FONDAZIONE BRUNO KESSLER

Language Modelling

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MT Marathon, Edinburgh, 2012

Outline

- Role of LM in ASR and MT
- N-gram Language Models
- Evaluation of Language Models
- Smoothing Schemes
- Discounting Methods
- Class-based LMs
- Maximum-Entropy LMs
- Neural Network LMs
- Toolkits and ARPA file format

Fundamental Equation of ASR

Goal: find the words $\mathbf{w}^*$ in a speech signal $\mathbf{x}$ such that:

$$\mathbf{w}^* = \arg\max_{\mathbf{w}} \Pr(\mathbf{x} \mid \mathbf{w}) \Pr(\mathbf{w}) \qquad (1)$$

Problems:

- language modeling (LM): estimating $\Pr(\mathbf{w})$
- acoustic modeling (AM): estimating $\Pr(\mathbf{x} \mid \mathbf{w})$
- search problem: computing (1)

AM sums over hidden state sequences $\mathbf{s}$ a Markov process of $(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{s})$ from $\mathbf{w}$

$$\Pr(\mathbf{x} \mid \mathbf{w}) = \sum_{\mathbf{s}} \Pr(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{s} \mid \mathbf{w})$$

Hidden Markov Model: hidden states "link" speech frames to words.

Fundamental Equation of SMT

Goal: find the English string $\mathbf{e}$ translating the foreign text $\mathbf{f}$ such that:

$$\mathbf{e}^* = \arg \max_{\mathbf{e}} \Pr(\mathbf{f} \mid \mathbf{e}) \Pr(\mathbf{e}) \tag{2}$$

Problems:

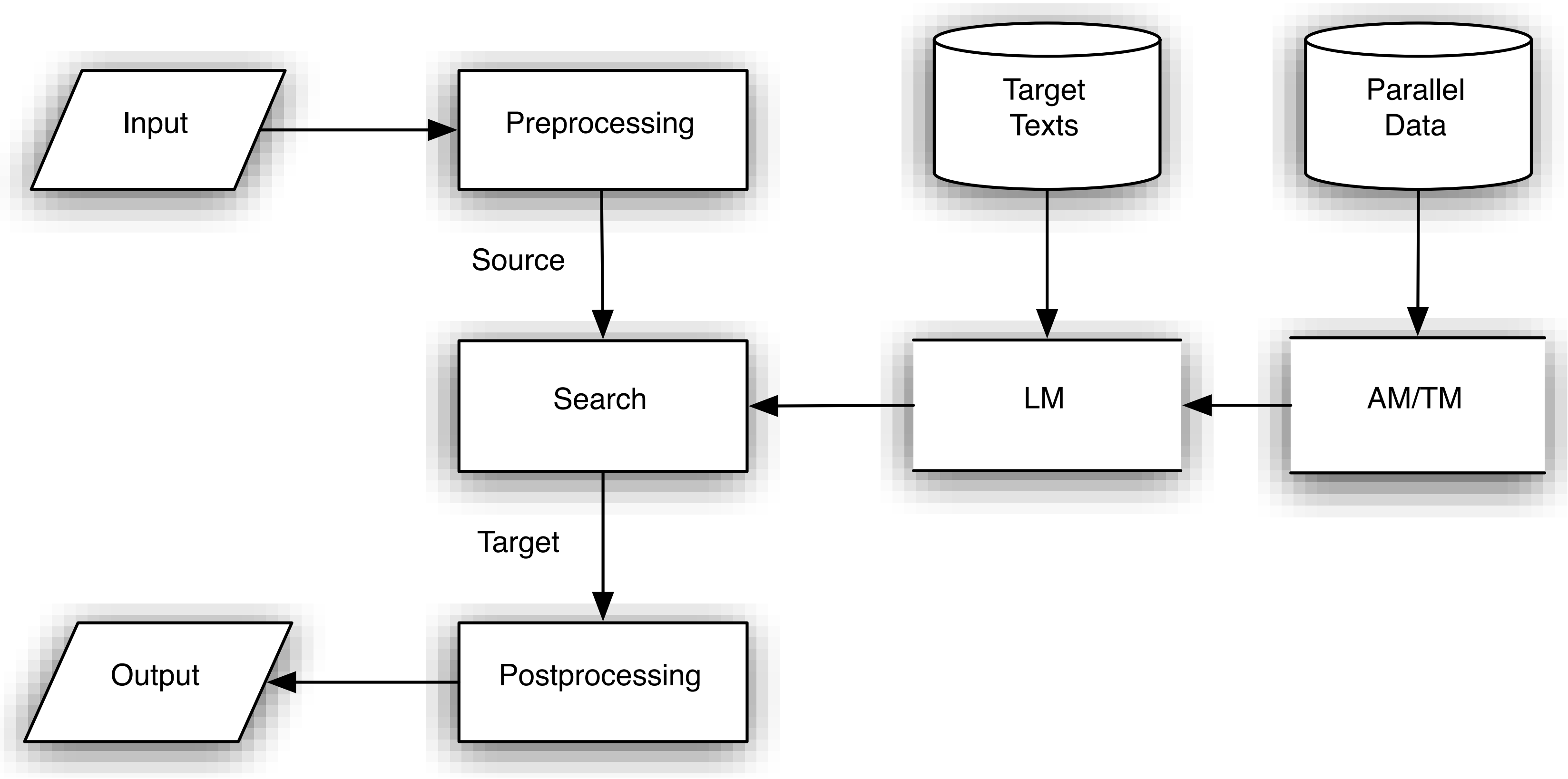
- language modeling (LM): estimating $\Pr(\mathbf{e})$
- translation modeling (TM): estimating $\Pr(\mathbf{f} \mid \mathbf{e})$
- search problem: computing (2)

TM sums over hidden alignments $\mathbf{a}$ a stochastic process generating $(\mathbf{f}, \mathbf{a})$ from $\mathbf{e}$.

$$\Pr(\mathbf{f} \mid \mathbf{e}) = \sum_{\mathbf{a}} \Pr(\mathbf{f}, \mathbf{a} \mid \mathbf{e})$$

Alignment Models: hidden alignments "link" foreign words with English words.

ASR and MT Architectures



- Parallel data are samples of observations $(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{w})$ and $(\mathbf{f}, \mathbf{e})$
- AM and TM can be machine-learned without observing $\mathbf{s}$ and $\mathbf{a}$.

Linear phrase-based SMT

- Translation hypotheses are ranked by:

$$\mathbf{e}^* = \arg\max_{\mathbf{e},\mathbf{a}} \sum_i \lambda_i h_i(\mathbf{e},\mathbf{f},\mathbf{a})$$

- Phrases are finite strings (cf. n-grams)
- Hidden variable $\mathbf{a}$ embeds:
  – segmentation of $\mathbf{f}$ and $\mathbf{e}$ into phrases
  – alignment of phrases of $\mathbf{f}$ with phrases of $\mathbf{e}$
- Feature functions $h_k()$ include:
  – Translation Model: appropriateness of phrase-pairs
  – Distortion Model: word re-ordering
  – Language Model: fluency of target string
  – Length Model: number of target words
- Role of the LM is exactly the same as for the noisy channel approach:
  – to score translations incrementally generated by the search algorithm!

N-gram Language Model

Given a text $\mathbf{w} = w_1 \ldots, w_t, \ldots, w_{|\mathbf{w}|}$ we can compute its probability by:

$$\Pr(\mathbf{w}) = \Pr(w_1) \prod_{t=2}^{|\mathbf{w}|} \Pr(w_t \mid h_t) \tag{3}$$

where $h_t = w_1, \ldots, w_{t-1}$ indicates the history of word w_t.

- $\Pr(w_t \mid h_t)$ becomes difficult to estimate as the history h_t grows .
- hence, we take the n-gram approximation $h_t \approx w_{t-n+1} \ldots w_{t-1}$

  e.g. Full history: $\Pr(\texttt{Parliament} \mid \texttt{I declare resumed the session of the European})$
  $3 - gram$: $\Pr(\texttt{Parliament} \mid \texttt{the European})$

The choice of n determines the complexity of the LM (# of parameters):

- bad: no magic recipe about the optimal order n for a given task
- good: language models can be evaluated quite cheaply

Language Model Evaluation

- Extrinsic: impact on task (e.g. BLEU score for MT)
- Intrinsic: capability of predicting words

The perplexity (PP) measure is defined as: [1]

$$PP = 2^{LP} \quad \text{where} \quad LP = -\frac{1}{|\mathbf{w}|}\log_2 p(\mathbf{w}) \tag{4}$$

- $\mathbf{w}$ is a sufficiently long test sample and $p(\mathbf{w})$ is the LM probability.

Properties:

- $0 \leq PP \leq |V|$ (size of the vocabulary V)
- predictions are as good as guessing among PP equally likely options

Good news: there is typical strong correlation between PP and BLEU scores!

[1] [Exercise 1. Find PP of 1-gram LM on the sequence `T H T H T H T T H T T H` for $p(\mathtt{T})$=0.3, $p(\mathtt{H})$=0.7 and $p(\mathtt{H})$=0.3, $p(\mathtt{T})$=0.7. Comment the results.]

Train-set vs. test-set perplexity

For an n-gram LM, the LP quantity can be computed as follows:

$$LP = -\frac{1}{|\mathbf{w}|} \sum_{t=1}^{|\mathbf{w}|} \log_2 p(w_t \mid h_t).$$

PP is a function of a LM and a text:

- the lower the PP the better the LM
- test-set PP evaluates LM generalization capability
- PP strongly penalizes zero probabilities
- train-set PP measures how good the LM explains training data

Note: train-set PP is strictly related to the train-set likelihood.

N-gram Probabilities

Estimating n-gram probabilities is not trivial due to:

- model complexity: e.g. 10,000 words correspond to 1 trillion 3-grams!
- data sparseness: e.g. most 3-grams are rare events even in huge corpora.

Relative frequency estimate: MLE of any discrete conditional distribution is:

$$f(w \mid x\ y) = \frac{c(w \mid x\ y)}{\sum_w c(w \mid x\ y)} = \frac{c(x\ y\ w)}{c(x\ y)}$$

where n-gram counts $c(\cdot)$ are taken over the training corpus.

Problem: relative frequencies in general overfit the training data

- if the test sample contains a "new" n-gram PP $\rightarrow +\infty$
- this is largely the most frequent case for $n \geq 3$

We need frequency smoothing!

Frequency Smoothing

Issue: $f(w \mid x\ y) > 0$ only if $c(x\ y\ w) > 0$

Idea: for each observed w take off some fraction of probability from $f(w \mid x\ y)$ and redistribute the total to all words never observed after $x\ y$.

- the discounted frequency $f^*(w \mid x\ y)$ satisfies:

$$0 \leq f^*(w \mid x\ y) \leq f(w \mid x\ y) \qquad \forall x, y, w \in V$$

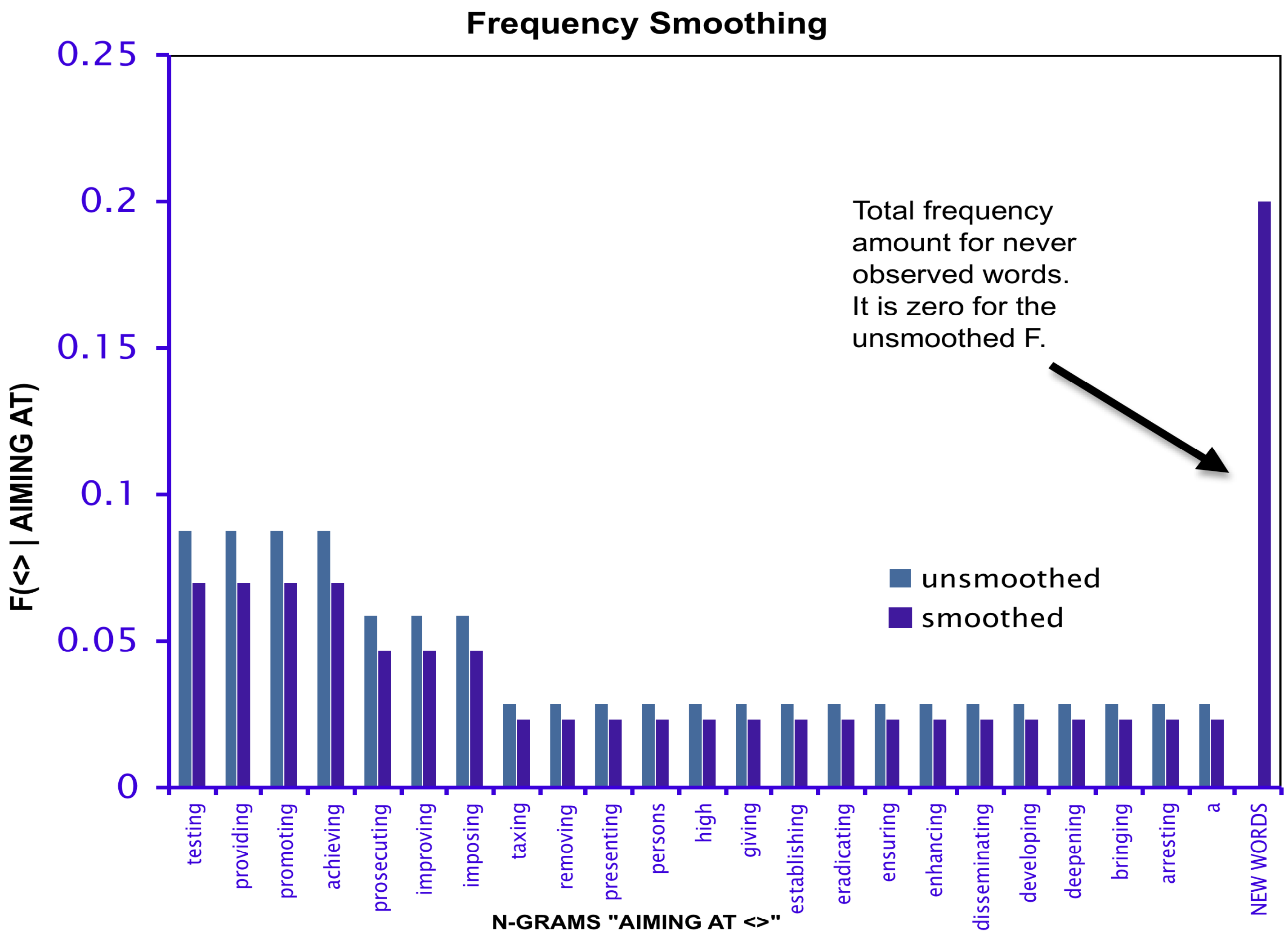
- the total discount is called zero-frequency probability $\lambda(x\ y)$:[2]

$$\lambda(x\ y) = 1.0\ - \sum_{w \in V} f^*(w \mid x\ y)$$

How to redistribute the total discount?

[2] Notice: by convention $\lambda(x\ y) = 1$ if $f(w \mid x\ y) = 0$ for all w, i.e. $c(x\ y) = 0$.

Discounting Example



Frequency Smoothing

Insight: redistribute $\lambda(x\ y)$ according to the lower-order smoothed frequency.

Two major hierarchical schemes to compute the smoothed frequency $p(w \mid x\ y)$:

- Back-off, i.e. select the best available n-gram approximation:

$$p(w \mid x\ y) = \begin{cases} f^*(w \mid x\ y) & \text{if } f^*(w \mid x\ y) > 0 \\ \alpha_{xy} \times \lambda(x\ y) p(w \mid y) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

  where α_{xy} is an appropriate normalization term.[3]

- Interpolation, i.e. sum up the two approximations:

$$p(w \mid x\ y) = f^*(w \mid x\ y) + \lambda(x\ y) p(w \mid y). \quad (6)$$

Smoothed frequencies are learned bottom-up, starting from 1-grams ...

[3][Exercise 2. Find and expression for α_{xy} s.t. $\sum_w p(w \mid x\ y) = 1$.]

Frequency Smoothing of 1-grams

Unigram smoothing permits to treat out-of-vocabulary (OOV) words in the LM.

Assumptions:

- $|U|$: upper-bound estimate of the size of the true vocabulary
- $f^*(w) > 0$ on observed vocabulary V, e.g. $f^*(w) = c(w)/(N + |V|)$
- λ: total discount reserved to OOV words, e.g. $\lambda = N/(N + |V|)$

Then: 1-gram back-off/interpolation schemes collapse to:

$$p(w) = \begin{cases} f^*(w) & \text{if } \; w \in V \\ \lambda \times (|U| - |V|)^{-1} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

Notice: we introduce approximations when an OOV word o appears:

$$p(w \mid h_1 \; o \; h_2) = p(w \mid h_2) \;\; \text{and} \;\; p(o \mid h) = p(o)$$

Important: use a common value $|U|$ when comparing/combining different LMs!

Discounting Methods

Linear interpolation (LI) [Jelinek, 1990]

- Insight:
  – learn $\lambda(x\ y)$ from data with a mixture model
  – MLE on some held-out data (EM algorithm)
- Solution:

$$f^*(w \mid xy) = (1 - \lambda([x\ y])f(w \mid xy) \quad \text{and} \quad 0 \leq \lambda([x\ y]) \leq 1$$

the notation $[x\ y]$ means that a map is applied to reduce the set of parameters, e.g., according to the frequency of the last word in the history:

$$[x\ y] = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } c(y) \leq k_1 \\ c(y) & \text{if } k_1 < c(y) \leq k_2 \\ y + k_2 & \text{if } k_2 < c(y) \end{cases}$$

- Pros: sound and robust
- Cons: over-smooths frequent n-grams

Discounting Methods

Witten-Bell estimate (WB) [Witten and Bell, 1991]

- Insight: count how often you would back-off after x y in the training data
  - corpus: x y u x x y t t x y u w x y w x y t u x y u x y t
  - assume $\lambda(x\ y) \propto$ number of back-offs (i.e. 3)
  - hence $f^*(w \mid x\ y) \propto$ relative frequency (linear discounting)
- Solution:

$$\lambda(x\ y) = \frac{n(x\ y\ *)}{c(x\ y) + n(x\ y\ *)} \quad \text{and} \quad f^*(w \mid xy) = \frac{c(x\ y\ w)}{c(x\ y) + n(x\ y\ *)}$$

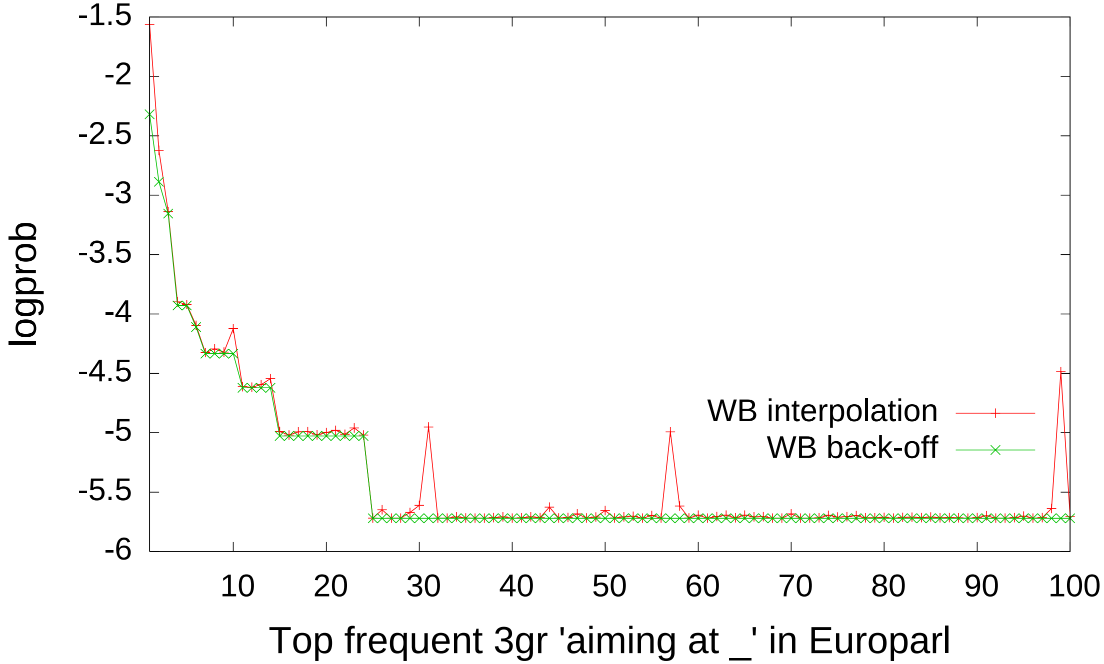
where $c(x\ y) = \sum_w c(x\ y\ w)$ and $n(x\ y\ *) = |\{w : c(x\ y\ w) > 0\}|$. [4]

- Pros: easy to compute, robust for small corpora, works with artificial data.
- Cons: underestimates probability of frequent n-grams

[4] [Exercise 3. Compute $f^*(\mathtt{u} \mid \mathtt{x\ y})$ with WB on the above artificial text.]

Discounting Methods

- Interpolation and back-off with WB discounting
- Trigram LMs estimated on the English Europarl corpus
- Logprobs of 3-grams of type `aiming at _` observed in training



- Peaks correspond to very probable 2-grams interpolated with f^* respectively: `at that`, `at national`, `at European`
- Back-off performs slightly better than interpolation but costs more

Discounting Methods

Absolute Discounting (AD) [Ney and Essen, 1991]

- Insight:
  - high counts are be more reliable than low counts
  - subtract a small constant β $(0 < \beta \leq 1)$ from each count
  - estimate β by maximizing the leaving-one-out likelihood of the training data
- Solution: (notice: one distinct β for each n-gram order)

$$f^*(w \mid x\ y) = max\left\{\frac{c(xyw) - \beta}{c(xy)}, 0\right\} \text{ which gives } \quad \lambda(xy) = \beta\frac{\sum_{w:c(xyw)>1} 1}{c(xy)}$$

where $\beta \approx \frac{n_1}{n_1+2n_2} \leq 1$ and $n_r = |\{x\ y\ w : c(x\ y\ w) = r\}|$. [5]

- Pros: easy to compute, accurate estimate of frequent n-grams.
- Cons: problematic with small and artificial samples.

[5] [Exercise 4. Given the text in WB slide find the number of 3-grams, n_1, n_2, β, $f^*(\mathtt{w} \mid \mathtt{x\ y})$ and $\lambda(\mathtt{x\ y})$]

Discounting Methods

Kneser-Ney method (KN) [Kneser and Ney, 1995]

- Insight: lower order counts are only used in case of back-off
  - estimate frequency of back-offs to `y w` in the training data (cf. WB)
  - corpus: `x y w x t y w t x y w u y w t y w u x y w u u y w`
  - replace $c(x\ y)$ with $n(*\ y\ w)$ = # of observed back-offs (=3)

- Solution: (for 3-gram normal counts)

$$f^*(w \mid y) = max\left\{\frac{n(*\ y\ w) - \beta}{n(*\ y\ *)}, 0\right\} \text{ which gives } \quad \lambda(y) = \beta\frac{\sum_{w:n(*\ y\ w)>1} 1}{n(*\ y\ *)}$$

where $n(*\ y\ w) = |\{x : c(x\ y\ w) > 0\}|$ and $n(*\ y\ *) = |\{x\ w : c(x\ y\ w) > 0\}|$

- Pros: better back-off probabilities, can be applied to other smoothing methods
- Cons: LM cannot be used to compute lower order n-gram probs

Discounting Methods

Modified Kneser-Ney (MKN) [Chen and Goodman, 1999]

- Insight:
  - specific discounting coefficients for infrequent n-grams
  - introduce more parameters and estimate them with leaving-one-out
- Solution:

$$f^*(w \mid x\ y) = \frac{c(x\ y\ w) - \beta(c(x\ y\ w))}{c(x\ y)}$$

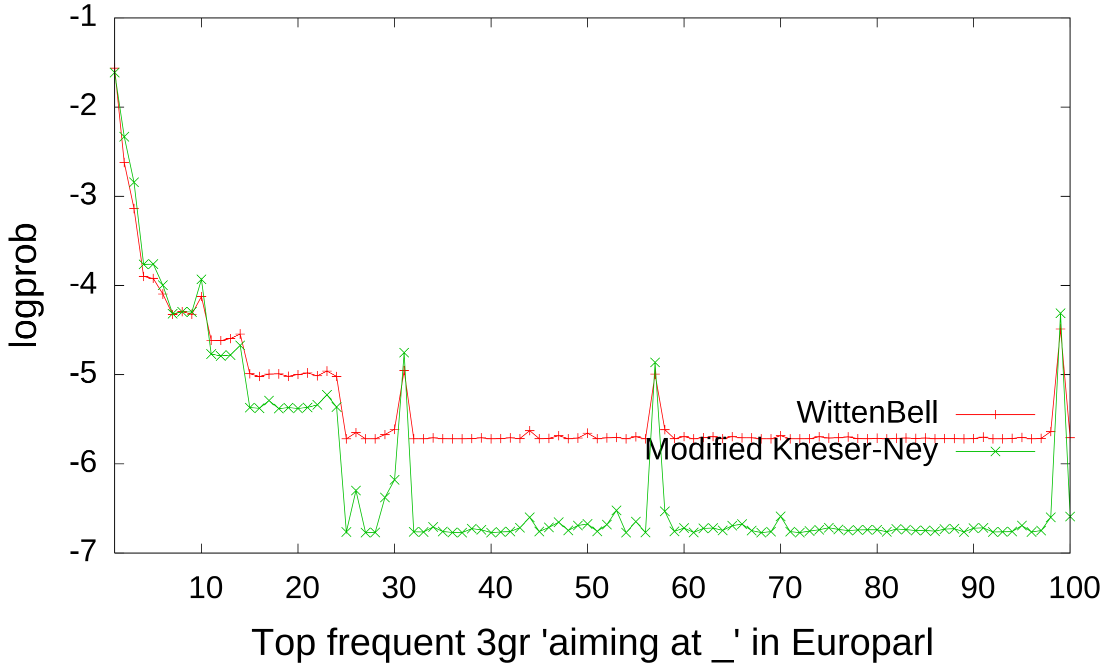
where $\beta(0) = 0$, $\beta(1) = D_1$, $\beta(2) = D_2$, $\beta(c) = D_{3+}$ if $c \geq 3$, coefficients are computed from n_r statistics, corrected counts used for lower order n-grams

- Pros: see previous + more fine grained smoothing
- Cons: see previous + more sensitiveness to noise

Important: LM interpolation with MKN is the most popular smoothing method. Under proper training conditions it gives the best PP and BLEU scores!

Discounting Methods

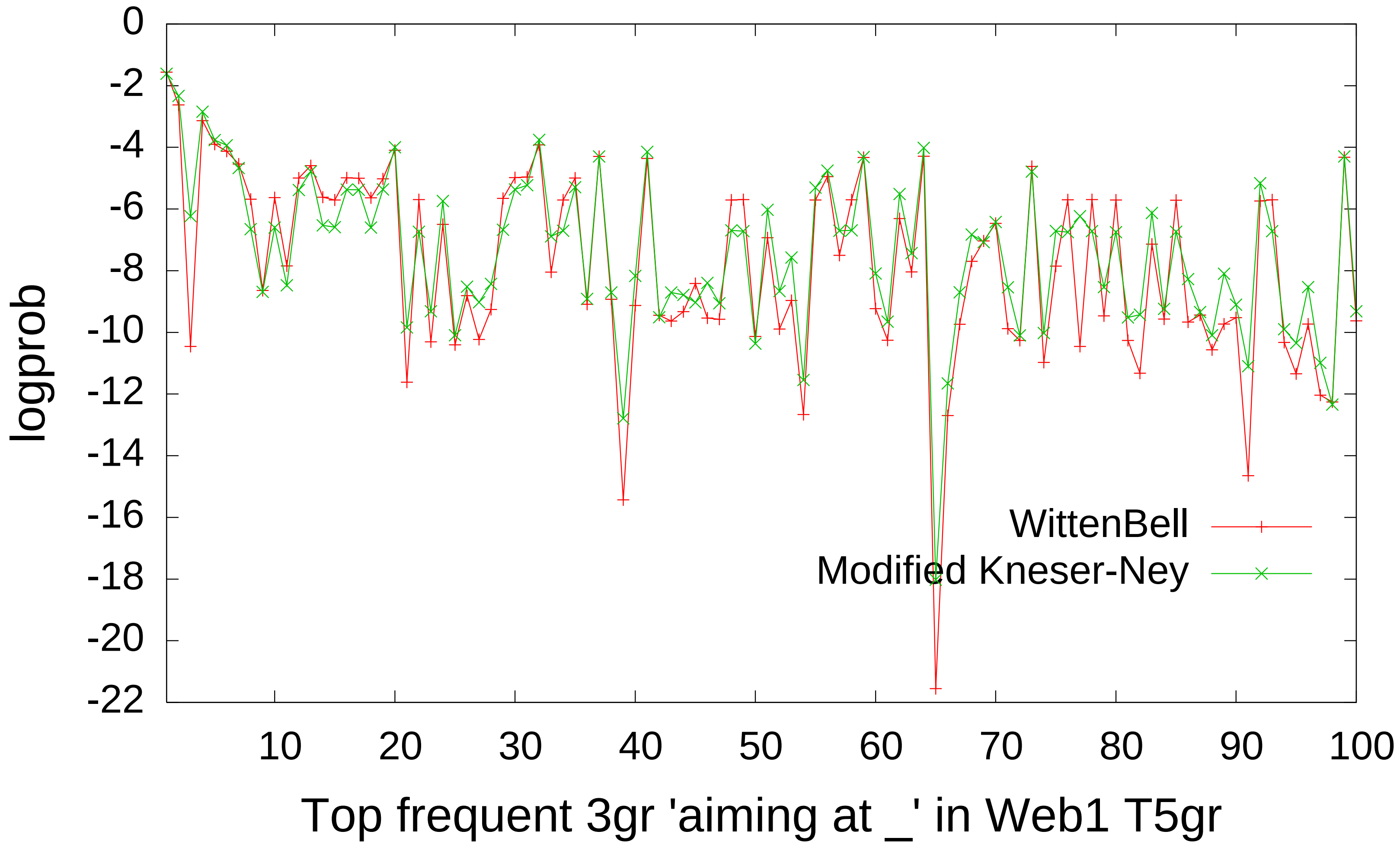
- Interpolation with WB and MKN discounting (Europarl corpus)
- The plot shows the logprob of observed 3-grams of type `aiming at _`



- Notice that for less frequent 3-grams WB assigns higher probability
- We have three very high peaks corresponding to large corrected counts: `n(*at that)=665 n(* at national)=598 n(* at European)=1118`
- Another interesting peak at rank #26: n(* at very)=61

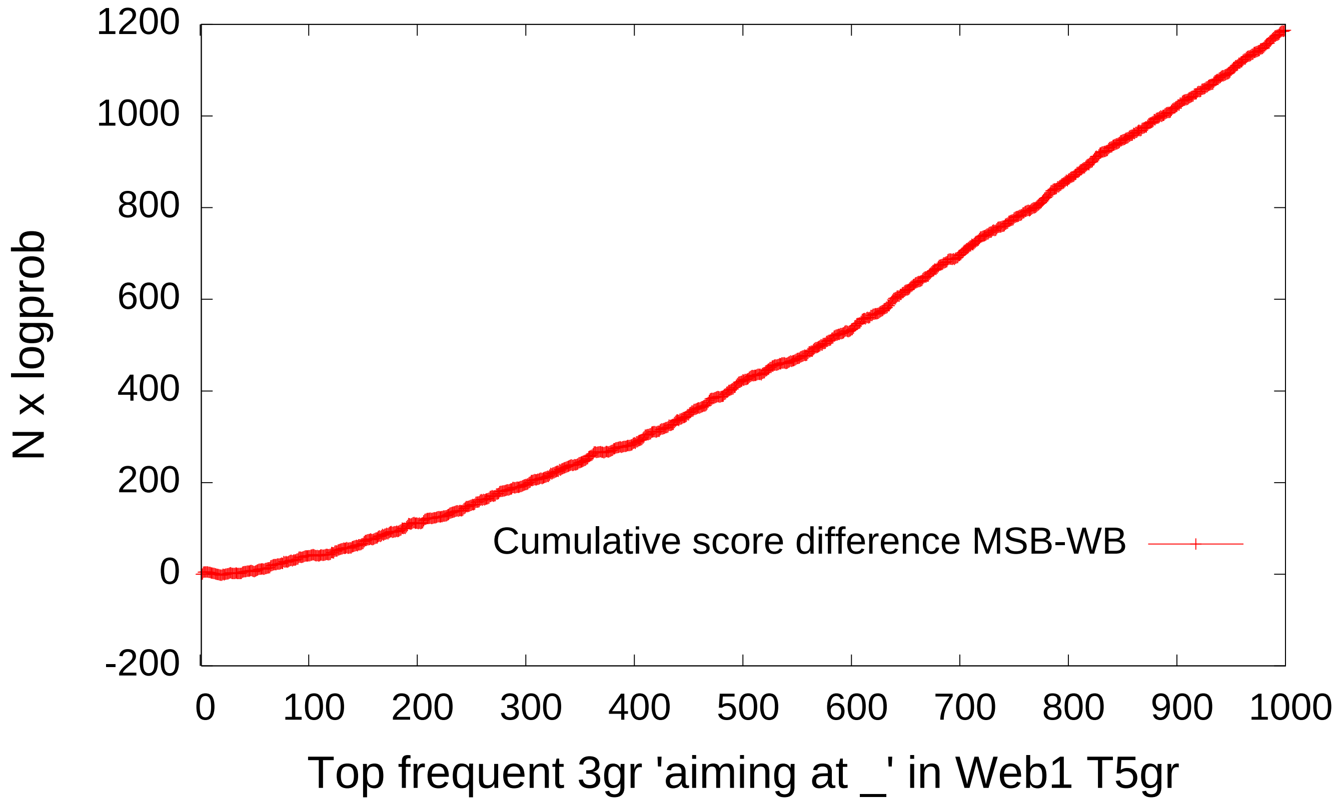
Discounting Methods

- Train: interpolation with WB and MKN discounting (Europarl corpus)
- Test: 3-grams of type `aiming at _` (Google 1TWeb corpus)



Discounting Methods

- Train: interpolation with WB and MKN discounting (Europarl corpus)
- Test: 3-grams of type `aiming at _` (Google 1TWeb corpus)
- Plot: cumulative score differences between MKN and WB on top 1000 3-grams



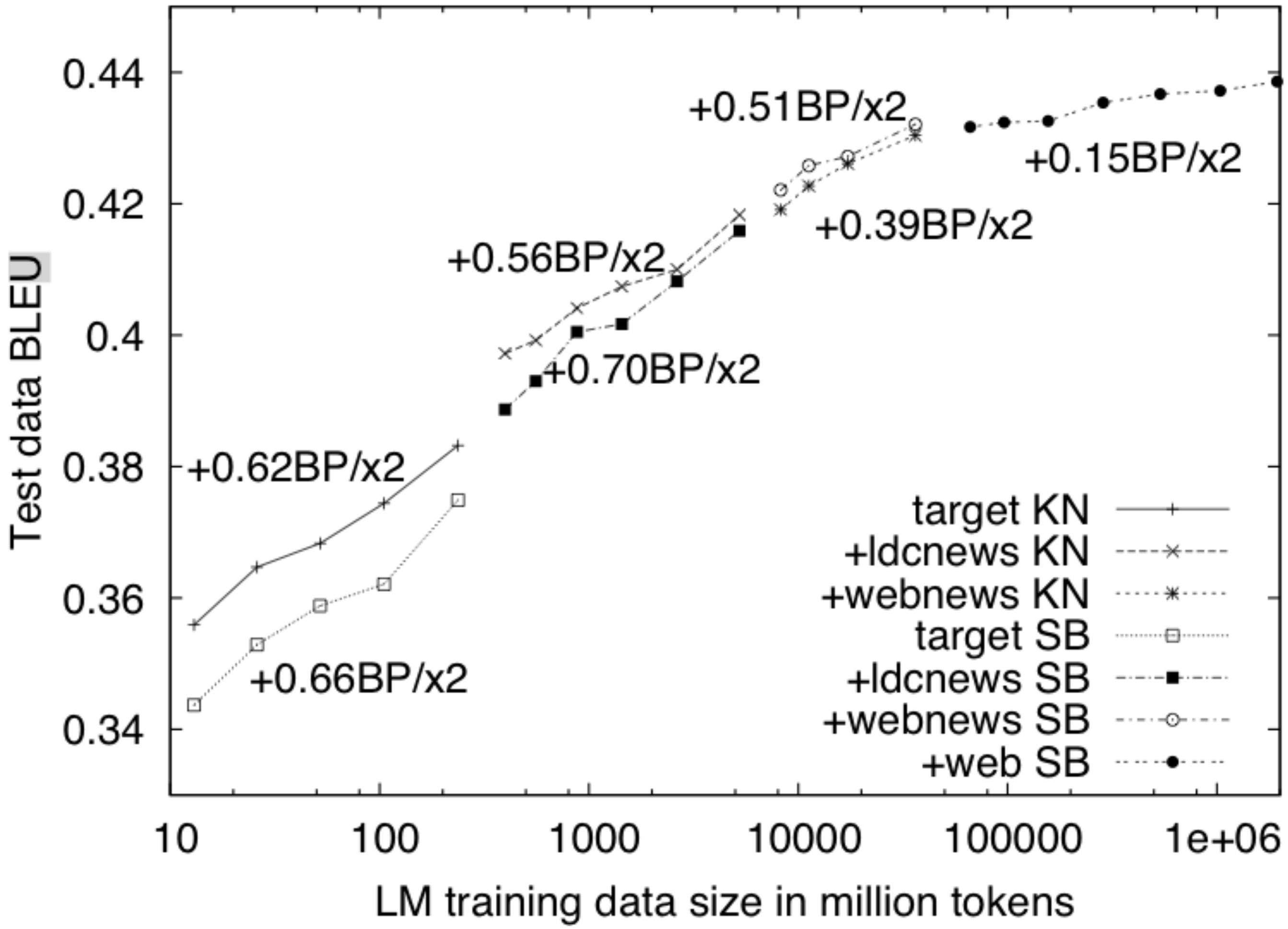
Approximate Smoothing

- LM Quantization [Federico and Bertoldi, 2006]
  - Idea: one codebook for each n-gram/back-off level
  - Pros: improves storage efficiency
  - Cons: reduces discriminatory power
  - Experiments with 8bit quantization on ZH-EN NIST task showed:
    * 2.7% BLEU drop with a 5-gram LM trained on 100M-words
    * 1.6% BLEU drop with a 5-gram LM trained on 1.7G words.
- Stupid back-off [Brants et al., 2007]
  - no discounting, no corrected counts, no back-off normalization

$$p(w \mid x\ y) = \begin{cases} f(w \mid x\ y) & \text{if } f(w \mid x\ y) > 0 \\ k \cdot p(w \mid y) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (8)$$

where $k = 0.4$ and $p(w) = c(w)/N$.

Is LM Smoothing Necessary?



From [Brants et al., 2007]. SB=stupid back-off, KN=modified Kneser-Ney

- Conclusion: proper smoothing useful up to 1 billion word training data!

Factored LMs

- Use less sparse representation of words than surface form words
  – e.g. part-of-speech, semantic classes, lemmas, automatic clusters
- Higher chance to match longer n-grams in test sequences
  – allows to model longer dependencies, to capture more syntax structure
- For a text $\mathbf{w}$ we assume a corresponding class sequence $\mathbf{g}$
  – ambiguous (e.g. POS) or deterministic (word classes)
- Factored LMs can be integrated into log-linear models with:
  – a word-to-class factored model: $\mathbf{f} \rightarrow \mathbf{e} \rightarrow \mathbf{g}$ with features:

$$h_1(\mathbf{f}, \mathbf{e}) \ , h_2(\mathbf{f}, \mathbf{g}) \ , h_3(\mathbf{f}) \ , h_4(\mathbf{g})$$

  – a word-class joint model $\mathbf{f} \rightarrow (\mathbf{e}, \mathbf{g})$ with features

$$h_1(\mathbf{f}, \mathbf{e}, \mathbf{g}) \ , h_2(\mathbf{f}) \ , h_3(\mathbf{g})$$

Features of single sequences are log-probs of standard n-gram LMs.

Maximum Entropy N-gram LMs

- The n-gram prob is modeled with log-linear model [Rosenfeld, 1996]:

$$p_\lambda(w \mid h) = \frac{\exp\left(\sum_{r=1}^{m} \lambda_r h_r(h,w)\right)}{\sum_{w'} \exp\left(\sum_{r=1}^{m} \lambda_r h_r(h,w')\right)} = \frac{1}{Z(h)} \exp\left(\sum_{r=1}^{m} \lambda_r h_r(h,w)\right)$$

- $h_r(\cdot)$ are feature functions (arbitrary statistics), λ_r are free paramenters
- Features can model any dependency between w and h.
- Given feature functions and training sample $\mathbf{w}$, parameters can be estimated [Berger et al., 1996] by maximizing the posterior log-likelihood:

$$\hat{\lambda} = \arg \underset{\lambda \in \mathbf{R}^m}{max} \sum_{t=1}^{|\mathbf{w}|} \log p_\lambda(w_t \mid h_t) + \log q(\lambda)$$

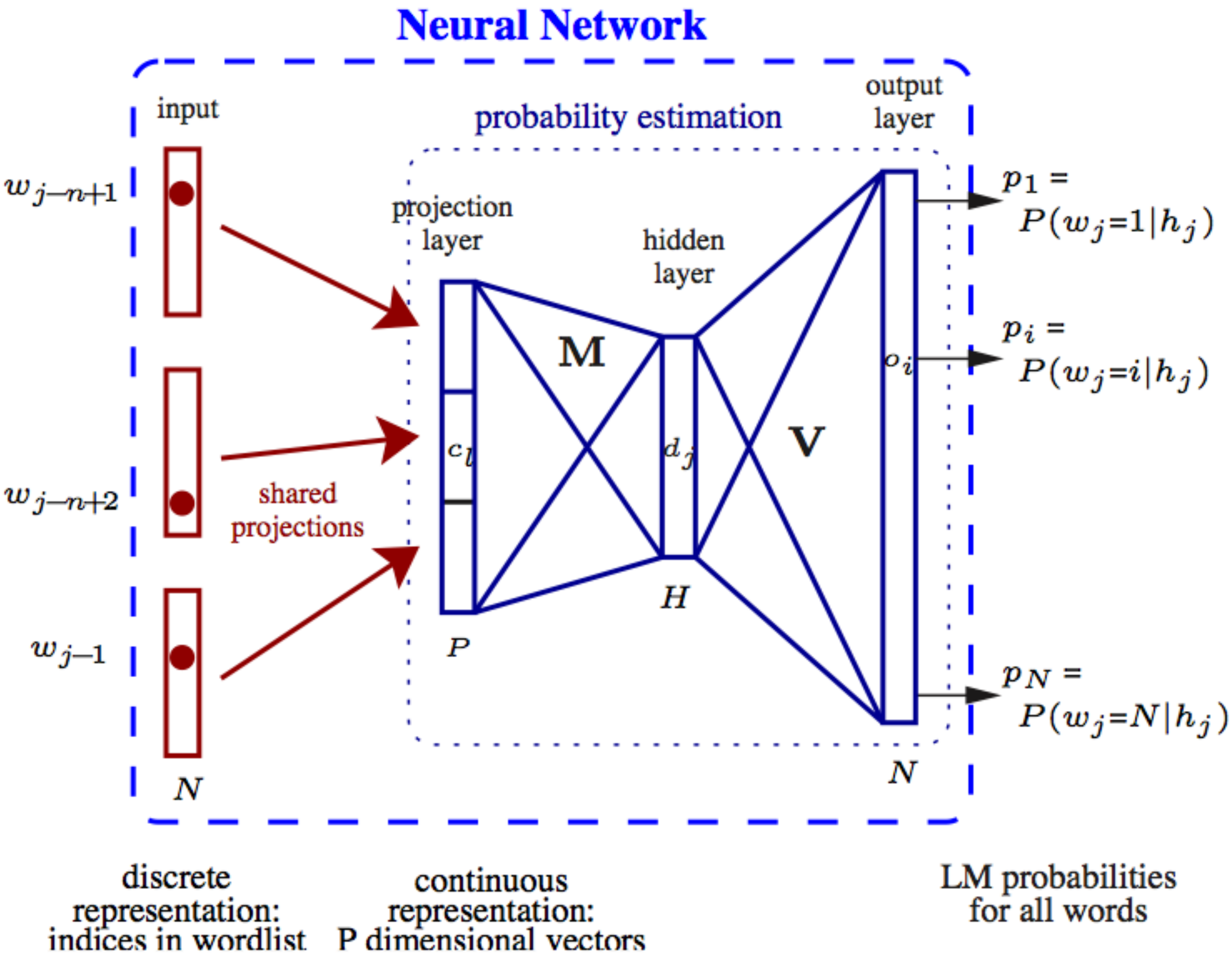
- where the second term is a regularizing Gaussian prior
- ME n-grams are rarely used: perform comparably but at higher computational costs, because of the partition function $Z(h)$.

Neural Network LMs

- Most promising among recent development on n-gram LMs.
- Idea: Map single word into a $|V|$-dimensional vector space
  - Represent n-gram LM as a map between vector spaces
- Solution: Learn map with neural network (NN) architecture
  - one hidden layer compress information (projection)
  - second hidden layer performs the n-gram prediction
  - other architectures are possible: e.g. recurrent NN
- Implementations:
  - Continuous Space Language Model [Schwenk et al., 2006]
  - Recurrent Neural Network Language Modeling Toolkit [6]
- Pros:
  - Fast run-time, competitive when used jointly with standard model
- Cons:
  - Computational cost of training phase
  - Not easy to integrate into search algorithm (used in re-scoring)

[6] http://rnnlm.sourceforge.net

Neural Network LMs



(From [Schwenk et al., 2006])

Language Modelling Today

- Availability of large scale corpora has pushed research toward using huge LMs
- MT systems set for evaluations use LMs with over a billion of 5-grams
- Estimating accurate large scale LMs is still computationally costly
- Querying large LMs can be carried out rather efficiently (with adequate RAM)

Available LM toolkits

- SRILM: training and run-time, Moses support, open source (no commercial)
- IRSTLM: training and run-time, Moses support, open source
- KENLM: run-time, Moses support, open source

Interoperability

- The standard for n-gram LM representation is the so-called ARPA file format.

ARPA File Format (srilm, irstlm)

Represents both interpolated and back-off n-gram LMs

- format: log(smoothed-prob) :: n-gram :: log(back-off weight)
- computation: look first for smoothed-prob, otherwise back-off

```
ngram 1= 86700
ngram 2= 1948935
ngram 3= 2070512

\1-grams:
-2.94351     world    -0.51431
-6.09691     friends  -0.15553
-2.88382     !        -2.38764

  ...

\2-grams:
-3.91009     world !        -0.3514
-3.91257     hello world    -0.2412
-3.87582     hello friends  -0.0312

  ...

\3-grams:
-0.00108     hello world  !
-0.00027     hi hello  !
  ...

\end\
```

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  ...

\3-grams:
-0.00108      hello world   !
-0.00027      hi hello   !
  ...

\end\
```

Query: Pr(! / hello friends)?

1. look-up logPr(hello friends !)
   failed! then back-off
2. look-up logBow(hello friends)
   res=-0.0312
3. look-up logPr(friends !)
   failed! then back-off
4. look-up logBow(friends)
   res=res-0.15553
5. look-up logPr(!)
   res=res-2.88382
6. prob=exp(res)=0.04640

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