# Understanding Natural Language Understanding

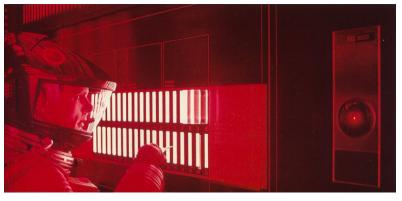
ACM SIGAI Bay Area Chapter Inaugural Meeting
16 July 2014

# How we imagine talking to computers

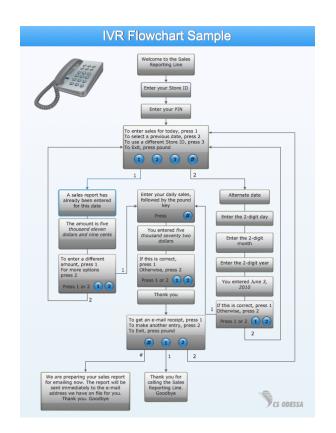








# How we actually talk to computers





#### HAL-9000

In the 1967 Stanley Kubrick movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the spaceship's computer HAL can

- display graphics;
- play chess; and
- conduct natural, open-domain conversations with humans.

How well did the filmmakers do at predicting what computers would be capable in 2001?



# HAL-9000: graphics

HAL





Jurassic Park (1993)



## HAL-9000: chess

HAL



Deep Blue (1997)



# HAL-9000: natural language understanding

HAL



**David Bowman:** Open the pod bay doors, HAL.

**HAL:** I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that.

**David:** What are you talking about, HAL?

**HAL:** I know that you and Frank were planning to disconnect me, and I'm afraid that's something I cannot allow to happen.

Siri (2011)



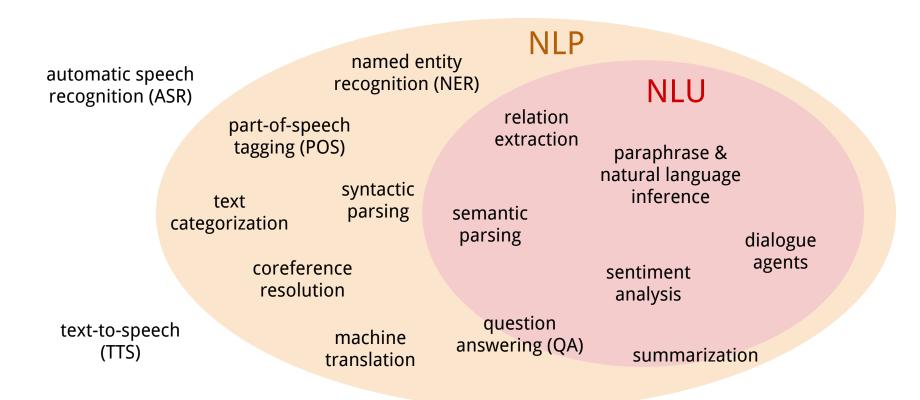
**Colbert:** ... I don't want to search for anything! I want to write the show!

**Siri:** Searching the Web for "search for anything. I want to write the shuffle."

**Colbert:** ... For the love of God, the cameras are on, give me something?

**Siri:** What kind of place are you looking for? Camera stores or churches?

## Terminology: NLU vs. NLP vs. ASR



## Outline

- Introduction
- NLU yesterday and today
- Relation extraction
- Semantic parsing
- Vector-space semantics
- Sentiment analysis

# A brief history of NLU

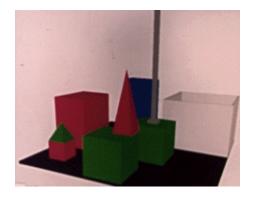
- 1960s: Pattern-matching with small rule-sets
- 1970-80s: Linguistically rich, logic-driven, grounded systems; restricted applications
- 1990s: the "statistical revolution" in NLP leads to a decrease in NLU work
- 2010s: NLU returns to center stage, mixing techniques from previous decades

# SHRDLU (Winograd 1972)

- H. What does the box contain?
- C. THE BLUE PYRAMID AND THE BLUE BLOCK.
- H. What is the pyramid supported by?
- C. THE BOX.
- H. How many blocks are not in the box?
- C. FOUR OF THEM.
- H. Is at least one of them narrower than the one which I told you to pick up?
- C. YES, THE RED CUBE.
- H. Is it supported?
- C. YES, BY THE TABLE.

http://youtube.com/watch?v=8SvD-lNg0TA http://hci.stanford.edu/winograd/shrdlu/





## CHAT-80 (Pereira 1980)

Is there more than one country in each continent?

No.

What are the countries from which a river flows into the Black\_Sea?

[romania].

What is the total area of countries south of the Equator and not in Australasia?

10239 ksqmiles.

Which country bordering the Mediterranean borders a country that is bordered by a country whose population exceeds the population of India?

turkey.

What countries border Denmark?

west\_germany.

What countries is Denmark adjacent to?

I don't understand!

## **NLU** today

## An explosion of interest, in both academia and industry:

- voice-driven assistants (Siri, Google Now, Microsoft Cortana)
- natural-language search (Google, Facebook Graph Search)
- question answering (Google, IBM's Watson, Wolfram Alpha)
- web-scale relation extraction (Google, many startups)
- sentiment analysis for automated trading (many hedge funds)
- legal discovery (Cataphora, H5)
- business intelligence (Palantir, Quid)
- social media analytics (a zillion startups)
- content summarization (Summly, other startups)

## Conversational search at Google

what's the population of Chicago who's the mayor how old is he who is he married to

OK Google, where am I
how is traffic in San Diego
show me things to do there
when did the San Diego Zoo open
is it open
how far is it
call them



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiQX-\_Y0gms

when is Thanksgiving
I meant the Canadian one

#### IBM's Watson



## NLU in automated trading

- Most financial trading is now done by automated systems (especially in "high-frequency trading", or HFT)
- Many trading strategies rely in part on automated analysis of unstructured data feeds: newswires, analyst reports, etc.
- You can make vast profits if you can discover and act on market-moving news a few milliseconds faster than rivals
- Essentially, they're using NLU to predict the markets

## The 2008 United Airlines "bankruptcy"

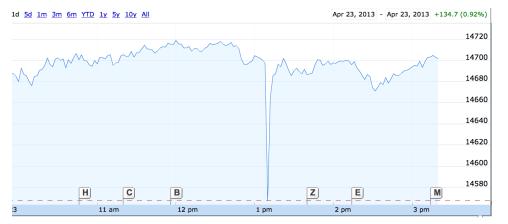
- Newspaper accidentally republished old bankruptcy story
- Automated trading reacted within seconds
- \$1B in market value evaporated within 12 minutes



Read more at <a href="http://nyti.ms/1dBz]SK">http://nyti.ms/1dBz]SK</a>

## The 2013 @AP Twitter hack





@AP Twitter feed hacked.

Within seconds, Dow plunged 140 points.

Recovered in 6 minutes.

S&P 500 temporarily lost \$136B in market cap!

Oops.

## The 2013 @AP Twitter hack

The rapid fire trading also highlights the role of computers and algorithmic trading on Wall Street. "That goes to show you how algorithms read headlines and create these automatic orders — you don't even have time to react as a human being," said Kenny Polcari of O'Neill Securities, on Power Lunch. "I'd imagine the SEC's going to look into how this happens. It's not about banning computers, but it's about protection and securing our markets."

http://www.cnbc.com/id/100646197

## Semantic representations

#### One way of organizing NLU topics: by output representation

relation extraction	discrete	relation instances / database triples	(Larry Page, founder, Google) (Google, located in, Mountain View)
semantic parsing	disc	logical forms / other rich structures	argmax(λx.state(x), λx.size(x))
sentiment analysis	snonu	scalars	- +
vector space models	contin	vectors / topic distributions	politics business business sports science treaty contract star

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## Relation extraction example

CHICAGO (AP) — Citing high fuel prices, United Airlines said Friday it has increased fares by \$6 per round trip on flights to some cities also served by lower-cost carriers. American Airlines, a unit of AMR, immediately matched the move, spokesman Tim Wagner said. United, a unit of UAL, said the increase took effect Thursday night and applies to most routes where it competes against discount carriers, such as Chicago to Dallas and Atlanta and Denver to San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York.

Subject	Relation	Object
American Airlines	subsidiary	AMR
Tim Wagner	employee	American Airlines
United Airlines	subsidiary	UAL

# Extending the Knowledge Graph

Google's Knowledge Graph: >500M entities, >40B relationships Curation is an ongoing challenge — things change! Relies heavily on relation extraction from the web

#### /film/film/starring

Bad Words Jason Bateman
Divergent Shailene Woodley

Non-Stop Liam Neeson

#### /organization/organization/parent

WhatsApp Facebook
Nest Labs Google
Nokia Microsoft

#### /music/artist/track

Macklemore White Privilege

Phantogram Mouthful of Diamonds

Lorde Royals

#### /people/person/date\_of\_death

 Nelson Mandela
 2013-12-05

 Paul Walker
 2013-11-30

 Lou Reed
 2013-10-27

## Approaches to relation extraction

## Many possible approaches to the problem:

- Hand-built patterns (80s and 90s)
- Bootstrapping methods (late 90s)
- Supervised methods (late 90s to late 00s)
- Unsupervised methods (mid 00s to present)

#### The one I'll focus on is *distant supervision*:

- Use relation instances you already know about to learn how the relation is expressed in text
- Then apply that to discover new relation instances

#### Knowledge Graph

Founder: (Bill Gates, Microsoft)

Founder: (Larry Page, Google)

CollegeAttended: (Bill Gates, Harvard)

#### Web documents

Bill Gates founded Microsoft in 1975.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, ...

Bill Gates attended Harvard from...

Google was founded by Larry Page ...

Training data

Knowledge Graph

Training data

Founder: (Bill Gates, Microsoft)

Founder: (Larry Page, Google)

CollegeAttended: (Bill Gates, Harvard)

(Bill Gates, Microsoft)
Label: Founder

Feature: X founded Y

#### Web documents

Bill Gates founded Microsoft in 1975.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, ...

Bill Gates attended Harvard from...

Google was founded by Larry Page ...

Requires entity annotations in web documents See http://lemurproject.org/clueweb12/FACC1/

#### Knowledge Graph

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(Bill Gates, Microsoft)

Label: Founder

Feature: X founded Y Feature: X, founder of Y

Mintz et al. 2009

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#### Training data

(Bill Gates, Microsoft)

Label: Founder

Feature: X founded Y Feature: X, founder of Y

(Larry Page, Google) Label: Founder

Feature: Y was founded by X

## Knowledge Graph

Founder: (Bill Gates, Microsoft)

Founder: (Larry Page, Google)

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#### Web documents

Bill Gates founded Microsoft in 1975.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, ...

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Label: Founder

Feature: X founded Y Feature: X, founder of Y

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Feature: Y was founded by X

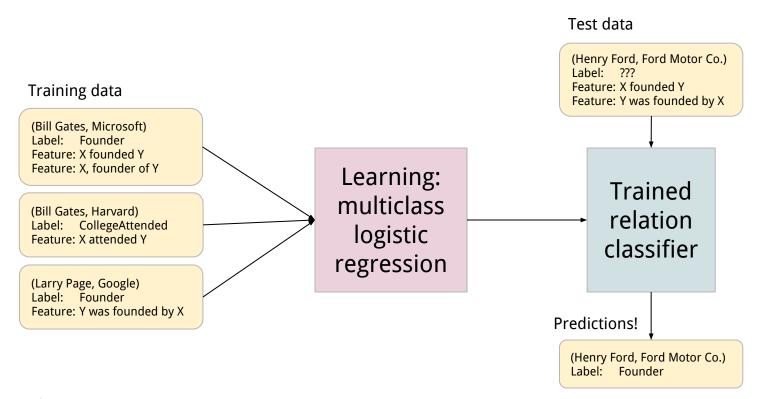
(Bill Gates, Harvard)

Label: CollegeAttended

Feature: X attended Y

Mintz et al. 2009

## Distant supervision: learning a model



## Distant supervision: new relation instances

Relation name	New instance
/location/location/contains	Paris, Montmartre
/location/location/contains	Ontario, Fort Erie
/music/artist/origin	Mighty Wagon, Cincinnati
/people/deceased_person/place_of_death	Fyodor Kamensky, Clearwater
/people/person/nationality	Marianne Yvonne Heemskerk, Netherlands
/people/person/place_of_birth	Wavell Wayne Hinds, Kingston
/book/author/works_written	Upton Sinclair, Lanny Budd
/business/company/founders	WWE, Vince McMahon
/people/person/profession	Thomas Mellon, judge

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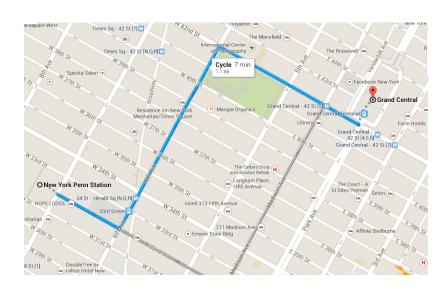
# The semantic parsing task

#### "navigate me to Grand Central by bike"



```
(GetDirections
  (Destination /m/01rz3c)
  (Mode BIKE))
```





## Natural-language interfaces to databases

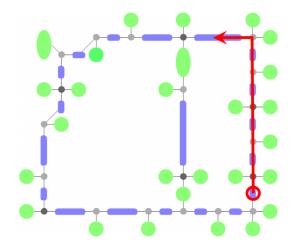
To facilitate data exploration and analysis, you might want to parse natural language into database queries:

```
which country had the highest carbon emissions last year

SELECT country.name
FROM country, co2_emissions
WHERE country.id = co2_emissions.country_id
AND co2_emissions.year = 2013
ORDER BY co2_emissions.volume DESC
LIMIT 1;
```

#### Robot control

For a robot control application, you might want a custom-designed procedural language:



# Semantic query parsing at Google

# A growing proportion of queries require semantic interpretation. Conventional keyword-based retrieval does not suffice!

#### directions to SF by train

```
(TravelQuery
  (Destination /m/0d6lp)
  (Mode TRANSIT))
```

#### angelina jolie net worth

```
(FactoidQuery
  (Entity /m/0f4vbz)
  (Attribute /person/net_worth))
```

#### weather friday austin tx

```
(WeatherQuery
  (Location /m/0vzm)
  (Date 2013-12-13))
```

#### text my wife on my way

```
(SendMessage
  (Recipient 0x31cbf492)
  (MessageType SMS)
  (Subject "on my way"))
```

#### play sunny by boney m

```
(PlayMedia
  (MediaType MUSIC)
  (SongTitle "sunny")
  (MusicArtist /m/017mh))
```

#### is REI open on sunday

```
(LocalQuery
  (QueryType OPENING_HOURS)
  (Location /m/02nx4d)
  (Date 2013-12-15))
```

# Challenge: linguistic variation

bike gct grand central navigation

I need to get to the train station

train station directions

Which train should I take to get to Grand Central Terminal?

How do I get to Grand Central?

how to get to grand central by subway

take me to grand central

tell me how to go to the grand central

best route gct directions to grand central walk to grand central

grand central navigation

what's the best way to walk

to grand central from here

# Challenge: internationalization

I need to get to the train взять меня в Grand Central station grand central navigation bike gct 私は、鉄道駅に取得する必要があります Which train should I take to get bici GCT train station directions to Grand Central Terminal? directions à Grand Central How do I get to Grand Central? how to get to grand central by subway Bahnhof Richtungen tell me how to go to the grand central take me to grand central navegar grand central التي القطار لجراند سنترال best route gct grand central navigation directions to grand central 步行到中央火车站 what's the best way to walk walk to grand central to grand central from here

# Challenge: ambiguity

"italian reservation in palo alto"

\$Cuisine reservation in \$Location

"indian reservation in montana"

"mission bike directions"

\$Location \$TransportationMode directions

"mission bicycle directions"

# Typical approaches

- Recent academic work explores a variety of related approaches
  - Cf. Zettlemoyer & Collins 2005, Kwiatkowski et al. 2013
  - Cf. Liang et al. 2011, Liang et al. 2013, Berant et al. 2013
- Context-free grammars with semantic attachments
- Log-linear scoring models learned from training data
- Leveraging annotators for numbers, locations, times, entities, ...
- Grammar induction to learn CFG rules from data

# Context-free grammar

The *syntactic* part of the grammar is a fairly conventional CFG:

```
$Loc \rightarrow Google

$Loc \rightarrow NY

$Loc \rightarrow $Loc in $Loc

$Opt \rightarrow me

$Mode \rightarrow bike

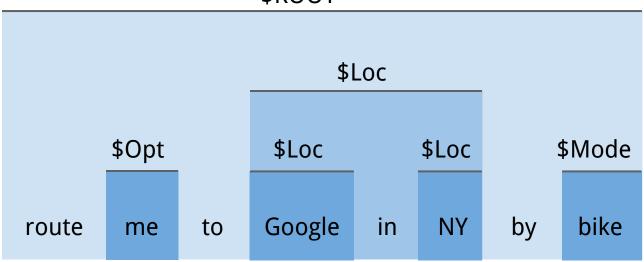
$Mode \rightarrow car

$ROOT \rightarrow route ($Opt)? to $Loc by $Mode
```

Usually *not* deterministic: many possible derivations per input.

# Example parse





# Semantic attachments to grammar rules

Little programs which compute semantic interpretation bottom-up

```
$Loc \rightarrow Google \ [/m/045c7b]$$Loc \rightarrow NY \ [/m/02_286]$$Loc \rightarrow $Loc in $Loc \ [(In $1 $2)]$$$$SOpt \rightarrow me \ []$$$$$$$Mode \rightarrow bike \ [BIKE]$$$$Mode \rightarrow car \ [CAR]$$$$$$$$$$ROOT \rightarrow route \ ($Opt)? to $Loc by $Mode \ [(GetDirections \ (Destination $2) \ (Mode $3))]$$
```

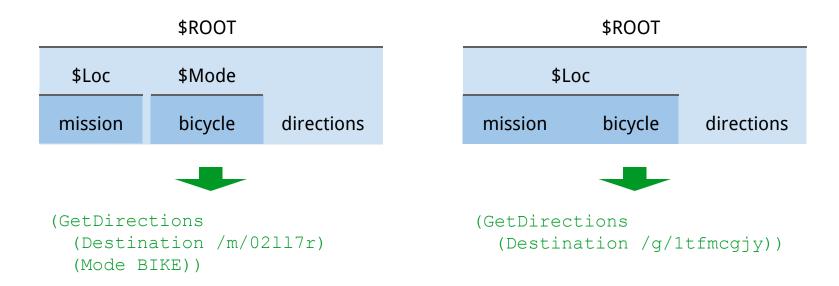
### Example parse, now with semantics!

(GetDirections (Destination (In /m/045c7b /m/02\_286)) (Mode BIKE)) \$ROOT



# Semantic ambiguity

When grammar supports multiple interpretations, how to choose?



# Scoring model

- A log-linear model to score alternative derivations (parses)
- Features from input x, semantic yield y, and derivation z
  - E.g., co-occurrence of "to" in input and Destination in semantics
  - E.g., occurrence of specific CFG rules or categories in derivation
  - E.g., confidence score from an annotator

$$score(x, z) = features(x, z)^{\top} \theta$$

$$p(z|x, \theta) = \frac{e^{score(x, z)}}{\sum_{z' \in Z(x)} e^{score(x, z')}}$$

# Learning

- Estimate parameters using EM-style training (Liang et al., 2011)
- Assume we have training data
- Sum out latent derivations in n-best list

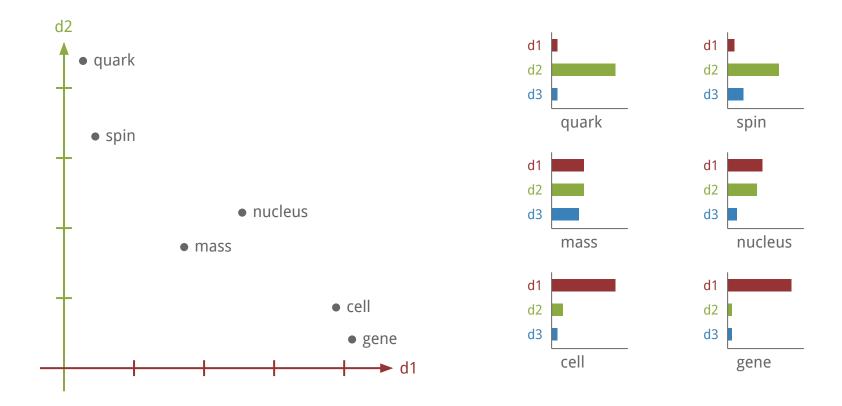
$$\underset{\theta}{\operatorname{argmax}} \sum_{z} p(y|z) p(z|x, \theta)$$

- Update using Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD)
- Adaptive step size à la AdaGrad (Duchi et al., 2008)

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# Vector-space models of meaning



# Kinds of vector space models

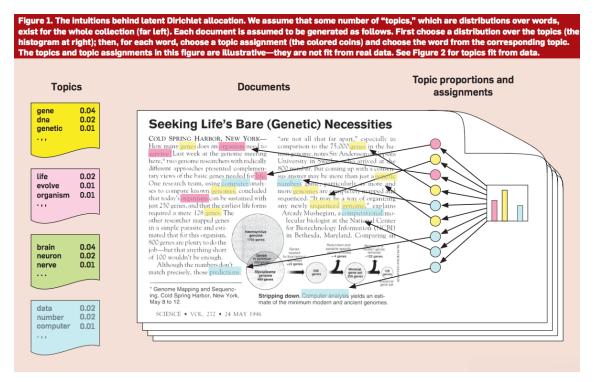
#### "Distributional" models

- Vectors based on the distribution of contexts in which word appears
- Examples: tf-idf (term frequency / inverse document frequency),
   LSA (latent semantic analysis), LDA (latent Dirichlet allocation)

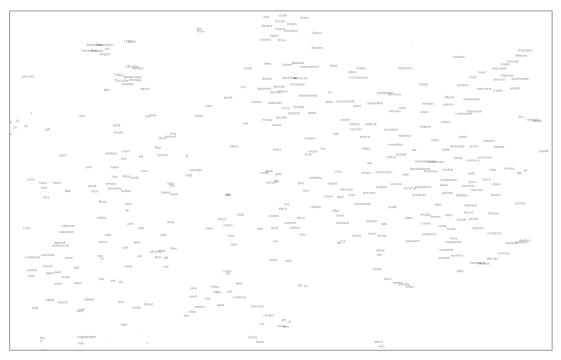
### "Distributed" models

- Vectors are the output of some neural network model
- Examples: NNLM (neural network language model), CBOW (continuous bag-of-words), skip-gram, RNN (recursive neural network), MV-RNN (matrix-vector RNN), RNTN (recursive neural tensor network)

# Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA)



# Neural word embeddings



100D word embeddings projected with t-SNE [Turian et al. 2010] http://metaoptimize.com/projects/wordreprs/

# Neural word embeddings

Corp planned expected agreed announced continued reported given

Iraq Israel Prime Russia Britain Europe France Germany Japan London China Minister
minister
leader
president
head
chief chairman
director spokesman
executive trader

come come go take give keep make get meet see continue

Saturday Friday<sub>Wednesday</sub> Thursday Monday Tuesday late earlier

economy bond currency nent trading cash debt stock production price shar sales earnings interest arowth inflation share

100D word embeddings projected with t-SNE [Turian et al. 2010]

http://metaoptimize.com/projects/wordreprs/

### The word2vec model

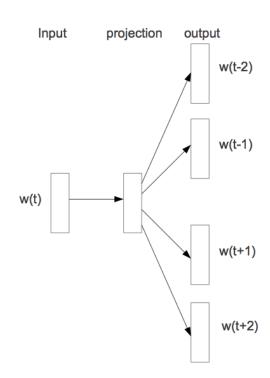
Work by Mikolov & others at Google (2013) "Skip-gram" model: a simple neural embedding Learn word vectors that predict nearby words:

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^{T} \sum_{-c \le j \le c, j \ne 0} \log p(w_{t+j}|w_t)$$

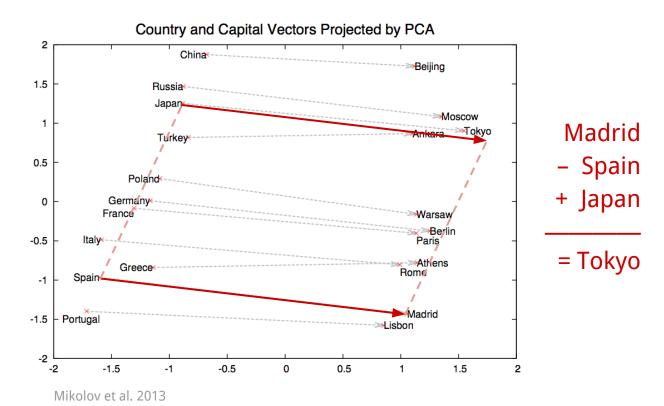
Highly efficient & scalable

Train 1000D vectors on 33B words in 1 day!

Get it at https://code.google.com/p/word2vec/



# Relationships learned by word2vec



# Solving analogies using word2vec

	Newspapers					
New York	New York Times	Baltimore	Baltimore Sun			
San Jose San Jose Mercury New		Cincinnati	Cincinnati Enquirer			
NHL Teams						
Boston	Boston Bruins	Montreal	Montreal Canadiens			
Phoenix	Phoenix Phoenix Coyotes		Nashville Predators			
NBA Teams						
Detroit	Detroit Pistons	Toronto	Toronto Raptors			
Oakland	Oakland Golden State Warriors		Memphis Grizzlies			
Airlines						
Austria	Austrian Airlines	Spain	Spainair			
Belgium	Belgium Brussels Airlines		Aegean Airlines			
Company executives						
Steve Ballmer	Microsoft	Larry Page	Google			
Samuel J. Palmisano	IBM	Werner Vogels	Amazon			

# Vector compositionality in word2vec

The four closest tokens to the sum of two vectors:

Czech + currency	Vietnam + capital	German + airlines	Russian + river	French + actress
koruna	Hanoi	airline Lufthansa	Moscow	Juliette Binoche
Check crown	Ho Chi Minh City	carrier Lufthansa	Volga River	Vanessa Paradis
Polish zolty	Viet Nam	flag carrier Lufthansa	upriver	Charlotte Gainsbourg
CTK	Vietnamese	Lufthansa	Russia	Cecile De

Mikolov et al. 2013

#### But why!?! My interpretation:

Vectors implicitly represent (log of) probability distributions over contexts. Sum of vectors represents product (conjunction) of context distributions. Which words are probable both near "Czech" and near "currency"?

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# Sentiment analysis

Traditional approach: count +/- sentiment words

best movie of the year ... a triumph slick and entertaining, despite a weak script an abysmal failure

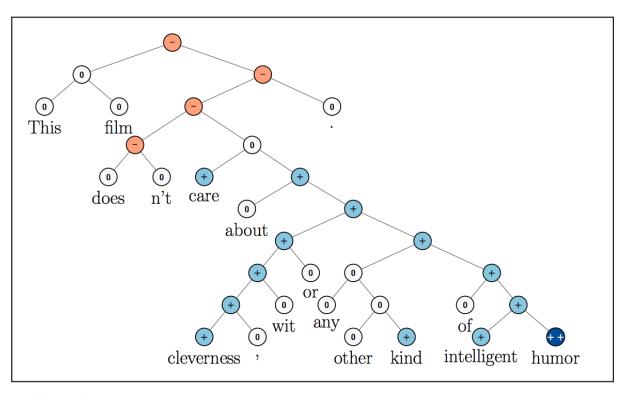


But it's hard to account for role of semantic composition

not an abysmal failure fun, sweet, and earnest, but ultimately unsatisfying

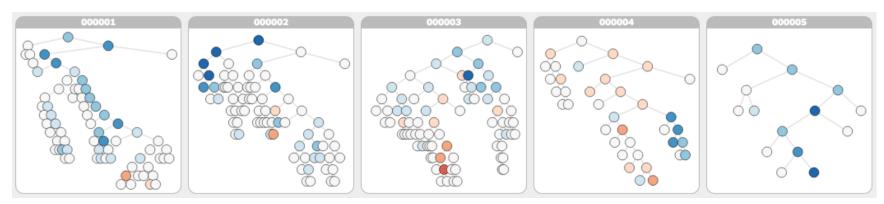


# Sentiment and compositionality



### The Stanford Sentiment Treebank

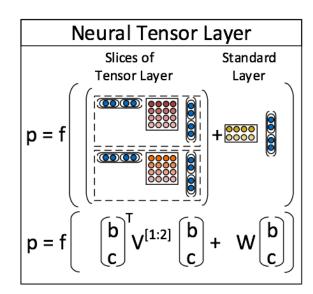
10K sentences from movie reviews, with 215K phrases 5-level sentiment labels collected from Mechanical Turk See <a href="http://nlp.stanford.edu/sentiment/treebank.html">http://nlp.stanford.edu/sentiment/treebank.html</a>



Socher et al. 2013

### Recursive neural tensor networks (RNTNs)

Semantics of words are 30D vectors Semantics of phrases via tensor product Trained via backprop in neural network Goal: minimize KL divergence to SST labels 85% accuracy on +/- sentence sentiment Try it! <a href="http://nlp.stanford.edu/sentiment/">http://nlp.stanford.edu/sentiment/</a>



Socher et al. 2013

# Are we there yet?



# THE END

Questions?

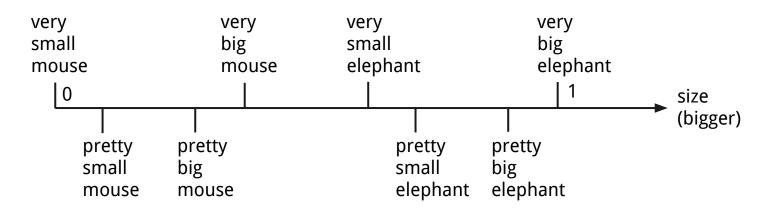
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- Vector-space semantic parsing [bonus topic!]

# Vector space semantic parsing

OK, VSMs seem cool, but what about semantic composition? Idea: combine VSMs with combinatory categorial grammar (CCG) Nouns  $\rightarrow$  vectors; adjs & dets  $\rightarrow$  matrices; tr. verbs & preps  $\rightarrow$  tensors Semantic composition via matrix / tensor multiplication

# Adjective-adverb-noun composition



"elephant" 
$$\begin{pmatrix} 1.6 \\ -0.1 \end{pmatrix}$$
 "mouse"  $\begin{pmatrix} -0.1 \\ 1.6 \end{pmatrix}$ 
"small"  $\begin{pmatrix} 0.22 & 0 \\ 0 & 1.7 \end{pmatrix}$  "big"  $\begin{pmatrix} 1.7 & -1.1 \\ 0 & 0.22 \end{pmatrix}$ 
"very small"  $\begin{pmatrix} 0.25 & -.12 \\ -1.34 & 2.3 \end{pmatrix}$  "very big"  $\begin{pmatrix} 2.3 & -1.34 \\ -0.12 & 0.25 \end{pmatrix}$ 

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# BACKUP SLIDES

# The Geo880 dataset (880 examples)

what cities in texas have the highest number of citizens? what is the area of the state with the smallest population density? what state is des moines located in? what are the major cities in states through which the mississippi runs? what are the major cities in the smallest state in the us? what is the capital of ohio? what is the population of denver? what is the biggest city in nebraska? what are the major cities in new mexico? what is the capital of california? what is the capital of utah? what are the population of mississippi? where is mount whitney? what is the population of the state with the largest area? what is the capital of iowa? what is the most populous state through which the mississippi runs? how many states border on the state whose capital is boston? which states does the longest river cross? what is the capital of new york? what is the smallest city in arkansas? how many people live in mississippi?

what is largest capital? how many states are in the usa? how many big cities are in pennsylvania? what state contains the highest point in the us? where is san jose? how many cities are in montana? what states border michigan? name the rivers in arkansas. what rivers are in nevada? could you tell me what is the highest point in the state of oregon? what state borders new vork? which states border hawaii? what is the population of atlanta ga? which state is the smallest? what is the largest city in missouri? how much population does texas have? give me the number of rivers in california? how many states does iowa border? what states border states that the ohio runs through? which states border texas? what is the population of dallas?

# The WebQuestions dataset (5810 examples)

what is the name of justin bieber brother? what character did natalie portman play in star wars? what state does selena gomez? what country is the grand bahama island in? what kind of money to take to bahamas? what character did john noble play in lord of the rings? who does joakim noah play for? where are the nfl redskins from? where did saki live? how old is sacha baron cohen? what two countries invaded poland in the beginning of ww2? what time zone am i in cleveland ohio? who did draco malloy end up marrying? which countries border the us? where is rome italy located on a map? what is nina dobrev nationality? what country does iceland belong to? which kennedy died first? what books did beverly cleary right? who did the philippines gain independence from? where to fly into bali?

what movies does taylor lautner play in? what year lebron james came to the nba? what did the german revolution lead to? how much did adriana lima gain during pregnancy? what does that mean? which wife did king henry behead? who was ishmael's mom? what was malcolm x trying to accomplish? where are the netherlands on a world map? what is the president of brazil? what are the major cities in france? what city did esther live in? what sport do the toronto maple leafs play? what is saint nicholas known for? when is the new series of the only way is essex starting? what is cher's son's name? what is martin cooper doing now? what party was andrew jackson? what is medicare a? what county is the city of hampton va in? what is the name of the first harry potter novel?