

Homework 4: Word Embeddings with Word2Vec

Points: 20 | **Due:** Sunday, February 22, 2026 @ 11pm Pacific

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Compute: CPU (free tier)

Learning Objectives

1. **Understand** how words become numbers (and why it matters)
 2. **Train** your own Word2Vec model on domain-specific data
 3. **Document** embedding successes AND failures
 4. **Create** business-relevant word analogies
 5. **Compare** your embeddings to pre-trained models
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Why This Matters for Business

Recommendation Systems: Netflix and Spotify use embeddings to understand that users who like “thriller” probably like “suspense.” These semantic relationships power personalized recommendations worth billions.

Customer Support: Zendesk uses embeddings to route tickets—understanding that “can’t login” and “password not working” mean the same thing, even without shared words.

Competitive Intelligence: Investment firms train embeddings on SEC filings to find companies with similar business models, even when they use different terminology.

Search & Discovery: Google’s search understands that “cheap flights to Vegas” and “affordable airfare Las Vegas” should return similar results—that’s embeddings at work.

Grading

Component	Points	Effort	What We're Looking For
Data Prep	3	*	Text preprocessed for Word2Vec
Model Training	4	*	Word2Vec model trained successfully
Similarities	4	**	Word similarities explored and analyzed
Failures	4	**	At least 1 embedding failure documented
Analogies	3	***	3 business-relevant analogies tested
Comparison	2	*	Compared to pre-trained embeddings
Total	20		

Effort Key: * Straightforward | ** Requires thinking | *** Challenge

The Big Picture

Before embeddings, computers saw words as arbitrary symbols. **Word2Vec changed everything** by learning that similar words should have similar numbers.

The magic: king - man + woman ≈ queen

Instructions

1. Open MIS769_HW4_Word_EMBEDDINGS.ipynb in Google Colab
 2. Load your dataset (need 10,000+ documents for good embeddings)
 3. Preprocess text for Word2Vec training
 4. Train your model and explore word similarities
 5. Hunt for embedding failures (antonyms, rare words, polysemy)
 6. Create and test business-relevant analogies
 7. Compare your embeddings to pre-trained GloVe
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What Your Output Should Look Like

Word Similarities:

WORD SIMILARITIES

```
'good' is similar to:  
great          0.842  
excellent      0.798  
nice           0.756  
bad            0.712 ← Antonym problem!  
decent         0.694
```

Analogy Results:

```
bad - better + good = ?  
→ worse (0.634)    ✓ Makes sense!  
→ bad (0.598)  
→ terrible (0.521)
```

Antonym Test:

ANTONYM TEST

```
good      ↔ bad       : 0.712  TOO SIMILAR!  
love      ↔ hate      : 0.689  TOO SIMILAR!  
best      ↔ worst     : 0.758  TOO SIMILAR!
```

Common Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them)

Mistake	Symptom	Fix
Too little data	Poor similarities, random results	Need 10,000+ documents minimum
min_count too high	“Word not in vocabulary” errors	Lower to 5 or 10
min_count too low	Noisy results from rare words	Increase to 10-20
Not lowercasing	“Good” and “good” are different vectors	Lowercase during preprocessing
Short training	Poor quality embeddings	Increase epochs to 15-20
Wrong sg parameter	Skip-gram vs CBOW confusion	sg=1 for skip-gram (usually better)

If you see this error:

KeyError: "word 'xyz' not in vocabulary"

The word appeared fewer than min_count times. Try a more common word or lower min_count.

If similarities seem random: - Your corpus is too small - Try more epochs - Check preprocessing (are you keeping meaningful words?)

Questions to Answer

- **Q1:** Which similarities made sense? Which surprised you?
 - **Q2:** Document an embedding failure: what happened and why?
 - **Q3:** Which analogies worked? Why do some fail?
 - **Q4:** How do your embeddings differ from pre-trained ones?
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Going Deeper (Optional Challenges)

Challenge A: Industry-Specific Analogies

Create 5 analogies specific to your dataset's domain. Example for finance: bull – optimistic + pessimistic = bear?

Challenge B: Embedding Visualization

Use t-SNE to visualize word clusters. Pick 50 words from 5 categories (e.g., positive sentiment, negative sentiment, actors, directors, genres) and show they cluster together.

Challenge C: Temporal Embeddings

If your data has timestamps, train separate models on different time periods. Do word meanings shift? (e.g., “viral” meant something different before social media)

Quick Reference

```

# Train Word2Vec
from gensim.models import Word2Vec

model = Word2Vec(
    sentences=corpus,           # List of tokenized documents
    vector_size=100,            # Embedding dimensions
    window=5,                  # Context window size
    min_count=10,               # Ignore rare words
    workers=4,                  # CPU cores
    sg=1,                      # 1=Skip-gram, 0=CBOW
    epochs=15,                 # Training iterations
    seed=42                    # Reproducibility
)

# Find similar words
model.wv.most_similar("good", topn=5)

# Word analogies: A - B + C = ?
model.wv.most_similar(
    positive=["king", "woman"],
    negative=["man"],
    topn=3
)

# Similarity between two words
model.wv.similarity("good", "great") # → 0.84

# Get word vector
vector = model.wv["good"] # → array of 100 floats

# Check vocabulary
"word" in model.wv # → True/False
len(model.wv)       # → vocabulary size

```

Key Parameters Explained: | Parameter | What it does | Recommendation |-----|-----|-----|-----|
 | vector_size | Dimensions of embedding | 100-300 | | window | Words to consider as context |
 5-10 | | min_count | Minimum word frequency | 5-20 | | sg | Algorithm choice | 1 (skip-gram) for small
 data | | epochs | Training passes | 10-20 |

Submission

Upload to Canvas: - Your completed .ipynb notebook with all cells executed

— Richard Young, Ph.D.