

An Experiment on Automatic Detection of Named Entities in Bangla

Bidyut Baran Chaudhuri

Head- CVPR Unit
Indian Statistical Institute
203,B.T. Road, Kolkata-108
bbc@isical.ac.in

Suvankar Bhattacharya

Systems Executive
ABP Pvt. Ltd.
6, P.S. Street, Kolkata-1
suvankar.bhattacharya@abp.in

Abstract

Several preprocessing steps are necessary in various problems of automatic Natural Language Processing. One major step is named-entity detection, which is relatively simple in English, because such entities start with an uppercase character. For Indian scripts like Bangla, no such indicator exists and the problem of identification is more complex, especially for human names, which may be common nouns and adjectives as well. In this paper we have proposed a three-stage approach of named-entity detection. The stages are based on the use of Named-Entity (NE) dictionary, rules for named-entity and left-right co-occurrence statistics. Experimental results obtained on Anandabazar Patrika (Most popular Bangla newspaper) corpus are quite encouraging.

1 Introduction

The discipline of Natural Language Processing (NLP) is concerned with the design and implementation of computational approaches that communicate with human using natural language. Name searching, matching and recognition have been active areas of research in the field of NLP and Information retrieval for a long period. This is an important problem since search queries are often proper nouns while all proper nouns cannot be exhaustively maintained in the dictionary for automatic identification. Moreover, human names may be picked from common nouns and adjective words (e.g. Surya, Anindya) and hence dictionary-

based syntactic information can confuse the Natural Language Processor in such a situation. Pet and other animal names, organization and place names, can also come from common nouns and adjectives e.g. Shyamali (cow name), Bardhaman (Place name), Bhalobasha (Building name), Nandan (Auditorium name) etc. So, it becomes a non-trivial problem to automatically detect the named entity from a sentence.

This paper aims at attacking this problem for Bangla language, especially on the NE detection from newspaper text. Name recognition in English is somewhat easier since quite often the proper noun starts with an uppercase character. Bangla names cannot be identified by such case information because Bangla has single-case alphabet.

Some studies on Named Entity (NE) identification are reported in the literatures (from Zhou and 2007 to Narayanswamy et al., Narayanswamy as listed in the reference section of this paper). The approaches mainly employ dictionary based, rule based and statistical tools such as HMM, Maximum entropy, Support vector machine and conditional random field for this purpose. Name searching in the context of information retrieval and query answering are also reported in the literature (Thompson and Dozier, 2007). However, these studies are done on non-Indian languages. Among Indian languages typical efforts based on HMM and CRF are presented by EKbal et al. (2007) and Li and McCallum (2003) respectively.

The NE identification approach presented here employs a three tier combination of dictionary-based, rule-based and statistical information. The approach employed here is explained in Section 2 where use of the hybrid approach is also justified. In Section 3, the data collection and experimental

setup is described. Tests have been made on a moderate size Anandabazar (most popular Bangla newspaper) news corpus. The results are presented in Section 4.

2 Proposed Named Entity (NE) detection approach

As mentioned before, our method of NE detection is a combination of dictionary-based, rule-based and statistical (n-gram based) approaches. In the dictionary based approach, we need a word-level morphological parser as well. The approaches are sequentially described here and demonstrated in Fig.1. However, at first, we describe some properties of named entity.

2.1 Properties of named entity

If we look at a corpus of reasonable size from the perspective of NEs, we note that the words may belong to three categories: (a) words that almost never act as NE, (b) the words that almost always act as NE, (c) the words that sometimes act as names and sometimes as common nouns or adjectives. Words like *I, the, to, from, go* belong to category (a) while words like *India, Ganges, Paris, Himalayas* belong to category (b). Words like *Nirmal, Swapan, Rabi* belong to category (c). The English meanings of these third category words are clean, dream and sun, respectively, but they are used as names of persons in Bangla and thus can create problems for the NLP of Bangla language. In English, the names begin with uppercase, and are less problematic in nature.

Another point to note is that the named entity may be a single word or a multi word expression. The multi-word names pose additional difficulty for automatic identification of NE. A multi-word may have a component that alone is also a name, like *England* in *New England* or it may consist of adjective and common noun, like *White House*. Such multi-words generate additional problems for NE detection.

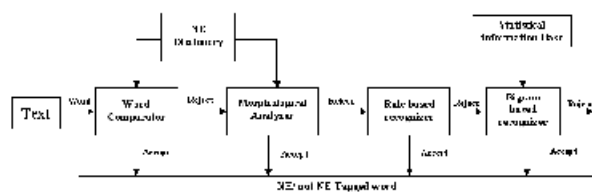


Fig 1. Flow chart for NE detection

2.2 Justification of hybrid approach

In the NE detection tasks, the entries that are considered are person, organization, location, date, time, money, percentage. In case of English, there are indicators like uppercase character, dot mark, Dollar and Pound symbol etc. to identify them. In addition, rule-base or machine learning approaches are employed and hence an impressive result is obtained.

In Bangla, date, time, money, percentage also use special symbols in some occasions, but for person, organization or location name this is not true. Moreover, nouns and adjectives are very frequently used for single-word or multi-word names of above types. Now, a dictionary or some special kind of word data-base is used in most NLP problems. If we equip the same dictionary or data-base which have information about NE, then every word of a text need not pass through more sophisticated NE detection software. We have noted that even for NE-rich text like news, the percentage of such words does not exceed 7% (See Table-1). The dictionary helps us to detect 65% of Nes and discard more than 90% of the non-NE words. For that purpose, we have to tag the dictionary in the manner described in Section 2.3. We can be left with about 1.4% words, which may be ambiguous (can be or cannot be NE) and about 1.15% words, which are not there in the dictionary (hence nothing can be said using dictionary).

| Newspaper | Total Word | Total NE | Person Name | Place Name | Other Names |
|-------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Anandabazar | 42104 | 6.53% [2753] | 2.50% [1023] | 2.30% [972] | 1.80% [758] |
| Ajkaal | 39452 | 6.93% [2734] | 2.89% [1143] | 1.92% [755] | 2.11% [836] |
| Bartamaan | 40323 | 6.50% [2621] | 3.43% [1383] | 1.60% [645] | 1.47% [593] |

Table 1. NEs from different Bangla Newspapers

So, we can use the rule base at the second stage. Compared to statistical learning methods, rule-based system has both power and limitation. Consider a robust simulation where each person name and place name of West Bengal, Tripura and Bangladesh (the Bangla-language-using places) can appear. Note that there are about 240 million Bengali names and a few tens of thousands of place names. Of course, not all are distinct names, but the distinct names are also huge in number. To explain it better, let there be 1000 distinct first names, 50

distinct middle names and 500 distinct last names (title) of persons. Then the total number of distinct human names that can be created is $1000 \times 50 \times 500 = 25$ million. If the full names appear in the test, then they could be very easily tackled by a rule and a database of middle names and titles. On the other hand, any statistical technique is based on probability, and estimation of probability needs a reasonable corpus size that is costly and may not be available for design. Even if the corpus is available, the statistical approach will perhaps discover the same rule along with the same database in a different manner. Moreover, extension for a few more names can be quickly accommodated in the database or another rule, but the statistical approach will need re-training, resulting in a new set of absolute and conditional probabilities.

On the other hand, rule-based system cannot tackle ambiguous situations very well. So, when it is the question of a noun or adjective word being used as NE or not NE, good rules cannot be formulated for every situation. Rule-based system is also useless for a word not falling under any of the rules generated so far. In such a situation the statistical learning technique may be very useful.

In this way, we believe that the combination of three approaches will help us in detecting NE in a robust way. Moreover, we believe that it will be easily adapted to changed environment of the test set.

2.3 Dictionary based NE detection

If a dictionary is maintained where one of the above three category tags are attached to each word and if a word morphological analyzer is developed, then the combination of these two can act as a NE detector for a text file. The dictionary should be generated from a corpus of reasonable size, say 5-10 million words, as well as from conventional dictionary book of say 50,000 root words. Normally, 10 million word corpus of Bangla contains between 100,000 and 200,000 surface words. A small fraction of these words belong to the set of NEs not found in the conventional dictionary. These surface words should be properly NE tagged as per three types described above and entered in the NE dictionary. The corpus provides important information about the inflectional nature of root words, which, in turn, helps in building the morphological analyzer. On the other hand, if we want to avoid building sophisticated morph ana-

lyzer, the most common inflected surface words of the corpus may also be included in the dictionary with the three tags described above. We have followed this procedure for our NE detection approach.

The detection algorithm will proceed as follows. Given a test word W , at first, a match is searched in the NE tagged dictionary. If no match is found, W is rejected and the next word is considered for examination. But if a match occurs, we look at the tag of the matched word. If the tag is '*almost always NE*' then we declare this W as NE with weight 1. If the tag is '*almost never NE*' then W is declared as not NE (ie with weight 0). But if the tag is '*may or may not be NE*' then again W has to be rejected (say with weight 0.5), which makes this approach uncertain for such word. To remedy this drawback, we next employ some rule-based approach described in the next Section.

However, before sending to the rule-based module, each of the words with weight 0.5 is subject to morphological analysis. Here for each word, the suffix is stripped using a previously stored suffix database. If no database suffix matches, then the whole word is sent to rule based method. Else, the suffix-stripped word is again matched in the NE dictionary. If a match is found, then it is checked if the suffix can be morphologically accepted by the dictionary root word category. Then W is properly tagged with weight 1 or 0. Else, it is sent to the module for rule-based approach described below with the hope for better decision.

2.4 Rule-based NE detection

Rule-based approaches rely on some rules, one or more of which is to be satisfied by the test word W . There may be *positive* and *negative* rules. The positive rules make the inference system biased towards NE while the negative rules tend to be biased against NE. Some small databases may be needed to execute the rules. For Bangla text NEs, some typical rules are given below. Here, 1-8 are positive and 9-12 are negative rules.

Rule1. If there are two or more words in a sequence that represent the characters or spell like the characters of Bangla or English, then they belong to the named entity (with high weight). For example, বি এ (B A), সি এম ডি এ (C M D A), অ গ প are all NEs. Note that the rule will not distinguish between a proper name and common name.

Rule 2. If the previous word of W is a pre-name word like শ্রী, শ্রীমুক্ত, ডঃ, মিঃ, মিস, মিসেস, বেগম, বিবি, মোঃ, মুঃ, ডক্টর, স্বামী, সৈয়দ, রেভারেন্ড, then W belongs to the named entity (with high weight). To detect them, all words of this type can be maintained in a database.

Rule 3. If after W there are title words and mid-name words to human names like ষাষ, বোস, বসু, মিত্র, রায়, সরকার, খান, আহমেদ, রহমান, হক etc. and কুমার, চন্দ্র, রঞ্জন, শেখর, প্রসাদ, আলী, আলম etc., respectively, then W along with such words are likely to constitute a multi-word NE (with high weight). For example, রবি বসাক, পল্লব কুমার মল্লিক are all NEs. A set of title and mid-name words should be collected and maintained in a database.

Rule 4. If a substring like -বাবু, -দাদা, -দা, -সাহেব, -কাকু, -গঞ্জ, -গ্রাম, -পুর, -গড়, -নগর occurs at the end of the word W, then W is likely to be a NE (with high weight). These strings can be collected in a database for future use.

Rule 5. If at the end of a word W there are strings like -এ-কার, -এর, -র, -রা, -এরা, -কে, -দের, -তে, -য় then W is likely to be a name (with high weight).

Rule 6. If a word like সরণী, রোড, স্ট্রিট, লেন, থানা, স্কুল, বিদ্যালয়, কলেজ, নদী, লেক, হ্রদ, সাগর, মহাসাগর, পাহাড়, পর্বত is found after W of type unknown in dictionary then W along with such word may belong to NE (with high weight). For example, বিধান সরণী, রাসেল স্ট্রিট, ডালহৌসি পাহাড় are all NEs.

Rule 7. We note that only a few names or words in Bangla consist of characters ঁ (Chandrabindu) or ৳ (Khanda Ta). So, if W does not belong to those words and has the occurrence of any of these two characters, then W may be a named entity (with high weight). For example, “অঁরি” is a French name.

Rule 8. If in the sentence containing unknown word W or a word W with *may or may not be NE* tag, the following words are বলেন, বললেন, বলল, শুনল, হাসল, লিখল, লিখলেন, খেলেন, দেখল which imply action that can be done by human being, then W is likely to be a name (with high weight). A database of action verbs of various types is needed to check this rule.

Rule 9. If W of the type given in rule 8 is followed by verb not in the set of verbs described above, then W is not likely to be a NE. So, the weight should be reduced from 0.5 to a smaller value.

Rule 10. If there is re-duplication of W in a sentence then W is not likely to be a named entity. This is so because rarely name words are reduplicated. In fact, reduplicated name word may signify something else. For example রাম রাম is used to greet a person. So, the NE weight should be reduced in a such case to near zero.

Rule 11. If at the end of W there are suffixes like -টা, -খানা, -খানি, -টাতে, -টায়, -টিকে, -টাকে, -টকুল, -গুলা, -গুলো, -গুলি etc., then W is usually not a named entity.

Rule 12. If there is an echo-word after W e.g. গাছ টাছ, then none of these two words is a named entity. The exact value of the weight for a rule is decided from training dataset. We increase or decrease the weight of the test word if a rule fires. To be consistent, we have included the dictionary-based approach under the same framework.

Thus, in our scheme, if the weight is more than certain value (say 0.75) then the word is finally accepted to be NE. On the other hand, if the weight is less than certain value (say 0.25) then the word is rejected to be NE. For intermediate cases, the word may be subject to the n-gram based technique described below.

2.5 n-gram based NE detection

The n-gram based approach relies on the co-occurrence of other words before and after a NE. To generate the n-gram we need a corpus where the NE words are tagged manually. From these tagged words the left neighbor and right neighbor words are checked (for a 2-gram model). The frequencies of each pair of left-right neighbor are counted from the corpus. The probability of each left-right pair with respect to W may be estimated as

$P_{lr}(W) = \frac{\text{No of this left-right word pair around W}}{\text{total no of all left-right words around W in the training corpus}}$

If a particular left-right neighbors occur about a word W, then W has a *positive likelihood* of being NE, or a *negative likelihood* that W is not a NE. For example, in the sentence ‘Mark the answer script properly’ the word ‘Mark’ is a negative instance for NE. But in the sentence ‘Mark is a good boy’, ‘Mark’ is a positive instance. Here the left-right pair is ‘blank’ and ‘is’. We have to count from the test corpus how many times the particular left-right neighbor give positive instances of W being a NE, while how many are the instances of

non-NE. From these positive and negative instance counts, a NE weight value is found for a particular pair of left-right word pair around W as

$$w_{lr}(W) = P_{lr}(W) R_{lr}(W)$$

where $R_{lr}(W) = \text{No of positive instances} / (\text{No of positive instances} + \text{No of negative instances})$.

However, a large number of words will be negative instances at all times, so their $w_{lr}(W)$ value will come out as zero. Examples are the so-called *stop* words. They can be dealt in the dictionary itself, as discussed in Sec 2.2, reducing a lot of computational effort for this n-gram based approach. Some words which will also be positive instance, irrespective of the left right words. The NE dictionary described in Section 2 can deal them as well. This fact partly justifies the scheme of having three approaches combined in our NE detection algorithm.

Thus, the generation of training phase is completed. Now, in the test phase, if a word W has left-right neighbors whose weight is $w_{lr}(W)$ based on the training phase, then W may be assigned this weight of being named entity. This is the modified weight over and above what was given in the previous phases. For the test phase, a threshold t is set on the weight. If the weight for the test word W is $w > t$ then we declare W as a NE. Otherwise, we call it not-NE.

There may be left-right pair for a test word that is absent in our probability list. If none of the pair exist then the word is rejected since no decision can be made. If only left or right word is present then we take a pessimistic estimate based on it. In other words, we take the minimum of probabilities individually this W and the said left word.

3 Data collection

To obtain the corpus for our experiment, we browsed the net and found the site of Anandabazar Patrika, the largest Bangla daily newspaper. We downloaded the e-newspapers for the years 2001-2004. Of this huge data, a portion for the years 2001-2003 were used for training the system (about 20 million words) and a portion from 2004 (about 100, 000 words) was used for testing. The data could not be utilized in a straightforward way, since the newspaper authority used a proprietary glyph code. So, we had to discover which glyph code denotes which character of Bangla script and

then convert the text into ISCII coding format. After that, all the developed softwares were run on these ISCII files. At first a program was written was used to collect all distinct surface words from this corpus of 20 million words. These distinct words were ranked in descending order of frequency and the top 20,000 ranked words were chosen for manual tagging of named entity by giving weight 0, 0.5 or 1.0.

The manual tagging was done by the linguists based on their global knowledge. However, if the person is in doubt, (s)he would consult a few examples in the original corpus involving the word in question. Using the contextual information, most problematic cases could be disambiguated. Those which still appeared unclear were given 'may or may not be' status. A morphological analyzer was previously developed in connection with the design of a spell checker in Bangla (Chaudhuri, 2001). That analyzer has been employed for stemming of the type-words in the current NE detection problem also. Moreover, a rule-based system as described in Section 2.3 is also developed. The database needed for each rule is being continuously updated to give better experimental results.

Experimental results:

The software was trained with the Anandabazar Patrika web corpus of the year 2001-2003. Some geographical names were further added to enrich the database. Then several files of the corpus of the same newspaper of the year 2004 were used for testing. The results are presented in the form of recall(R), precision (P) and F-measure percentage. Here the recall is the ratio of number of NE words retrieved and the number of NE words actually present in the file, expressed in percent. In other words,

$$R\% = \frac{\text{Number of NE words retrived}}{\text{Total Number of NE words in the text}} \times 100\%$$

Precision is the number of correctly retrieved NE words to the total number of words retrieved, expressed in percent. So, we can write

$$P\% = \frac{\text{Number of correct NE words retrieved}}{\text{Total Number of NE words retrieved}} \times 100\%$$

The F-measure is often used in the Information Retrieval and Natural Language Processing problems. This class of measures was introduced by C.

J. van Rijsbergen. F₁- measure is the ratio of the twice of the multiplication of precision (P) and recall (R) and the sum of these two. In other words,

$$F_1\% = \frac{2P\% R\%}{P\% + R\%} \times 100\%$$

F₁ measure combines recall (R) and precision (P) with an equal weight and hence is the harmonic mean of the two quantities. Note that F₁ cannot exceed 100%. Experimental results on 10 sets of test documents are shown in Table 2.

| NO. OF WORDS | NO. OF NE | CORRECTLY DETECTED | NO. OF ER-ROR | RECALL % | PRECISION % | F ₁ -MEASURE % |
|--------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 2592 | 165 | 138 | 7 | 79.39 | 95.00 | 86.00 |
| 2938 | 186 | 157 | 6 | 81.10 | 96.20 | 88.00 |
| 2477 | 247 | 176 | 6 | 76.25 | 97.60 | 85.00 |
| 3816 | 336 | 268 | 7 | 79.76 | 97.40 | 87.00 |
| 2944 | 192 | 144 | 5 | 75.00 | 96.52 | 84.41 |
| 4843 | 255 | 210 | 13 | 82.35 | 93.50 | 87.85 |
| 2899 | 202 | 192 | 7 | 95.04 | 96.35 | 95.44 |
| 3420 | 232 | 201 | 9 | 86.63 | 95.52 | 90.85 |
| 4428 | 243 | 209 | 11 | 86.00 | 94.73 | 90.15 |
| 4228 | 210 | 177 | 16 | 84.28 | 90.96 | 87.42 |
| 4528 | 292 | 261 | 11 | 89.38 | 95.78 | 92.46 |
| 2991 | 193 | 168 | 5 | 87.04 | 97.02 | 91.75 |
| AVERAGE | | | | 85.50 | 94.24 | 89.51 |

Table 2. Results of the experiment

It is noted from Table 1 that the precision is reasonably high but the recall is somewhat moderate. The reason of moderate occurrence of recall is that the training has been done with only 20,000 corpus words, while actual number of corpus words was about 200,000. Also, we have to improve the database for rules, as well as search for other potential rules that we have not included here. The front back 2-grams are also at present aggregated over all NE words tagged manually. Such global occurrence statistics can mask the local phenomenon. We are working towards improving our NE detection approach.

Every detection system is to be judged by some automatic evaluation techniques, e.g. BLEU (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy) (Papineni, 2002) and several others. So, in case of ours we introduced an Automatic Evaluation approach for the main detection algorithm. The evaluation system is actually based upon a manually annotated dataset of almost 70,000 words. These datasets are tagged in a “non-NE <NE Name NE> non-NE” format and are available at Chaudhuri (2007). After the system detects and tags the names, the detection system treats the NE-detected file location as the “Target Location”. In our annotated dataset the annotated corpus is available for the same docu-

ments. That location is treated as the “Annotated Location”. As the evaluation system starts evaluating, a word by word comparison is done between the target and annotated locations. At the end of evaluation number of correctly detected words, the number of wrong detection and the number of real NE is found and so the Precision, Recall and F₁-Measure is calculated easily. We have also observed that our evaluation system gives almost the same result as found by manual evaluation.

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