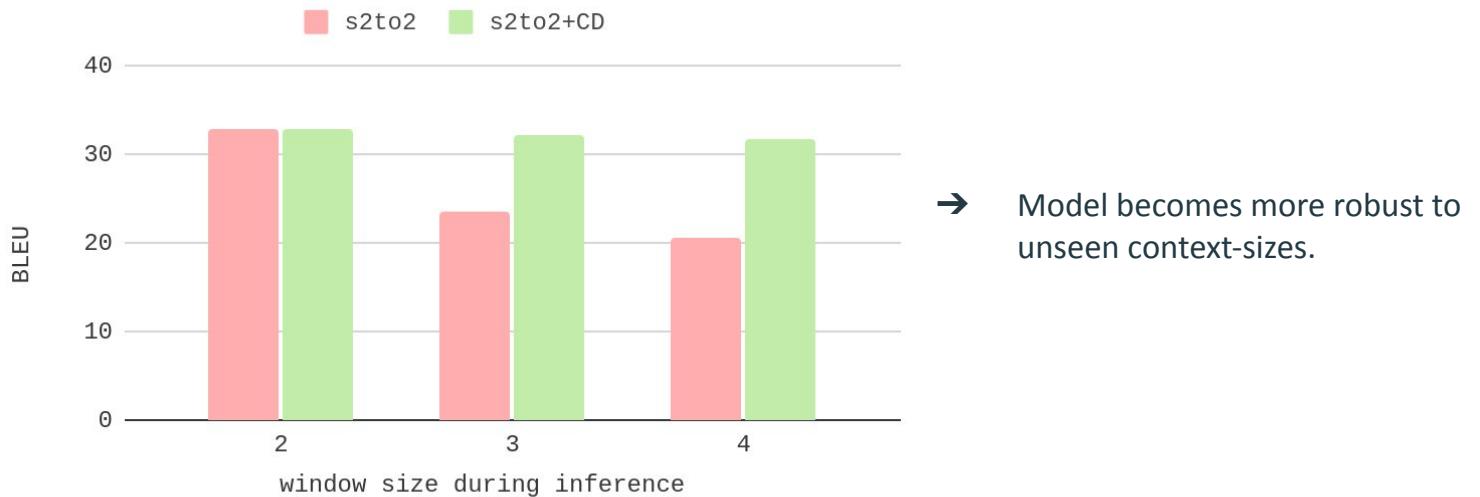
Context discounting: analysis



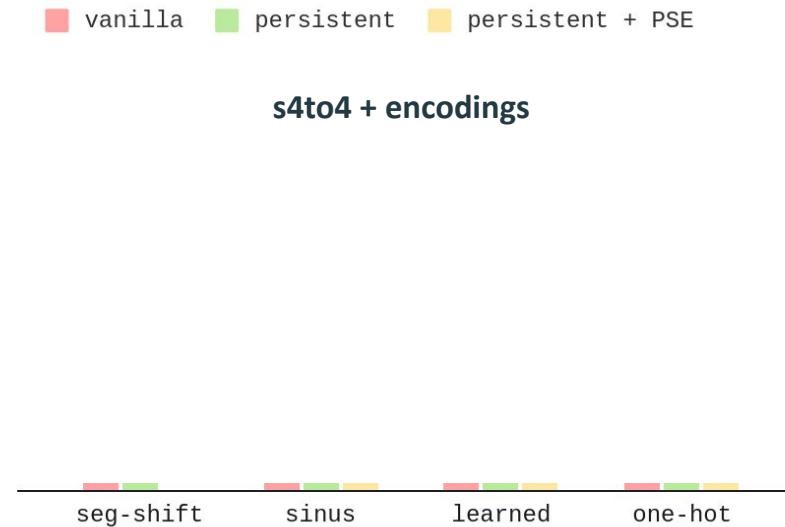
→ Self-attention gets more focused.

Evaluation of **En→Ru s4to4** trained with various levels of context discounting.

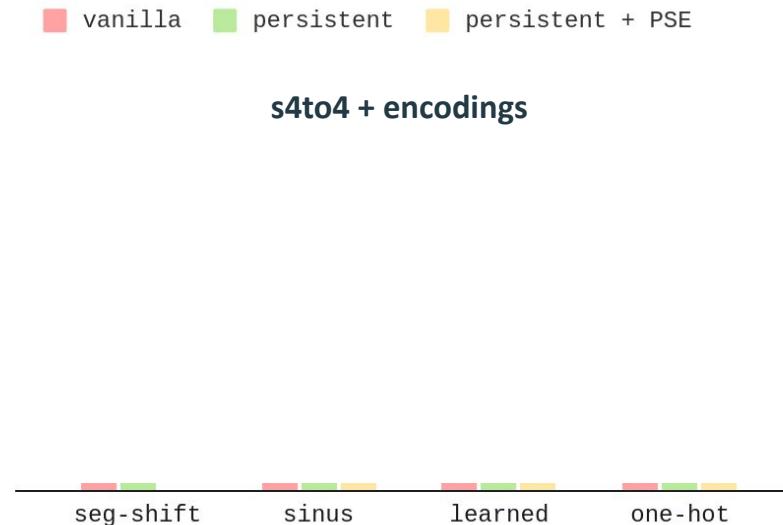
Context discounting: analysis



Encoding sentence position: main results



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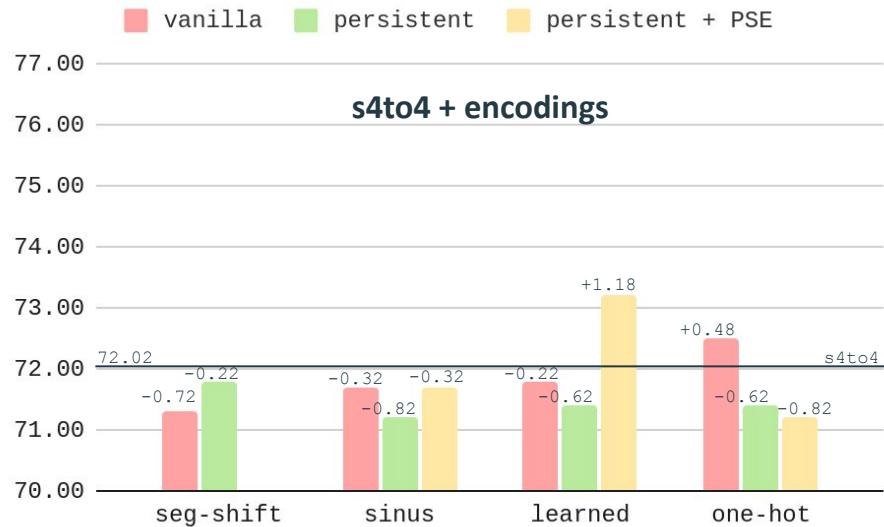


vanilla: adding encodings to the input of the 1st block

persistent: adding encodings to the input of every block

 Position-Segment
Embeddings

Encoding sentence position: main results



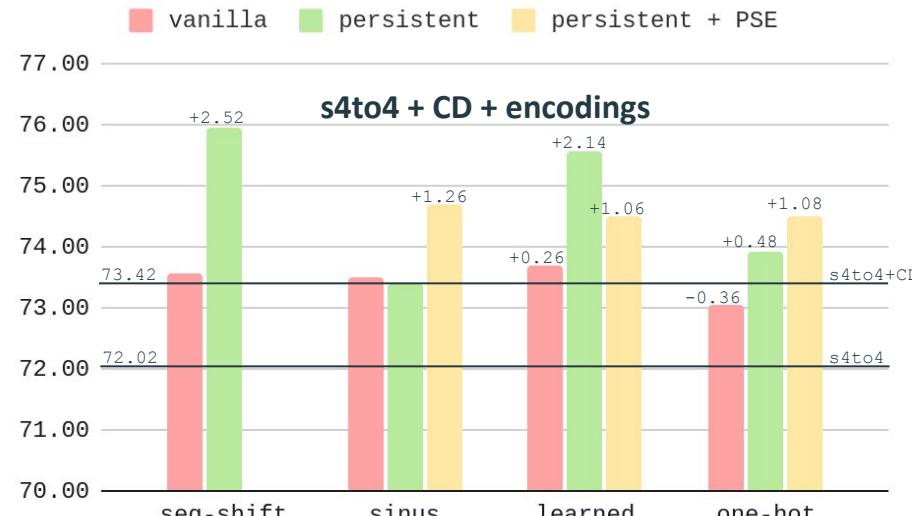
Accuracy on Voita's contrastive set on En → Ru discourse phenomena.

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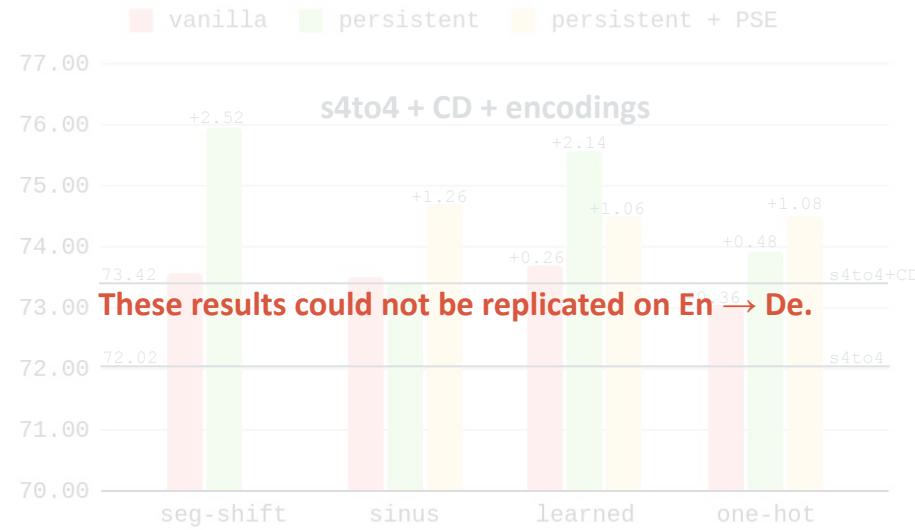
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Position-Segment
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Benchmarking

En→Ru	
System ⁶	Voita
Chen et al. (2021)	55.61
Sun et al. (2022)	58.13
Zheng et al. (2020)	63.30
Kang et al. (2020)	73.46
Zhang et al. (2020)	75.61
s4to4 + shift _{pers} + CD	75.94

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En→De	
System ⁶	ContraPro
Maruf et al. (2019)	45.04
Voita et al. (2018) ⁷	49.04
Stojanovski and Fraser (2019)	57.64
Müller et al. (2018)	59.51
Lupo et al. (2022a)	61.09
Lopes et al. (2020)	70.8
Majumder et al. (2022)	78.00
Fernandes et al. (2021)	80.35
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> x 10
training data

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Multi-encoding approaches
 - a. Lupo, L., Dinarelli, M. and Besacier, L., **Divide and Rule: Effective Pre-Training for Context-Aware Multi-Encoder NMT**, ACL 2022.
3. Concatenation approaches
 - a. Lupo, L., Dinarelli, M. and Besacier, L., **Focused Concatenation for Context-Aware NMT**, WMT 2022.
 - b. Lupo, L., Dinarelli, M. and Besacier, L., **Encoding Sentence Position in Context-Aware NMT with Concatenation**, Insights 2023.
4. Conclusions

Contributions

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 - C. the **architecture** - Sentence position encodings for concatenation approaches;

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 - a. the **training data** - Divide and Rule for multi-encoding approaches
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 - C. the **architecture** - Sentence position encodings for concatenation approaches;
3. **Improved understanding** of context-aware NMT approaches through analysis.

Perspectives

1. **Long-range arena:** contrastive test sets for the evaluation of wider-context-aware NMT, including:
 - a. long-context-dependent discourse phenomena;

Perspectives

1. **Long-range arena:** contrastive test sets for the evaluation of longer-context-aware NMT, including:
 - a. long-context-dependent discourse phenomena;
2. **Large multilingual language models (GPT3, Bloom, LLaMa) as automatic post editors:** from context-agnostic NMT document translations to coherent translations.
 - a. Prompt engineering.
 - b. Inclusion of meta-data such as authors' information or a glossary for domain-specific terminology constraints.
 - c. Fine-tuning on DocRepair-like training data [[Voita et al., 2019b](#)].

Thank you.

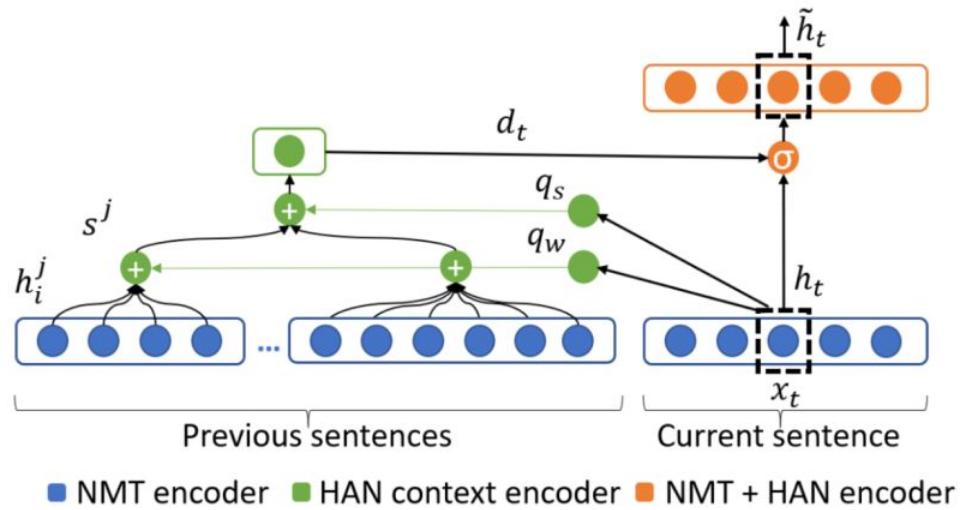


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HAN



Contrastive test sets

Accuracy on **contrastive test sets** for the evaluation of discourse phenomena disambiguation.

Source Context	Target Context
Good morning Mr President!	Bonjour Monsieur le Président!
Source	Translation Candidates
How <u>are you</u> today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Comment allez-vous aujourd'hui?Comment vas-tu aujourd'hui?

Data

	En→Ru		En→De		En→Fr	
	Low Res	Hig Res	Low Res	Hig Res	Low Res	Hig Res
Sentence-level train	OpenSubs2018	OpenSubs2018	WMT17	WMT17	WMT14	WMT14
Context-aware train	1/10th of OpenSubs2018	OpenSubs2018	IWSLT17	News-v12 Europarl-v7 IWSLT17	IWSLT17	News-v9 Europarl-v7 IWSLT17
Fine-tuning	-	-	-	IWSLT17	-	IWSLT17
Test (BLEU)	OpenSubs2018	OpenSubs2018	IWSLT17	IWSLT17	IWSLT17	IWSLT17
Contrastive test	EllipsisVP	EllipsisVP	ContraPro	ContraPro	ContraPro	ContraPro

Contrastive test sets [voita et al., 2019a]

(a) EN We haven't really spoken much since your return. Tell me, what's on your mind these days?

RU Мы не разговаривали с тех пор, как вы вернулись. Скажи мне, что у тебя на уме в последнее время?

RU My ne razgovarivali s tekh por, kak **vy** ver-nulis'. Skazhi mne, chto u **tebya** na ume v posledneye vremya?

(b) EN I didn't come to Simon's for you. I did that for me.

RU Я **пришла** к Саймону не ради тебя. Я **сделал** это для себя.

RU Ya **prishla** k Saymonu ne radi tebya. Ya **sdelal** eto dlya sebya.

Figure 1: Examples of violation of (a) T-V form consistency, (b) speaker gender consistency.

In color: (a) red – V-form, blue – T-form; (b) red – feminine, blue – masculine.

(a) EN You call her your friend but have you been to her home ? Her work ?

RU Ты называешь её своей подругой, но ты был у неё дома? Её **работа**?

RU Ty nazyvayesh' yevo soyey podrugoy, no ty byl u neye doma? Yeo **rabota**?

(b) EN Veronica, thank you, but you **saw** what happened. We all **did**.

RU Вероника, спасибо, но ты **видела**, что произошло. Мы все **хотели**.

RU Veronika, spasibo, no ty **videla**, chto proizoshlo. My vse **khoteli**.

(a) EN Not for Julia. Julia has a taste for taunting her victims.

RU Не для Джулии. Юлия умеет дразнить своих жертв.

RU Ne dlya Dzhulii. Yuliya umeyet draznit' svoikh zhertv.

(b) EN But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about your future.

RU Но я говорю не об этом. Речь о твоём будущем.

RU No ya **govoryu** ne ob etom. Rech' o tvoym budushchem.

Figure 2: Examples of discrepancies caused by ellipsis.
(a) wrong morphological form, incorrectly marking the noun phrase as a subject. (b) correct meaning is “see”, but MT produces хотели *khoteli* (“want”).

Figure 3: Examples of lack of lexical cohesion in MT.
(a) Name translation inconsistency. (b) Inconsistent translation. Using either of the highlighted translations consistently would be good.

Testing with inconsistent context

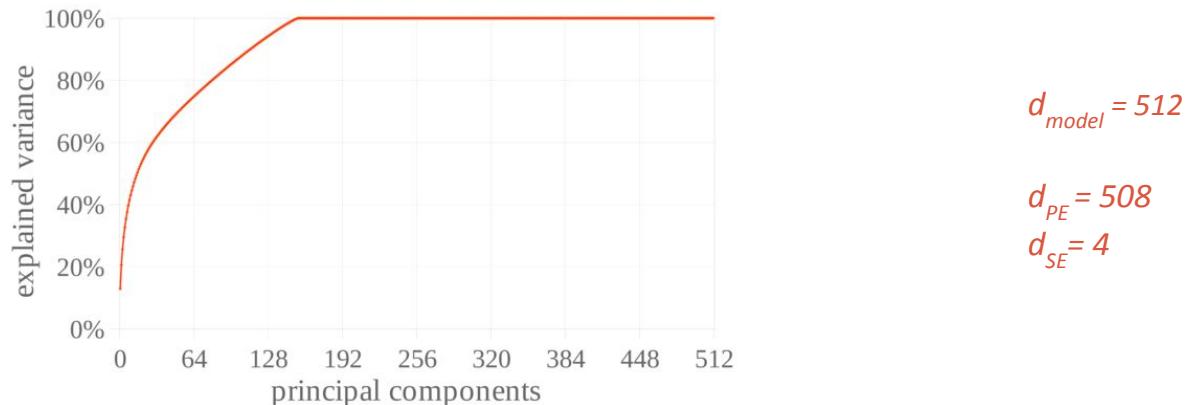
Model	En→De		En→Fr	
	BLEU	ContraPro	BLEU	ContraPro
<i>base</i>	32.97 (+0.00)	46.37 (0.00)	41.44 (-0.00)	79.46 (0.00)
<i>K2</i>	33.06 (+0.06)	46.7 (-0.35)	41.75 (-0.12)	79.05 (-0.19)
<i>K4</i>	32.73 (-0.13)	46.21 (-0.27)	41.47 (+0.15)	79.24 (-1.29)
<i>K2-d&r</i>	33.1 (-0.34)	47.6 (-12.61)	41.64 (-0.14)	78.94 (-5.12)
<i>K4-d&r</i>	33.05 (-0.31)	47.96 (-8.26)	41.55 (-0.13)	79.05 (-6.45)

D&R scope

- **4,000 written languages** in the world (Eberhard et al., 2021)
- Most of them can be grouped in a **few types with similar word order**, as shown by the ample literature on word order typologies (Dryer and Haspelmath, 2013; Tomlin, 2014).
- The primary order of interest is the **constituent order**, concerning the relative order of subject (**S**), object (**O**) and verb (**V**) in a clause.
- ~40% of languages is SVO (En,Fr,Ru,De)
- ~40% of languages is SOV (De)
- ~10% of languages is VSO.

Encoding sentence position with PSE

Can we reduce the size of sinusoidal embeddings without loss of information?



Cumulative ratio of the variance explained by the principal components of the **1024 × 512** sinusoidal position embedding matrix.

Context-discounting: preliminary analysis

CD	Loss	En→Ru		En→De	
		Voita ^{test}	Voita ^{dev}	Loss	ContraPro
1.000	1.580	69.99	66.50	1.097	70.43
0.900	1.583	70.26	66.20	1.096	69.44
0.700	1.580	70.96	66.40	1.093	70.52
0.500	1.579	70.89	66.10	1.092	70.38
0.300	1.573	71.59	66.30	1.089	72.49
0.100	1.564	71.86	67.00	1.086	69.58
0.010	1.563	73.19	67.40	1.090	74.31
0.009	1.563	67.30	67.30	1.086	71.93
0.007	1.562	67.90	67.90	1.091	72.72
0.005	1.562	67.00	67.00	1.110	71.25
0.003	1.563	67.20	67.20	1.105	71.13
0.001	1.563	67.50	67.50	1.104	64.53
0.000	1.574	70.34	66.80	1.191	61.14

Full context discounting?

En→Ru						
System	Deixis	Lex co.	Ell. inf	Ell. vp	Voita	BLEU
s4to1	50.00	45.87	57.60	71.40	51.66	32.64
s4to4 + CD=0	86.48	46.27	70.00	78.60	71.98	28.55

En→De						
System	d=1	d=2	d=3	d>3	ContraPro	BLEU
s4to1	36.90	46.55	49.38	69.68	40.67	29.28
s4to4 + CD=0	57.35	67.81	71.72	85.29	61.14	11.85

Synergies: D&R + CD

En→Ru			
System	<i>dℓgr</i>	Voita	BLEU
s4to4	no	72.02	32.45
s4to4 + CD	no	73.42	32.37
s4to4	yes	70.84	32.07
s4to4 + CD	yes	74.50	31.95

En→De			
System	<i>dℓgr</i>	ContraPro	BLEU
s4to4	no	71.35	29.48
s4to4 + CD	no	74.31	29.32
s4to4	yes	70.06	29.08
s4to4 + CD	yes	74.63	29.78

Significance testing

McNemar's test (McNemar, 1947) for comparing accuracy results on the contrastive test sets. This test is specifically designed for paired nominal observations, which is exactly the situation encountered in contrastive test sets: each system obtains a binary outcome (correct/incorrect ranking) for each contrastive example

Approximate randomization (Riezler and Maxwell, 2005) for all the other cases, e.g., for comparing BLEU scores. Approximate randomization is based on resampling and it can be applied to non-binary, non-paired scores without requiring compliance to any hypothesis about their distribution (contrarily to, for instance, the Wilcoxon test (Wilcoxon, 1946)).