Named Entity Recognition for German Using Conditional Random Fields and Linguistic Resources
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Abstract

This paper presents a Named Entity Recognition system for German based on Conditional Random Fields. The model also includes language-independent features and features computed from large coverage lexical resources. Alongside the results themselves, we show that by adding linguistic resources to a probabilistic model, the results improve significantly.

1 Introduction

These last few years, models based on Conditional Random Fields (CRF) have shown interesting achievements for Named Entity Recognition (NER) tasks. However, most of the experiences carried out also show a lack of lexical coverage. To counterbalance this lack, two main kinds of strategies have been designed: the use of gazetteers and of clustering techniques. Both lead to a significant improvement of the results. For a review of these techniques, see (Tkachenko and Simanovsky, 2012). In the work presented here, we have opted for a more linguistic approach, close to the gazetteers: we included lexical resources as new features for a model based on CRF and measured their impact. This kind of approach has already been proven successful for a Part-of-Speech tagger by Constant and Sigogne (2011).

This work took place in the framework of the GermEval Named Entity Recognition Shared Task and is therefore applied to German. However, this approach has already been implemented for English, French and Dutch.

The characteristics of the GermEval tagset are presented in section 2. In section 3 is described our system for named entity recognition based on CRF and the adaptations we suggest for this kind of model. Section 4 presents the linguistic resources we added. Finally, our experiments and the results we obtained are presented in section 5.

2 GermEval Characteristics

2.1 Tagset

The tagset defined for the GermEval shared task (Benikova et al., 2014b) consists of four main classes. The class Person (1) includes person names but also nicknames and fictional characters names. The class Organisation (2) contains all kinds of organisations, companies, and also festivals, music bands, etc. The Location class (3) is made for all kinds of places: cities, countries, planets, churches, etc. The class Other (4), is the widest one as it includes a large variety of items: movies and books titles, languages, websites, market indexes etc.

These four main classes have two subclasses each: deriv and part (LOCderiv, OTHderiv, PERderiv, ORGderiv, LOCpart, OTHpart, PERpart, ORGpart). The deriv one is used to tag items that are derived from named entities. Most of the times they are adjectives such as asiatischen (asian). The part one is made for named entities that are included in a larger token, in compound

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2https://sites.google.com/site/germeval2014ner/home
forms. As the German language is agglutinative, this happens quite often, without diacritical marks (Bundesligaspiele).

2.2 Entities Embedding
Another specificity of the GermEval task is that nested entities are allowed. For example, the film title Shakespeare in Love must be tagged OTH but it must also contain an inner tag PER for Shakespeare. The tagger we developed therefore needed to be adapted to include this particularity.

3 Conditional Random Fields
As presented in (Lafferty, 2001), CRF define a framework for building probabilistic models that are able to split and tag sequences of data. Since they exist, CRF have lead to many works in Natural Language Processing (e.g. Constant and Sigogne (2011)) and more specifically in NER (e.g. Finkel et al. (2005) and Klein et al. (2003)).

3.1 Standard Approach
In practice, the probability of a sequence of labels depends on a set of features that are representative of the observation sequence (i.e. the tokens). Most of these features are language-independent and limited to local observations. CRF systems generally use a set of generic features, that we present in table 1.

These features are language-independent. However, some characteristics of the language can be in conflict with one or more features. For example, the feature that represents the presence or absence of a capital letter is less pertinent for German – where many words begin with a capital letter – than for other languages.

3.2 Hybrid approach
The statistical models are limited to their training corpus and therefore their lexical coverage is often not large enough. Many works have tried to compensate for this weak coverage to help the classification of unseen words. Faruqui and Padó (2010) and Finkel et al. (2005) suggest to add a distributional similarity feature trained on a very large corpus. The hypothesis of a strong correlation between the terms of a same distributional class is the basis of this feature. Faruqui and Padó (2010) show very interesting results for German, with an increase of 6-7% for precision and 12-13% for recall.

In parallel to this method, other studies suggest the use of external lexical resources (Nadeau and Sekine, 2007; Kazama and Torisawa, 2007; Constant and Sigogne, 2011). Indeed, a simple way to decide if a sequence of tokens corresponds to a named entity is to check in a dictionary. Today, many multilingual encyclopedic resources are available online and facilitate the construction of these dictionaries (DBPedia, Yago, FreeBase...). To integrate the information of these dictionaries in our model, we have defined 3 types of features, that are presented in table 2, where the classes correspond to the different classes of the GermEval tagset. The linguistic resources we used and their impact are presented in section 4 and 5.

4 Adding Linguistic Resources to the Model
The linguistic resources we used are divided into two types: dictionaries (word lists including morphological data) and grammars made of transducers created with the software Unitex

4.1 Dictionaries
We use two kinds of dictionaries. First, we use a general language dictionary of German, that we adapted from the resources created by Daniel Naber


flectional variations and part-of-speech tags. The second type of dictionaries are useful for data that can be fully listed, such as countries for example. We created dictionaries for most of the entities that needed to be extracted using free resources such as Freebase\(^6\). We also created dictionaries for the deriv entities to follow the GermEval guidelines. Table 3 gives the number of entries for each dictionary.

### 4.2 Local Grammars

Local grammars that we created using Unitex transducers (Paumier, 2003) are efficient for entities that can vary more or are difficult to fully list. For example, a grammar can be defined to describe all kind of universities or theatres names, as it is shown in the figure 1.

These grammars can also handle German specificities such as concatenation of words. Some specific transducers have been made to cover the part entities (when an entity is included in a larger token as Hamilton operator for example). Our grammar library contains 9 main graphs (one for each category, one for each deriv category and one for all part entities) and around 20 subgraphs.

### 5 Experiments and Results

In this section, we present our experiments and put our results in balance with those of the other participants to the GermEval task. The table 4 shows the results obtained by all the systems that have participated to the GermEval 2014 Shared Task. We rank number 4, out of 11 models competing. The table 5 presents the results we obtained with two models: the simple CRF model and the model enriched by the lexical resources. The four metrics we use are explained by Benikova et al. (2014a).

Our results are interesting because they show that by adding lexical resources and grammars as new features to our model, the results are improved by 3.01% for the strict metric, which is significant. This number should keep rising while the resources increase.

Table 6 shows the results obtained for each outer class and each inner class and the improvement made with lexical resources. As the class OTH is very versatile, it obtains less good results than the other classes. Furthermore the entity classes part and deriv, as well as the inner-classes, are less represented in the training set and therefore also reach less good results. The classes ORG, LOC and PER which can rely on external lexical resources obtain better results.

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\(^6\)http://www.freebase.com/
Table 6: For each outer and inner entity: number of occurrences in the evaluation corpus and $F_1$ for the simple CRF and the enriched CRF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>M-Outer</th>
<th>M-Inner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PER</td>
<td>1639</td>
<td>76.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORG</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>63.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>75.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTH</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>50.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERpart</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGpart</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>56.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCpart</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>55.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHpart</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEderiv</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGderiv</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCderiv</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>78.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHderiv</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Global | 6178    | 70.07   |

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we presented our Named Entity Recognizer for German. We achieve a global $F$-measure of 71.48% on the GermEval evaluation corpus with the complete tagset. In parallel, we evaluated the impact of using linguistic resources as an input to the statistical model: it improves the results by 3.01% for the strict metric. As a next step, to increase this impact, the dictionaries, that are still in an early stage, should be enhanced: they have been automatically gathered and could use a manual correction to avoid erroneous entries. In addition, we will try to find other precise dictionaries and enlarge the grammars to improve the recall, in particular to cover more completely the Others class.

Another possible way of improving our system would be to combine our linguistic approach to a clustering strategy.

References


