Automatic Speech Transcription and Archiving System using the Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese

Tatsuya Kawahara

Academic Center for Computing and Media Studies, Kyoto University
Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501, Japan
kawahara@i.kyoto-u.ac.jp
http://www.ar.media.kyoto-u.ac.jp/

Abstract

The target of automatic speech recognition (ASR) research has been shifted from read speech to spontaneous speech. The technology will realize automatic transcription (and translation) of lectures and meetings. In Japan, ”Spontaneous Speech” project has been conducted in last five years, and we set up the huge ”Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese (CSJ)”, which consists of over 2000 speeches (500 hours) and 7M words. The paper firstly addresses the current state of speech recognition using this corpus. It is shown that the large-scale corpus had strong impact in training acoustic and language models considering morphological and pronunciation variations which are characteristic to spontaneous Japanese. Unsupervised adaptation of these models and the speaking rate is also effective, and we obtained word accuracy of 78.0%. Then, an intelligent archiving system of lectures based on automatic transcription and indexing is introduced. Transcriptions are automatically edited for improving readability, and key sentences are indexed based on statistically-derived discourse markers and topic words. Thus, we realize efficient browsing of lecture audio archives.

1. Introduction

Automatic speech recognition (ASR) of read speech has successfully achieved accuracy exceeding 90% and realized a dictation system. The system, however, assumes that users clearly utter grammatically correct sentences with orthodox pronunciation for human-to-machine interfaces. On the other hand, recognition of human-to-human spontaneous speech, which would make possible automatic transcription or translation of lectures and meetings, is very poor and needs more extensive studies.

From this perspective, we have conducted the project of “Spontaneous Speech Corpus and Processing Technology” sponsored by the Science and Technology Agency Priority Program in Japan over past 5 years (1999-2004)[1][2]. The three major targets of the project are followings:

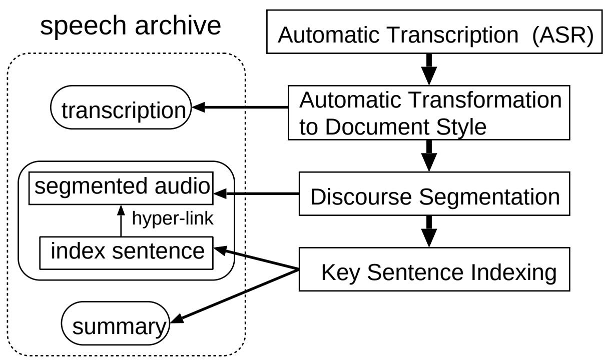

Figure 1: System overview

(1) Building a large-scale spontaneous speech corpus[3].

The compiled *Corpus of Spontaneous Speech (CSJ)* consists of roughly 7M words or 500 hours, which is the largest in scale. A large portion of the CSJ consists of two styles of monologues. One is academic presentation speech at technical conferences and meetings, and the other is extemporaneous public speech on given topics such as hobbies and travels. Approximately one-tenth of the corpus (*Core*) are tagged manually with linguistic and prosodic information as well as transcriptions.

(2) Acoustic and linguistic modeling for spontaneous speech recognition, understanding and summarization.

(3) Constructing a prototype of a spontaneous speech summarization system.

The paper addresses our approaches to the problems of transcriptions and key sentence indexing ((2) and (3) respectively), which are implemented as an intelligent speech archiving system at Kyoto University.

The overview of the system is depicted in Figure 1.

2. Automatic Transcription System

As many previous studies point out, various factors in spontaneous speech affect ASR performance. They include acoustic variation caused by fast speaking and imperfect articulation, and linguistic variation such as colloquial expressions and disfluencies. Thus, the problems should be addressed from the viewpoint of acoustic, pronunciation and language modeling.

We also revised our recognition engine Julius [1] so that very long speech can be handled without prior segmentation[4].

2.1. Acoustic Model

We have set up a variety of baseline acoustic models[5]. In this paper, we focus on academic presentation speech given by male speakers. The training data consist of 781 presentations that amount to 106 hours of speech.

Acoustic models are based on diagonal-covariance Gaussian-mixture HMM. The number of phones used is 43. We trained a PTM (phonetic tied-mixture) triphone model[6]. As a whole, there are 25K Gaussian components and 576K mixture weights.

Increase of training data thanks to the increased size of the CSJ consistently, though modestly, improved the word accuracy. For example, increase from 38 hours to 60 hours results in the reduction of WER (Word Error Rate) from 35.8% to 34.7% with the former language model. For reference, the standard read speech model[7] obtained a higher WER by about 10% absolute.

2.2. Language and Pronunciation Model

A baseline language model is constructed using the transcriptions of 2592 talks excluding the test-set. The total text size is about 6.67 million words including fillers and word fragments. Word segmentation was automatically done using a morphological analyzer that was trained with the maximum entropy criterion[8].

In spontaneously spoken Japanese, pronunciation variation is so large that a number of surface form entries are needed for a lexical item. We found that statistical modeling of pronunciation variations integrated with the language modeling was effective in suppressing false matching of less frequent entries[9]. Here, we adopt a simple trigram model of word-pronunciation entries.

The effect of training data size is clearly confirmed in Table 1. WER (Word Error Rate) is significantly reduced according to the increase of the data. For reference, the addition of lecture note archives that were post-edited for document-style has little effect[4] when the matched training data are increased. The result strongly demonstrates that the corpus of this scale is meaningful in modeling spoken language.

Next, the effect of statistical pronunciation modeling is shown in Table 2, where the cases of single pronunciation and multiple pronunciation entries without statistics are compared with statistical models. Here, pron-unigram is a model that adopts pronunciation unigram within individual word entries, for which a trigram model

[1] downloadable at `http://julius.sourceforge.jp`

Table 1: Effect of language model training data

	LM1	LM2	LM3	LM4	current*
# talks	186	316	612	1125	2592
text size	0.5M	0.8M	1.5M	2.7M	6.3M
voca. size	10K	13K	19K	21K	24K
OOV rate	4.7	4.0	3.2	3.0	1.5
perplexity	152.8	143.2	134.1	115.4	105.6
WER	38.5	36.2	34.9	34.5	33.?

Since the acoustic model used in ASR is a former version, the overall WER is lower than the latest result.
* Current system adopts a different morphological system, thus cannot be directly compared with former versions. The figures are estimated.

Table 2: Effect of pronunciation modeling

method	WER
single pron. per word	31.6
multiple pron. per word	31.4
pron-unigram	30.7
pron-trigram	30.5

is trained. On the other hand, pron-trigram is trained for word-pronunciation pairs. The result shows that the statistical modeling, especially the word-pronunciation trigram model, is effective. The model training was also made possible thanks to the large scale corpus.

2.3. Model Adaptation and Speaking Rate Dependent Decoding

Next, we incorporate speaker adaptation of acoustic and language models. Since lecture speech has long duration (large data) per speaker, the unsupervised adaptation scheme works very well.

First, we generate transcriptions for the test utterances using the baseline speaker-independent model. For acoustic model, MLLR adaptation of Gaussian means is performed using the phone labels of the initial recognition result, and a speaker-adapted model is generated.

We have also studied unsupervised methods of language model adaptation to a specific speaker and a topic[9], which are based on a model trained with the initial transcription. The first method is to select similar texts using the word perplexity and TF-IDF measure and weight them in re-training. The second method makes direct use of the model generated from the initial recognition result by linear interpolation with the baseline model.

We also proposed a decoding strategy adapted to the speaking rate[10]. In spontaneous speech, speaking rate is generally fast and may vary a lot within a presentation. We also observe different error tendencies for portions of presentations where speech is fast or slow. The proposed speaking rate dependent decoding strategy applies the most appropriate acoustic analysis, phone models, and decoding parameters according to the speaking rate.

Table 3: Effect of model and decoding adaptation

method	WER
baseline	30.9
+ acoustic model adaptation	26.0
+ language model adaptation	23.9
+ speaking rate adaptation	22.0

The effect of these methods for the task of transcription of 15 academic presentations is summarized in Table 3. The unsupervised acoustic model adaptation reduced WER by 4.9% absolute from 30.9% to 26.0%, and the combination with the language model adaptation methods reduced WER further by 2.1% absolute. The speaking rate dependent decoding strategy gained additional improvement of 1.9% absolute. Finally, WER of 22.0% is achieved.

3. Automatic Transformation of Transcription into Document Style

Transcriptions of lecture speech include many colloquial expressions peculiar to spoken language. The Japanese spoken language in particular is quite different from the written language, and is not suitable for documents in terms of readability. Thus, it is necessary to transform transcriptions and recognition results into document style for practical archives. This process is also important as a pre-process of automatic summarization.

We approach the problem by using a statistical framework that has become popular in machine translation. We regard the spoken and written Japanese languages as different languages and apply the translation methodology to transform the former into the latter. Within this framework, correction of colloquial expressions, deletion of fillers, insertion of periods (end-of-sentence symbols), and insertion of particles are performed in an integrated manner[11].

The statistical machine translation framework is formulated by finding the best output sequence Y for an input sequence X, such that a posteriori probability $P(Y|X)$ is maximum. According to Bayes rule, maximization of $P(Y|X)$ is equivalent to the maximization of the product (sum in log scale) of $P(Y)$ and $P(X|Y)$, where $P(Y)$ is the probability of the source language model and $P(X|Y)$ is the probability of the transformation model. The transformation model represents correspondence of input and output word sequences.

In the task of style conversion, the input X is a word sequence of spoken language transcriptions that do not have periods but include pause duration. The output Y is a word sequence of the written language. For $P(Y)$ calculation, we use a word 3-gram model trained with a written language corpus. Since the conversion of one word affects neighbor words in an N-gram model, the decoding is performed for a whole input word sequence with beam pruning.

4. Automatic Indexing of Key Sentences

Next, we address automatic extraction of key sentences, which will be useful indices in lectures. Collection of these sentences may suffice summarization of the talk. The framework extracts a set of natural sentences, which can be aligned with audio segments for alternative summary output.

4.1. Discourse Modeling of Lecture Presentations

There is a relatively clear prototype in the flow of presentation, which is similarly observed in technical papers[12]. When using slides for presentation, one or a couple of slides constitute a topic discourse unit we call 'section' in this paper. The unit in turn usually corresponds to the (sub-)sections in the proceedings paper.

It is also observed that there is a typical pattern in the first utterances of the units. Speakers try to briefly tell what comes next and attract audiences' attention. For example, "Next, I will explain how it works." and "Now, move on to experimental evaluation". We define such characteristic expressions that appear at the beginning of section units as discourse markers. We proposed a method to automatically train a set of discourse markers without any manual tags, and shown the effectiveness in segmentation of lecture speech[13].

The boundary of sections is known as useful for extracting key sentences in the text-based natural language processing. However, the methodology cannot be simply applied to spoken language because the boundary of sections is not explicit in speech. Thus, we apply the discourse segmentation to extraction of key sentences from lectures[14]. The importance of sentences is evaluated using the same function that was used as appropriateness of discourse markers.

The other approach to extraction of key sentences is to focus on keywords that are characteristic to the lecture. The most orthodox statistical measure to define and extract such keywords is the TF-IDF criterion. Then, we introduce a new measure of importance that combines it with the discourse marker-based method.

4.2. Experimental Evaluation

Indexing performance of the key sentences for correct transcriptions of 19 academic presentations is listed in Table 4. The method using the discourse marker (DM) was comparable to the keyword-based method (KW), and the synergetic effect of their combination was clearly confirmed. When we compare the system performance against the human judgment, the accuracy by the system is lower by about 10%. The proposed method performs reasonably, but it still has room for improvement.

Table 4: Performance of key sentence indexing (text)

method	recall	precision	F-measure
DM	71.0%	53.3%	0.609
KW	71.7%	53.8%	0.614
DM+KW	74.0%	55.5%	0.635
human	83.2%	62.7%	0.715

DM: discourse marker, KW: keyword

Table 5: Performance of key sentence indexing (ASR results)

transcript	segment	recall	precision	F-measure
manual	manual	74.0%	55.5%	0.635
manual	automatic	73.1%	45.8%	0.563
automatic	automatic	72.7%	45.6%	0.561

Then, we made evaluation using the transcriptions generated by the ASR system. Since ASR results do not include periods, we incorporate the automatic period insertion procedure in order to segment the lecture into sentences. The indexing method is based on the discourse marker and keyword combination (DM+KW). Table 5 lists the recall, precision and F-measure in comparison with the case of manual transcription. Here, we also tested the case where the sentence segmentation or period insertion is done automatically on the manual transcriptions to see individual effects. It is observed that the automatic segmentation has a bad effect on the accuracy, especially on the precision. On the other hand, no degradation is observed by adopting automatic speech recognition regardless of the word error rate of 23%. These results demonstrate that the statistical evaluation of importance of the sentences is robust.

5. Conclusions

The paper gave an overview of our recent works on spontaneous speech recognition using the *Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese (CSJ)*, which has been completed by the five-year project and will be released to the public. It is shown that the large-scale corpus had strong impact in developing acoustic and language models for spontaneous speech. It is also confirmed that speaker adaptation of these models is very effective. We are also developing an archiving system of lectures, which consists of not only automatic transcription but also automatic editing and indexing of key sentences. The proposed method combining statistical measures of discourse markers and topic words achieves indexing accuracy close to the human performance.

Ongoing work includes application of the method to other domains such as panel discussions and lectures at universities, and automatic annotation of more specific tags for a comprehensive digital archiving system.

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