Movie Review Classification using Word Embeddings and Neural Networks

Lakshmi Chandrika Yarlagadda (lvy5215)
CSE 587 Midterm Project

Februaury 28, 2025

1 Introduction

Sentiment analysis is a way to understand human emotions in text. It helps to determine whether a piece of text, such as a movie review, expresses a positive or negative opinion. This is widely used in businesses to understand customer feedback, in social media monitoring, and even in product reviews to see what people think about their product.

This project focuses on classifying movie reviews as positive or negative using deep learning techniques. We will use word embeddings to convert text into numerical form and apply neural networks to analyze and classify reviews. Using different models, our aim was to find the best way to accurately determine the sentiment of a given review.

2 Related Work

Several studies have explored sentiment analysis using word embeddings and deep learning techniques.

Zhang et al.[1] (2023) proposed a hybrid CNN-BiLSTM model for sentiment classification. Their approach combined convolutional layers to extract local textual features and bidirectional LSTMs to capture long-term dependencies. They reported an improvement in accuracy over traditional LSTM and CNN models. The study highlighted the effectiveness of feature extraction using CNNs while maintaining context understanding through BiLSTMs.

Similarly, Li and Wang[2] (2022) explored the use of pre-trained word embeddings with GRU networks for sentiment analysis. Their experiments demonstrated that fine-tuning embeddings like Word2Vec and GloVe significantly improved classification performance. Their model also incorporated attention mechanisms that improved the interpretability of the results by focusing on important words in the text.

In another study, Patel et al[3]. (2021) investigated the impact of domain-specific embeddings for sentiment classification. They trained custom word embeddings on movie review datasets and found that domain-specific embeddings outperformed general-purpose embeddings like Word2Vec[6] and GloVe[5]. Their study emphasized the need for customized embeddings tailored to the dataset to achieve better results in sentiment classification tasks.

3 Problem Definition and Dataset Curation

3.1 Problem Statement

Given a movie review data set, the objective is to build a model that can classify each review as positive or negative. The task is a binary classification problem, in which the model learns to associate words and phrases with sentiments.

3.2 Dataset

We used the IMDB movie reviews dataset, a widely used benchmark dataset for sentiment analysis. The data set consists of **50,000** movie reviews labeled asve or negative. It is already balanced, with **25,000** positive reviews and **25,000** negative reviews.

Each entry consists of two fields:

- `text`: The full text of the movie review.
- `label`: A binary value indicating sentiment (0 for negative, 1 for positive).

3.2.1 Data Preprocessing

Before feeding the data into the model, we applied several preprocessing steps:

1. **HTML and Special Character Removal**: Any HTML tags and special symbols were removed from the reviews.
2. **Lowercasing**: All text was converted to lowercase to maintain uniformity.
3. **Tokenization**: The text was broken down into individual words using NLTK's word tokenizer.
4. **Stopword Removal**: Common stop words (e.g., 'the', 'and', 'is') were filtered out to retain meaningful words.
5. **Punctuation and Number Removal**: Non-alphabetic characters were removed to avoid noise in the data.
6. **Padding and Truncation**: All reviews were standardized to a fixed length of **200 words** to ensure a uniform input to the model.

3.3 Word Embeddings

To represent the textual data numerically, we used:

- **GloVe Embeddings (100D)**: We utilized pre-trained GloVe vectors (100 dimensions) to convert words into dense vector representations.

- **Word2Vec embeddings**: We employed pre-trained Word2Vec embeddings to map words into continuous vector spaces based on contextual similarity.

A custom embedding matrix was created to map each word in our vocabulary to its corresponding GloVe vector. Any words missing from the GloVe embeddings were initialized with zeros.

4 Model Architectures

4.1 Feedforward Neural Network (NN)

A simple Feedforward Neural Network (NN) consists of an input layer, one or more hidden layers, and an output layer. Each neuron in a layer is connected to every neuron in the next layer. The model takes preprocessed word embeddings as input, passes them through fully connected layers with activation functions such as ReLU, and outputs a sentiment classification using a softmax or sigmoid function. This architecture is computationally efficient but lacks the ability to capture sequential dependencies in text.

4.2 Bidirectional Long Short-Term Memory (BiLSTM)

The BiLSTM[7] model is a type of Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) that can capture both past and future context in a sentence by processing text in both forward and backward directions. It consists of LSTM cells that help mitigate the vanishing gradient problem, making it effective for long-range dependencies in textual data. The output from both directions is concatenated and passed through dense layers for classification. This architecture is well-suited for sentiment analysis as it captures contextual dependencies effectively.

4.3 Convolutional Neural Network (CNN)

A Convolutional Neural Network[8] (CNN) is used primarily to extract features in text classification. The model applies 1D convolutional filters over the word embeddings to detect local patterns in text, such as n-grams. Pooling layers are used to downsample the feature maps, reducing dimensionality while retaining important information. The extracted features are then passed through fully connected layers for classification. CNNs are computationally efficient and effective at capturing key phrases in text data.

4.4 Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU)

A Gated Recurrent Unit[9] (GRU) is a type of Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) designed to handle sequential data by maintaining long-term dependencies. The GRU addresses the vanishing gradient problem by introducing gating mechanisms that control the flow of information. Specifically, the update gate decides how much of the past information should be retained, while the reset gate determines how much of the previous memory should be forgotten. GRUs are computationally more efficient than Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks and have been shown to perform well in tasks like text classification, where capturing context over time is important.

5 Experiments

We conducted experiments with different model architectures and various hyperparameter settings to analyze performance variations.

5.1 Feedforward Neural Network (NN)

A simple fully connected neural network was implemented with multiple dense layers and ReLU activations. This model served as a baseline to compare performance against more complex architectures.

5.2 Bidirectional LSTM (BiLSTM)

The BiLSTM model was trained to capture long-range dependencies in text. It utilized pre-trained word embeddings and consisted of LSTM units in both forward and backward directions to enhance context understanding.

5.3 Simple CNN

A single-layer CNN model was used for sentiment classification. The convolutional filters helped extract local features from text sequences, followed by max-pooling layers for dimensionality reduction.

5.4 Multi-Layered CNN

An extended CNN model was implemented with three convolutional layers, each followed by pooling layers. This deeper network aimed to improve feature extraction by learning hierarchical representations of text.

5.5 Fine-Tuned BiLSTM

To further optimize performance, the BiLSTM model was fine-tuned with the following hyperparameters:

- Epochs: 5, 10, 15
- Dropout: 0.2, 0.4
- Learning Rate: 0.001, 0.1
- Batch Size: 64, 128
- LSTM Units: 128, 256
- Patience 3, 5

5.6 Fine-Tuned Embeddings

The word embeddings were fine-tuned during training to allow better adaptation to the dataset-specific vocabulary. This experiment aimed to improve sentiment classification by using contextualized word representations.

5.7 BiLSTM + CNN Hybrid Model

A hybrid model combining CNNs for feature extraction and BiLSTM layers for sequential learning was tested. The CNN captured local dependencies while the BiLSTM retained long-range dependencies in text.

5.8 Gated Recurrent Units

Gated Recurrent Units (GRU) simplify LSTMs by using fewer parameters, making training more efficient. They effectively capture sequential dependencies while mitigating the vanishing gradient problem.

5.9 Evaluation Metrics

The model performance is evaluated using four common metrics: accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. These metrics provide a comprehensive understanding of how well the model performs in different aspects.

Accuracy is the proportion of correctly classified instances out of the total instances. It is a straightforward measure of overall model performance but can be misleading in cases of imbalanced datasets.

Precision is the ratio of correctly predicted positive observations to the total predicted positives. It reflects how many of the predicted positive instances are actually relevant. Precision is crucial in cases where false positives carry a high cost.

Recall (or sensitivity) is the ratio of correctly predicted positive observations to all actual positives. It measures how well the model captures the relevant instances. High recall is important when missing positive instances is costly, such as in medical diagnoses.

F1-score is the harmonic mean of precision and recall. It combines both precision and recall into a single metric, balancing the trade-off between them. F1-score is particularly useful when the dataset is imbalanced, as it ensures that both false positives and false negatives are considered.

6 Results

This section presents the performance evaluation of various models tested for sentiment classification on the IMDB dataset. The results are compared based on accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

6.1 Embeddings Comparison

We have compared word2vec, glove and fine-tuned glove with LSTM model. Glove out-perfomed word2vec and there is no difference between glove and fine-tuned glove embeddings.

Embedding	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Word2Vec	57.0	0.57	0.57	0.57
GloVe	88.0	0.88	0.88	0.88
Fine-Tuned GloVe	88.0	0.88	0.88	0.88

Table 1: Performance Comparison of Word2Vec, GloVe, and Fine-Tuned GloVe with LSTM

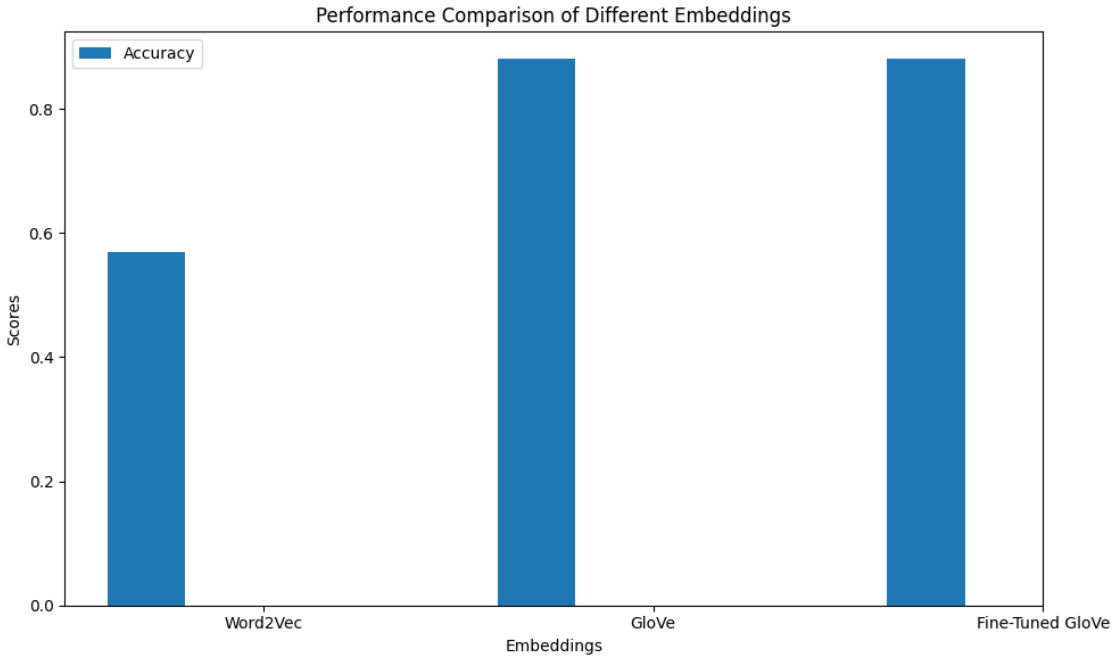

Figure 1: Comapring word embeddings

6.2 Model Comparison

We have compared a feed forward neural network, single layer CNN, Three layered CNN, Bi-LSTM and a hybrid of LSTM and CNN. Out of which LSTM + CNN model performed the best

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Feedforward NN	50.0	0.56	0.50	0.33
CNN	85.0	0.86	0.85	0.85
Deep CNN	85.0	0.85	0.85	0.85
GRU	87.0	0.87	0.87	0.87
BiLSTM	88.0	0.88	0.88	0.88
BiLSTM + CNN	89.0	0.87	0.89	0.89

Table 2: Performance Comparison of NN, CNN, Deep CNN, LSTM, and BiLSTM+CNN

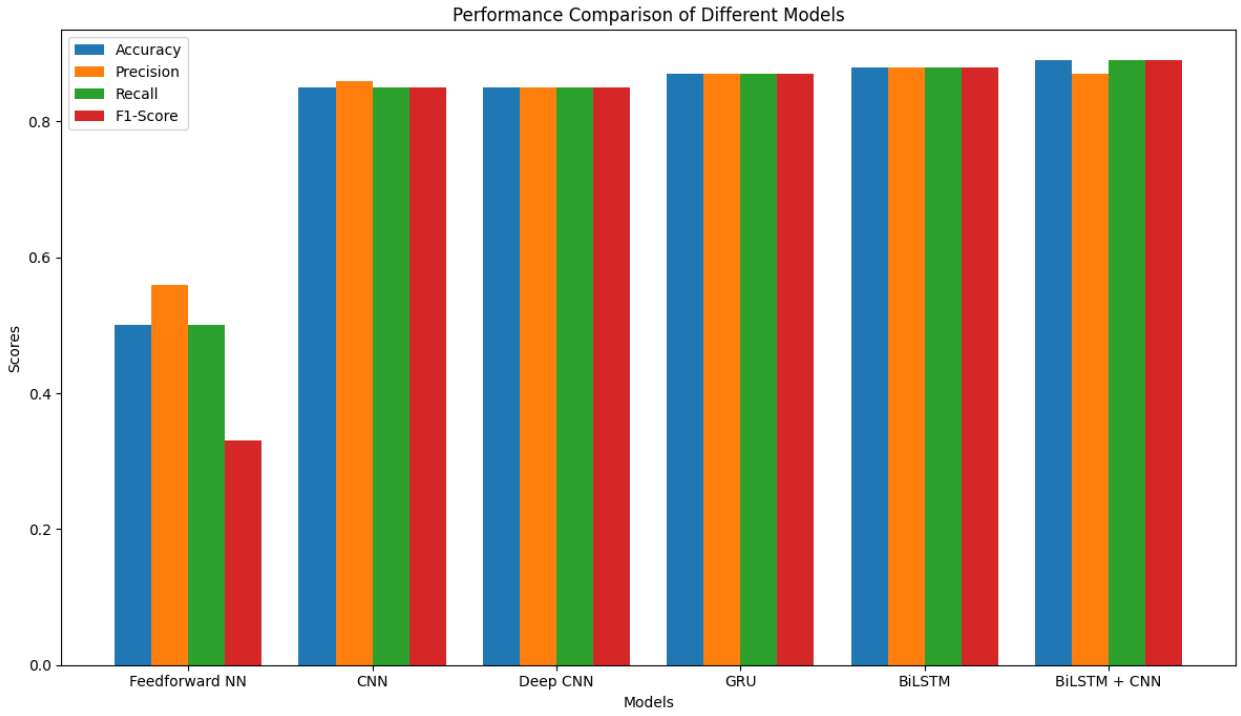

Figure 2: Comparing deep learning models

Figure 2 shows that, BILSTM with CNN has the highest accuracy and F1 score.

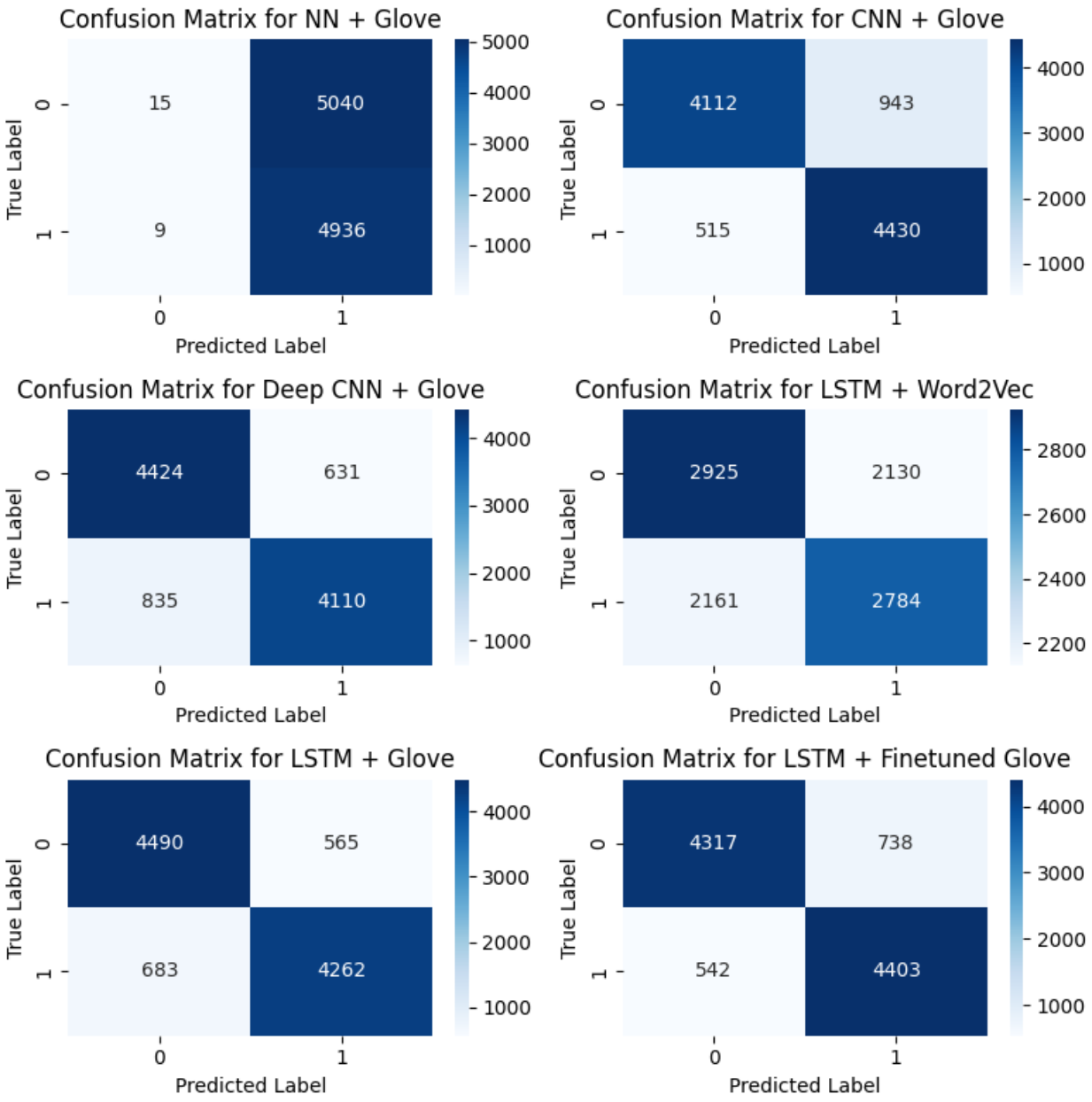

Figure 3: Confusion Matrices for classification with various models

Figure 3 shows confusion matrices for different models using various word embeddings. LSTM with fine-tuned GloVe performs best, having the lowest misclassification rate. In contrast, NN + GloVe struggles, misclassifying most samples as class 1.

6.3 Finetuning LSTM

The LSTM model is fine tuned with change in epochs, batch size, Learning rate, droup-out rate and Patience for early stopping.

Epochs	LR	LSTMs	Batch	Dropout	Patience	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
5	0.001	128	64	0.2	3	86.0	0.86	0.86	0.86
10	0.001	128	64	0.2	3	88.0	0.88	0.88	0.88
15	0.001	128	64	0.2	3	87.0	0.87	0.87	0.87
10	**0.01**	128	64	0.2	3	85.0	0.85	0.85	0.85
10	0.001	**256**	64	0.2	3	88.0	0.88	0.88	0.88
10	0.001	128	**128**	0.2	3	87.0	0.87	0.87	0.87
10	0.001	128	64	**0.4**	3	87.0	0.87	0.87	0.87
10	0.001	128	64	0.2	**5**	87.0	0.87	0.87	0.87

Table 3: Performance of LSTM with Various Hyperparameter Settings

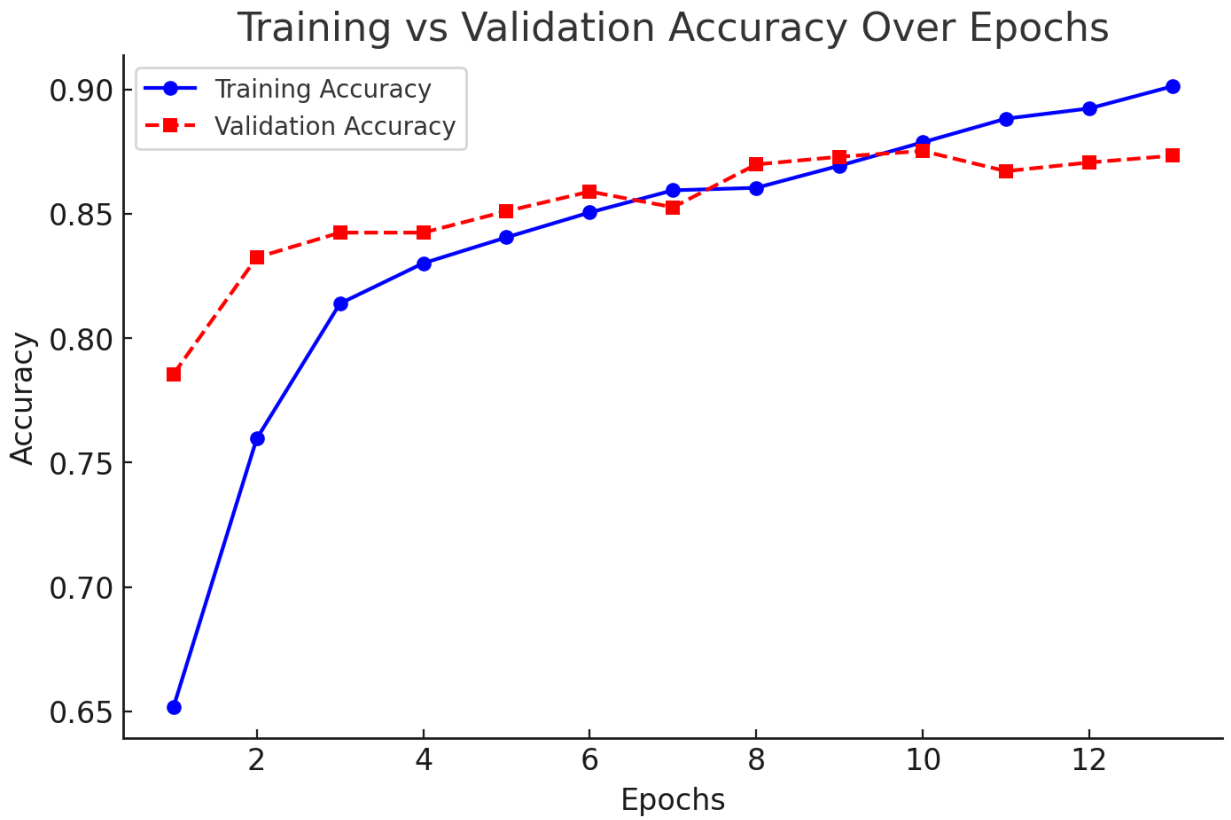

Figure 4: Effect of epochs on accuracy

Figure 4 shows training accuracy and validation accuracy over epochs. The trend indicates that accuracy improves steadily with more epochs, but validation accuracy starts to stabilize after around epoch 10,

suggesting a potential point of diminishing returns or slight overfitting.

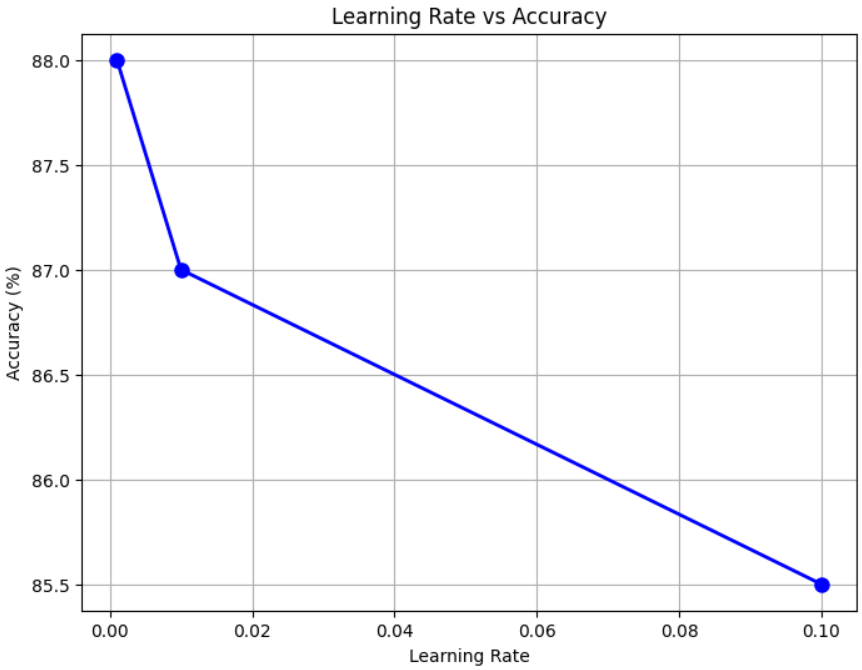

Figure 5: Effect of LR on accuracy

As the learning rate increases, the accuracy initially improves but can decrease if the learning rate is too high, causing unstable training and poor convergence.

7 Error Analysis

In our sentiment classification task, we identified several sources of misclassification and performance limitations across different models.

7.1 Misclassification of Neutral Reviews

One of the major challenges encountered was the misclassification of neutral reviews. Since the model outputs probabilities for each sentiment class, we applied a threshold-based conversion to map these probabilities to discrete labels. This conversion process could lead to cases where neutral reviews were incorrectly assigned to either the positive or negative class, particularly when the model's confidence was low. As a result, reviews with ambiguous or weak sentiment indicators were often misclassified, reducing overall accuracy.

7.2 Difficulty in Handling Sarcasm and Ambiguity

Sarcasm and contextually ambiguous reviews posed significant challenges for all models. For example, a review such as: *"I just love waiting in long lines for hours, best experience ever!"* contains superficially positive words but conveys negative sentiment. While the BiLSTM model performed better in capturing such nuances due to its ability to model long-range dependencies, it still struggled in certain cases where sarcasm was subtle or required deeper contextual understanding.

7.3 Limited Vocabulary Coverage

Pre-trained word embeddings such as GloVe and Word2Vec enhanced representation quality, but they did not cover all words present in our dataset. Words missing from the embedding vocabulary were initialized with zero vectors, leading to potential loss of semantic information. This limitation affected the model's ability to correctly classify sentiment, particularly for domain-specific expressions.

7.4 Model-Specific Performance Issues

Each model demonstrated distinct strengths and weaknesses:

- **Feedforward Neural Network (NN):** Performed the worst due to its inability to capture sequential dependencies, resulting in a high error rate, especially for longer reviews.
- **Convolutional Neural Network (CNN):** Effective in identifying local patterns but lacked the ability to model long-range dependencies, leading to difficulties in classifying complex sentiment structures.
- **Bidirectional LSTM (BiLSTM):** Achieved the best results due to its ability to process input in both forward and backward directions. However, it was computationally expensive and prone to overfitting on smaller datasets.

7.5 Effect of Hyperparameter Variations

Experimental results demonstrated that different hyperparameter settings significantly impacted model performance:

- A higher dropout rate of 0.4 improved generalization but sometimes led to underfitting.
- A learning rate of 0.1 caused unstable training, whereas 0.001 provided the most stable results.
- A batch size of 128 improved training speed but resulted in poorer generalization compared to a batch size of 64.

7.6 Overfitting on Training Data

The fine-tuned BiLSTM model exhibited signs of overfitting, achieving high accuracy on the training set while performing worse on the test set. This indicated that the model had learned dataset-specific patterns but failed to generalize effectively to unseen data.

8 Lessons Learned

During the course of this project, we gathered several insights that contributed to our understanding of sentiment classification using deep learning techniques:

- **Hybrid models excel:** The combination of CNN and BiLSTM provided a balance between local feature extraction and long-term contextual understanding, resulting in higher accuracy.
- **Data preprocessing is crucial:** Effective preprocessing, including stopword removal, tokenization, and padding, had a significant impact on model performance.
- **Fine-tuning enhances performance:** Adjusting hyperparameters like learning rates, dropout rates, and batch sizes played a crucial role in optimizing model efficiency.
- **Computational challenges:** Training deep networks required substantial computational resources, emphasizing the need for efficient model design and hardware considerations.
- **Glove outperforms word2vec embeddings:** Our results showed that GloVe performed better than Word2Vec, possibly because it captures word relationships more effectively.

9 Conclusion

This project explored sentiment classification on the IMDB movie reviews dataset using various deep learning architectures. Through extensive experimentation, we identified the advantages and limitations of different approaches:

- The BiLSTM model was highly effective in capturing long-range dependencies in text.
- CNN models efficiently extracted local text patterns, but performed better when combined with sequential models.
- Fine-tuning word embeddings and hyperparameters significantly enhanced model performance.
- Hybrid CNN-BiLSTM models outperformed standalone architectures, achieving the highest accuracy.
- Hugging Face transformer-based embeddings provided deep contextual representations, further improving sentiment classification accuracy.

10 Future Work

Future work could explore the integration of transformer-based models like BERT for further performance improvements. Additionally, experimenting with multiple datasets and domain-specific embeddings could enhance the generalizability of sentiment classification models.

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