Automatic Speech Recognition: Introduction

Peter Bell

Automatic Speech Recognition— ASR Lecture 1
17 January 2022

Automatic Speech Recognition — ASR

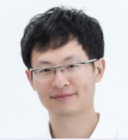
Course details

- **Lectures:** About 18 lectures, delivered in person
- **Labs:** Weekly lab sessions – using Python, OpenFst (openfst.org) and later Kaldi (kaldi-asr.org)
  - Lab sessions will start in Week 3 – expected to be in person.
- **Assessment:**
  - First five lab sessions worth **10%**
  - Coursework, building on the lab sessions, worth **40%**
  - Open book exam in April or May worth **50%**

http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/courses/asr/

Course details

- **People:**
  - Course organiser: Peter Bell
  - Assistant lecturer: Hao Tang
  - Guest lecturer: Yumnah Mohammied
  - TA: Zeyu Zhao
  - Demonstrators: Ramon Sanabria, Jie Chi, Electra Wallington






Lectures

Probably 18 lectures in total

- 5 delivered by Hao, including: Signal Signal Analysis (lectures 2-3) and HMM Algorithms (lectures 4-5)
- 1 guest lecture delivered by Yumnah on a cutting-edge research topic (lecture 18)
- The remaining 12 delivered by me

Labs

- Series of weekly labs using Python, OpenFst and Kaldi
- They count towards 10% of the course credit
- Labs start week 3 – expected to be four lab groups
- You will need to work **in pairs**
- Labs 1-5 will give you hands-on experience of using HMM algorithms to build your own ASR system
  - These labs are an important pre-requisite for the coursework – take advantage of the demonstrator support!
- Later optional labs will introduce you to Kaldi recipes for training acoustic models – useful if you will be doing an ASR-related research project

Other teaching support

- Teaching assistant Zeyu Zhao will help with lab and coursework setup, as well as answering questions online
- We use Piazza, and aim for a quick response time throughout the semester and right up until the exam
- I may run an office hour this year – watch out for announcements

Your background

If you have taken:

- Speech Processing *and* either of (MLPR or MLP)
  - Perfect!
- either of (MLPR or MLP) *but not* Speech Processing (probably you are from Informatics)
  - You'll require some speech background:
    - A couple of the lectures will cover material that was in Speech Processing
    - Some additional background study (including material from Speech Processing)
- Speech Processing *but neither of* (MLPR or MLP) (probably you are from SLP)
  - You'll require some machine learning background (especially neural networks)
    - A couple of introductory lectures on neural networks provided for SLP students
    - Some additional background study

What is speech recognition?

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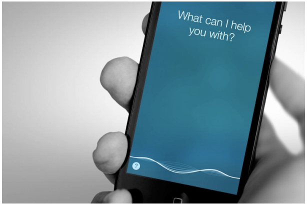

What is speech recognition?

Speech-to-text transcription

- Transform recorded audio into a sequence of words
- Just the words, no meaning.... But do need to deal with acoustic ambiguity: "Recognise speech?" or "Wreck a nice beach?"

Sometimes also considering...

- Speaker diarization: Who spoke when?
- Speech recognition: what did they say?
- Paralinguistic aspects: how did they say it? (timing, intonation, voice quality)
- Speech understanding: what does it mean?

Why is speech recognition difficult?

From a linguistic perspective

Many sources of variation

Speaker Tuned for a particular speaker, or speaker-independent? Adaptation to speaker characteristics

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Language spoken Estimated 7,000 languages, most with limited training resources; code-switching; language change

From a machine learning perspective

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- Hierachical and compositional nature of speech production and comprehension makes it difficult to handle with a single model

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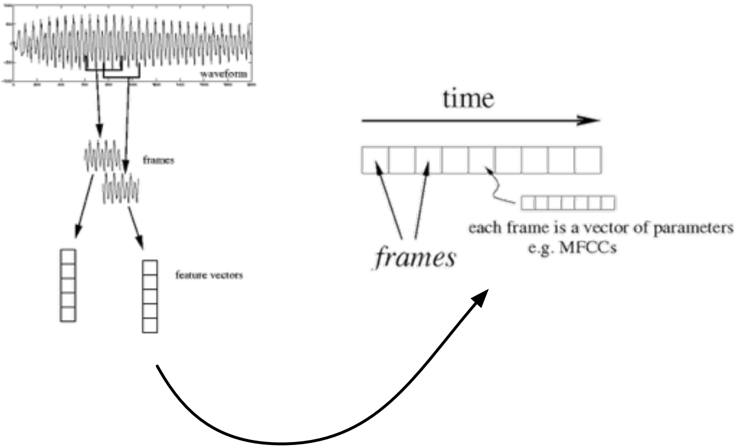
- At recognition time, our aim is to find the most likely W, given X
- To achieve this, statistical models are trained using a corpus of labelled training utterances (X^n, W^n)

Representing recorded speech (X)



Represent a recorded utterance as a sequence of *feature vectors*

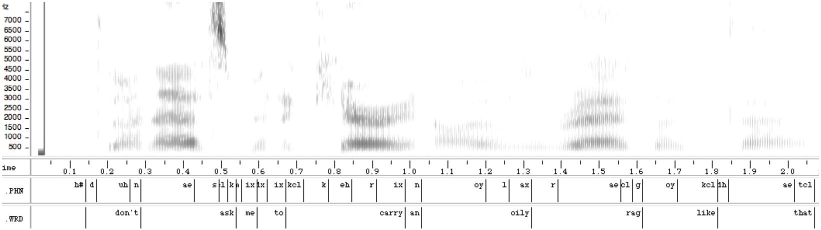
Reading: Jurafsky & Martin section 9.3

Acoustic units

- **Phonemes**
  - abstract unit defined by linguists based on contrastive role in word meanings (eg "pat" vs "bat")
  - 40–50 phonemes in English
- **Phones**
  - speech sounds defined by the acoustics
  - phones may be *allophones* of the same phoneme (eg /p/ in "pit" and "spit")
  - limitless in number
- Possible alternatives: syllables, characters ("graphemes"), automatically derived units, ...

(Slide taken from Martin Cooke from long ago)

Labelling speech (W)



Labels may be at different levels: words, phones, etc.
Labels may or may not be *time-aligned* – do we know the start and end times of an acoustic segment corresponding to a label?

Reading: Jurafsky & Martin chapter 7 (especially sections 7.4, 7.5)

Two machine learning challenges

In **training** the model:

Aligning the sequences X^n and W^n for each training utterance

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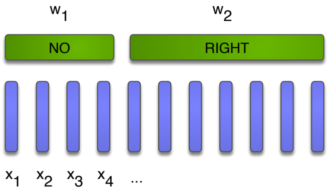

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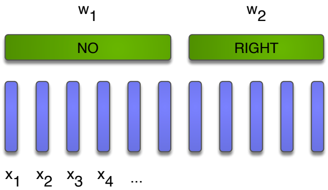

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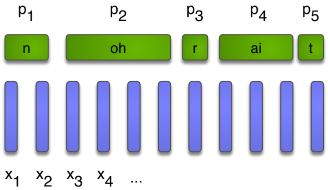

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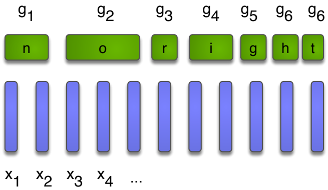

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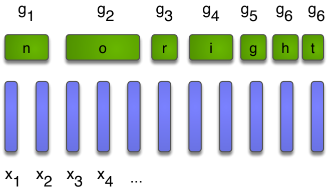

In **performing recognition**:

Searching over all possible output sequences W
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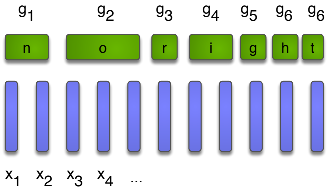

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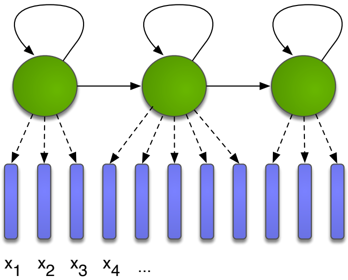
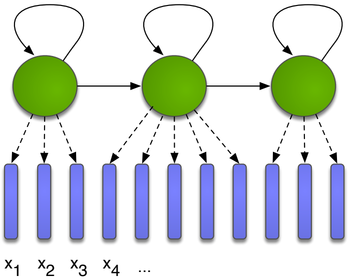
The **hidden Markov model** (HMM) provides a good solution to both problems

The Hidden Markov Model



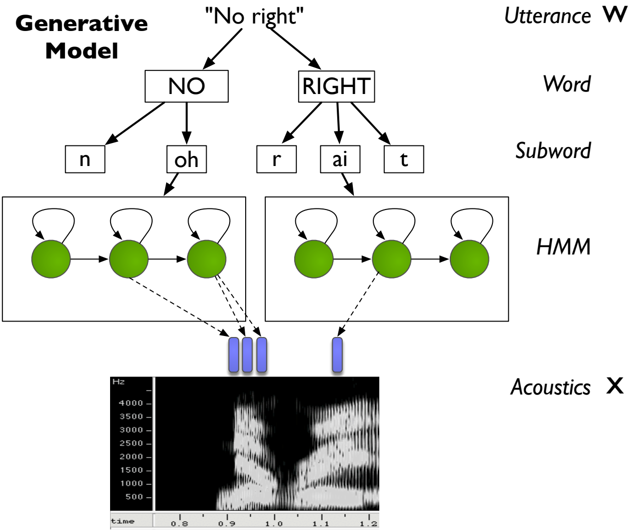
- A simple but powerful model for mapping a sequence of continuous observations to a sequence of discrete outputs
- It is a **generative** model for the observation sequence
- Algorithms for training (forward-backward) and recognition-time decoding (Viterbi)

The Hidden Markov Model



- A simple but powerful model for mapping a sequence of continuous observations to a sequence of discrete outputs
- It is a **generative** model for the observation sequence
- Algorithms for training (forward-backward) and recognition-time decoding (Viterbi)
- Later in the course we will also look at newer all-neural, fully-differentiable "end-to-end" models

Hierarchical modelling of speech



"Fundamental Equation of Statistical Speech Recognition"

If X is the sequence of acoustic feature vectors (observations) and W denotes a word sequence, the most likely word sequence W^* is given by

$$W^* = \arg\max_{W} P(W \mid X)$$

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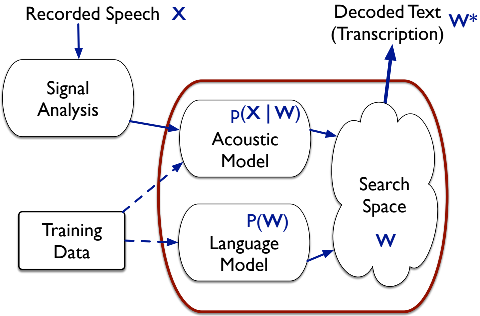
Applying Bayes' Theorem:

$$\begin{aligned} P(\mathrm{W} \mid \mathrm{X}) &= \frac{p(\mathrm{X} \mid \mathrm{W}) P(\mathrm{W})}{p(\mathrm{X})} \\ &\propto p(\mathrm{X} \mid \mathrm{W}) P(\mathrm{W}) \\ \mathrm{W}^* &= \arg\max_{\mathrm{W}} \underbrace{p(\mathrm{X} \mid \mathrm{W})}_{\text{Acoustic model}} \quad \underbrace{P(\mathrm{W})}_{\text{Language model}} \end{aligned}$$

Speech Recognition Components

$$W^* = \arg\max_{W} p(X \mid W) P(W)$$

Use an acoustic model, language model, and lexicon to obtain the most probable word sequence W^* given the observed acoustics X



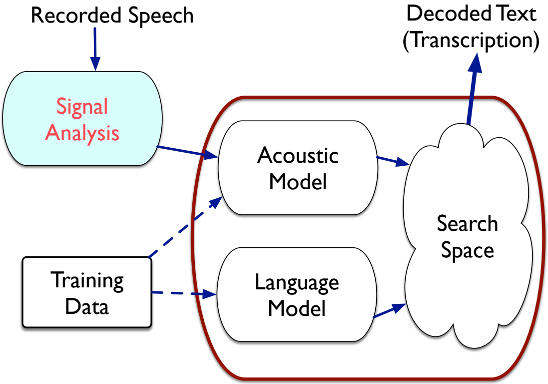
Evaluation

- How accurate is a speech recognizer?
- String edit distance
  - Use dynamic programming to align the ASR output with a reference transcription
  - Three type of error: insertion, deletion, substitutions
- Word error rate (WER) sums the three types of error. If there are N words in the reference transcript, and the ASR output has S substitutions, D deletions and I insertions, then:

$$\mathrm{WER} = 100 \cdot \frac{S + D + I}{N} \% \qquad \mathrm{Accuracy} = 100 - \mathrm{WER}\%$$

- Speech recognition evaluations: common training and development data, release of new test sets on which different systems may be evaluated using word error rate

Next Lecture



Example: recognising TV broadcasts

MGB CHALLENGE

Reading

- Jurafsky and Martin (2008). *Speech and Language Processing* (2nd ed.): Chapter 7 (esp 7.4, 7.5) and Section 9.3.
- General interest:
  - *The Economist Technology Quarterly*, "Language: Finding a Voice", Jan 2017.
    http://www.economist.com/technology-quarterly/2017-05-01/language
  - *The State of Automatic Speech Recognition: Q&A with Kaldi's Dan Povey*, Jul 2018.
    https://medium.com/descript/the-state-of-automatic-speech-recognition-q-a-with-kaldis-dan-povey-c860aada9b85