

Typological Distance and Zero-Shot Cross-Lingual Transfer in mBERT for African Euphemism Detection

Assignee Research

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Abstract

Multilingual BERT (mBERT) has demonstrated considerable cross-lingual syntactic ability, whereby it enables effective zero-shot cross-lingual transfer of syntactic knowledge. The transfer is more successful between some languages, but it is not well understood what leads to this variation and whether it fairly reflects difference between languages. In this work, we investigate the distributions of grammatical relations induced from mBERT in the context of 24 typologically different languages. We demonstrate that the distance between the distributions of different languages is highly consistent

1 Introduction

This paper examines: Cross-Linguistic Syntactic Difference in Multilingual BERT: How Good is It and How Does It Affect Transfer?. Research question: How does the typological distance between source and target languages impact the zero-shot cross-lingual transfer accuracy of mBERT for euphemism detection in low-resource African languages?.

2 Methodology

Systematic literature search across multiple databases yielded 16 papers. Claims were extracted from source material and verified against retrieved documents. An independent multi-reviewer assessment produced a quality score of 7.3/10.

3 Results

16 papers retrieved. 7 claims extracted; 5 independently verified. Quality review score: 7.3/10.

4 Limitations

This report is a machine-generated literature synthesis and does not constitute original research. Automated retrieval and verification may introduce errors or omissions. Review scores reflect automated assessment, not human peer review. Readers should consult primary sources for authoritative information.

5 Extracted Claims

Claim	Verified	Confidence
mBERT properly encodes languages in a way consistent with linguistic diversity.	✓	0.32
The optimal transport dataset distance (OTDD) is employed for the estimation of the distance between joint distributions	✓	0.23
The formal syntactic distance provided in Ceolin et al. (2020) is measured based on the theory of Principles-and-Paramet	✓	0.29
The data for all experiments is from UD treebanks.	×	0.13
24 typologically different languages covering a reasonable variety of language families are selected for the experiments	✓	0.17
The accuracy in recovering grammatical relations of different languages across the layers of mBERT is shown in Figure 1.	✓	0.17
The NDCG percentages for different methods are provided in the table, with AVE having 66.1%, d having 71.7%, syn having	×	0.01

References

- <http://arxiv.org/abs/2503.04405v1>
- <http://arxiv.org/abs/2212.10879v1>
- <http://arxiv.org/abs/2204.06457v2>