

# Unsupervised Tokenization Learning

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## Abstract

In the presented study, we discover that the so-called “transition freedom” metric appears superior for unsupervised tokenization purposes in comparison to statistical metrics such as mutual information and conditional probability, providing F-measure scores in range from 0.71 to 1.0 across explored multilingual corpora. We find that different languages require different offshoots of that metric (such as derivative, variance, and “peak values”) for successful tokenization. Larger training corpora do not necessarily result in better tokenization quality, while compressing the models by eliminating statistically weak evidence tends to improve performance. The proposed unsupervised tokenization technique provides quality better than or comparable to lexicon-based ones, depending on the language.

## 1 Introduction

Unsupervised language learning, framed as a problem of language modeling based on unannotated corpora, has attracted great attention in recent years, having achieved significant results with transformer-based models such as BERT and GPT that rely on deep neural networks (DNNs) (Vaswani et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2020). At the same time, the idea of unsupervisedly learning a language grammar represented “interpretable” via a formal grammar such as Link Grammar has been suggested by Vepstas and Goertzel (2014). Kolonin (2015) proposed yet another approach for the problem: using so-called “deep patterns” with hierarchical “symbolic” grammatical pattern structures learned from texts as a way to model grammars and ontologies for natural languages suiting a wide range of practical applications. Further studies on this path performed by Glushchenko et al. (2018, 2019) have indicated the possibility of learning grammars as well as domain ontologies given high-quality parse trees of texts obtained from unannotated training corpora. Unfortunately, the critical

part of the pipelines described in the aforementioned studies was the unsupervised generation of the parses, which turned out to be low-quality by virtue of being based on simple “minimum spanning trees” either based on mutual information (MI) (see Yuret, 1998) or “contextual information” (see Glushchenko et al., 2019) extracted from a BERT-based deep learning model (Vaswani et al., 2017). Still further studies by Ramesh and Kolonin have demonstrated the possibility of building different natural language processing (NLP) applications based on a language model represented by a formal grammar (Link Grammar in the explored cases) (Ramesh and Kolonin, 2020, 2021, 2022). Throughout the course of these studies, the concept of “interpretable natural language processing” (INLP) has been introduced to indicate the domain of NLP explorations involving both the learning of language models represented in an interpretable form and the application of these models to different tasks such as text segmentation, language generation, and question answering.

Yet another problem which has its place in the case of conventional language model learning based on DNNs (see Vaswani et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2020) as well as in relation to interpretable unsupervised language learning (see Kolonin, 2015; Glushchenko et al., 2018, 2019) is tokenization. In most cases, tokenization is based on predetermined rules and dictionaries, which does not quite fit the “grand plan” of completely unsupervised language learning from scratch with no prior knowledge of the language, including its lexicon and punctuation (Vepstas and Goertzel, 2014). Thus, the objective of our proposed study is to evaluate the possibility of learning the sets of tokens representing both punctuation and lexicons without any prior knowledge regarding the language, so that the set of valid combinations of letters or characters specific to punctuation marks or valid lexical entities such as words for a language is learned

along with the tokenization process.

Starting points were found in works of [Kearsley \(2016\)](#) and [Wrenn et al. \(2007\)](#), who explored the possibility of unsupervised segmentation applied to different languages and domain-specific literature.

The former work (see [Kearsley, 2016](#)) provides an exhaustive overview of different tokenization techniques applied to different languages, exploring different methods and metrics. Unfortunately, the  $F_1$  scores reported in this work for completely unsupervised tokenization based on statistical measures appear not high enough, so we further follow this approach in order to outperform these scores on the set of languages relevant and available to us—English, Russian, and Simplified (Mainland) Chinese—focusing on unsupervised tokenization only.

The latter work (see [Wrenn et al., 2007](#)) focuses on unsupervised tokenization based on statistical measures such as conditional probability (CP) as well as introduces the so-called “freedom of transition” (we henceforth call it “transition freedom” or TF) metric, which appears fundamentally consistent with the notion of “free energy” suggested by [Friston \(2010\)](#) as a key for an artificial intelligence concept. TF in the context of [Wrenn et al.’s \(2007\)](#) work corresponds to the number of symbolic states (characters, letters, or N-grams) that follow or precede the current state. Then, a sharp increase of the TF level along the temporal sequence of states might correspond to a loss of [Friston’s \(2010\)](#) “equilibrium,” and so “tokens” might be considered as chains of states resting in conditions of mutual equilibrium framed with transitions, with loss of this equilibrium marked by the TF level bursts. Furthermore, we explore both statistical measures and TF metrics, finding the latter substantially more practical. In particular, we explore different metrics based on CP and TF such as derivative, variance, and “peak values” as introduced in [Wrenn et al.’s \(2007\)](#) work (which indicate expressed local maximums on the derivative curve along the text being tokenized).

Interestingly, [Kearsley \(2016\)](#) writes that, “Given that the human ability to successfully read any natural language provides an existence proof that a generalized segmentation system (as implemented in the human mind) is possible, it is reasonable to investigate the feasibility of a language-agnostic segmentation system that could be easily integrated into larger natural language processing

systems.” Extending this statement, we anticipate that advances in this area could be also beneficial to deal with any sequential data such as flows of events and states in experiential or reinforcement learning. In particular, the “global feedback” concept suggested in [Kolonin’s \(2022\)](#) work demonstrates good learning rates in cases when the cognitive schema leading to the feedback or reward can be reliably associated with entire sequences of preceding actions, which is difficult to deal with in existing reinforcement learning frameworks. The ability to segment sequences of cognitive experiences unsupervisedly might potentially advance research on experiential and reinforcement learning with delayed reward or with no explicit feedback in any subject domain beyond NLP. The importance of the latter goal is also outlined in [Gopalakrishnan et al.’s \(2022\)](#) work, where it was stated that the “discovery of reusable sub-routines simplifies decision-making and planning in complex reinforcement learning problems.”

As will be presented further, we find the TF to be superior over MI (see [Glushchenko et al., 2018, 2019; Yuret, 1998; Kearsley, 2016](#)) and CP (see [Wrenn et al., 2007](#)) for the task of unsupervised text segmentation (tokenization). We find that the English and Russian languages require one specific way of handling the TF (variance) while Chinese requires a slightly different way (derivative-based “peak values”) for the same purpose. Tokenization quality for English and Russian may have  $F_1$  scores as high as 0.96-1.0 depending on training and testing corpora, while for Chinese the best score is  $F_1 = 0.71$  with precision of lexical word discovery reaching 0.92. Larger training corpora do not necessarily result in better tokenization quality, while compressing the models by eliminating statistically weak evidence typically improves the quality. Unsupervised TF-based tokenization provides quality that is the same as or better than lexicon-based tokenization for English and Russian, while for Chinese it appears to be the opposite (as could be anticipated); however, the precision of lexicon discovery for Chinese using TF-based tokenization appears close to reference tokenization.

## 2 Data Sets

We have used different training data sets for three different languages (English, Russian, and Chinese), while the same parallel corpus has been used for testing.

For English training corpora we have used the Brown ([http://www.sls.hawaii.edu/bley-vroman/brown\\_nolines.txt](http://www.sls.hawaii.edu/bley-vroman/brown_nolines.txt)), Gutenberg (<https://www.gutenberg.org>) Children, and Gutenberg Adult collections, as well as mixed collections such as Gutenberg Children and Adult blended together and all three corpora blended together. The sizes of the above corpora are 6M, 29M, and 140M, respectively.

For Russian training corpora we have used the RusAge collection (<https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/oldaandozerskaya/fiction-corpus-for-agebased-text-classification>) as two separate pieces: Test (141M size) and Previews (825M size), each used as an independent training corpus.

For Chinese training corpora we have used the CLUE Benchmark News 2016 dataset ([https://github.com/brightmart/nlp\\_chinese\\_corpus](https://github.com/brightmart/nlp_chinese_corpus)), which contains two pieces: Train and Validation. Each piece was used as an individual training dataset. The raw data encoded in JSON format have been processed so that title, desc, and content fields were extracted individually and each of the three fields was saved on a separate line in the text file used as input for further processing. After such preprocessing, we obtained an 8,500M-size training dataset and a 270M-size Validation dataset.

For the test corpus across all three languages above, we have used a parallel Chinese/English/Russian corpus of 100 multi-sentence statements within the financial domain, as derived from the dataset released by Magic Data (<https://magichub.com/datasets/chinese-english-parallel-corpus-finance>). The original corpus is parallel Chinese/English, but the Russian version of all 100 statements have been added with the help of Google Translate, with Chinese proper names manually replaced with Russian or English proper names used in the appropriate subject domain context.

English and Russian reference lexicons have been obtained from the Aigents/Pygents open source project: English ([https://raw.githubusercontent.com/aigents/aigents-java/master/lexicon\\_english.txt](https://raw.githubusercontent.com/aigents/aigents-java/master/lexicon_english.txt)), Russian ([https://raw.githubusercontent.com/aigents/aigents-java/master/lexicon\\_russian.txt](https://raw.githubusercontent.com/aigents/aigents-java/master/lexicon_russian.txt)).

A few different Chinese lexicons were obtained for reference: Chinese Lexical Database, or CLD (<http://www.chineselexicaldatabase.com>

[/download.php](#)) (see Sun et al., 2018); BLCU Chinese Corpus, or BLC (<https://www.plecoforums.com/threads/word-frequency-list-based-on-a-15-billion-character-corpus-bcc-blcu-chinese-corpus.5859>); and SUBTLEX-CH (<http://crr.ugent.be/programs-data/subtitle-frequencies/subtlex-ch>).

### 3 Exploration Methodology

#### 3.1 Overview

Our study involved the following phases:

- Models were trained on each training corpora across all three languages.
- Tokenization was performed for each of the languages with the models created in the previous phase, using different training corpora with different metrics and hyperparameters as will be discussed further. The same parallel test corpus was used for each language. While performing tokenization,  $F_1$  scores were evaluated for every set of hyperparameters and selected metrics, comparing the tokenization outputs with the outputs of a “standard” lexicon-based reference tokenizer. At this point, the corpora and sets of hyperparameters leading to the best  $F_1$  scores per language have been identified.
- The tokenization configurations corresponding to “winning” (superior)  $F_1$  scores were evaluated in comparison to the reference lexicon-based tokenizer specific to each of the three languages.
- The winning configurations were evaluated based on precision of lexicon discovery. This process included determining the fraction of tokens identified by the best unsupervised tokenizer setup that actually correspond to entries in reference lexicon dictionaries for each language.

#### 3.2 Model Structure and Building

Each of the models created for a corpus was represented by three pieces, based on N-grams with  $N$  in range from 1 (unigrams or individual characters/letters) to  $N_{max}$  (up to 7, according to discussion in Wrenn et al.’s (2007) work), with the latter being one of the hyperparameters discussed further. These pieces are described below.

- N-gram frequencies or counts of N-grams experienced through the corpus.
- Counts of all N-grams appearing after every specific N-gram (we call them “forward transitions”).
- Counts of all N-grams appearing before every specific N-gram (we call them “backward transitions”).

The model building process has been applied to corpus data on a line-by-line basis according to the original text layout of the corpora, without any other preprocessing.

For transition counts, two different models were built for every language corpus. First, there was N-gram-to-symbol counts, where the number of single symbols (unigrams) following or preceding every possible N-gram were counted. Second, there was N-gram-to-N-gram transitions, where the number of N-grams following or preceding a given N-gram were counted ( $N$  being the same). Preliminary studies on English corpora run at the beginning of our exploration have shown inferior performance of the latter kind of models, so further studies involved the N-gram-to-symbol models only.

The value of  $N$  varied from 1 to 7 for each language except Chinese, where  $N_{max} = 3$  for the smaller Validation dataset and  $N_{max} = 2$  for the larger Training dataset due to memory restrictions of 32G RAM which made it impossible to process larger models for Chinese corpora.

The described model of a language based on given corpora can be represented as a bidirected graph, with transitions on graph edges pointing both forward and backward independently. Every symbolic unit was involved in multiple overlaid subgraphs due to multiple contexts represented by embedding the same N-gram in multiple transitions on the graph as well as by embedding N-grams of lower rank into multiple N-grams of higher rank. The bidirected graph was weighted by frequency counts associated with vertices corresponding to N-grams as well as with edges corresponding to transitions. The same graph might be viewed in three ways: as an excessive container including a graph-based grammatical model expressed in a formal grammar such as Link Grammar (Vepstas and Goertzel, 2014; Glushchenko et al., 2018, 2019); as a bottom layer of the heterarchical system of

“deep patterns” which can be used to infer higher-level abstractions (Kolonin, 2015); or as a set of interconnected symbolic “instances” underlying an abstract higher-level language model consisting of interconnected symbolic “invariants” corresponding to parts of speech (Vityaev et al., 2022).

### 3.3 Tokenization Methods and Metrics

The following tokenization methods and respective metrics were used:

- Greedy aggregation of symbols into tokens according to the mutual information computed for pairwise symbol associations, as described by Yuret (1998) and Kearsley (2016). This did not work well in the initial cursory study on English corpora (proper English words were systematically broken into pieces), so it was not further considered as a tokenization approach.
- Probability (P) of an N-gram. N-grams with lexicon-wise probabilities above certain thresholds serve as delimiters breaking the stream of symbols into tokens.
- Conditional Probability (CP) computed on derivatives of N-gram-to-N-gram transitions in both forward and backward directions as described by Kearsley (2016) and Wrenn et al. (2007), with local maximums on N-gram-to-N-gram transitions corresponding to token breaking points.
- CP variance, the difference between the CP and its mean value for a given input sequence.
- Transition Freedom (TF), the number of possible transitions on forward or backward model graph traversal at a specific N-gram according to methodology described by Wrenn et al. (2007), with values exceeding the threshold breaking the stream of symbols into tokens.
- TF variance, defined as the difference between the TF and its mean value for a given input sequence.
- TF derivative in both directions, with local maximums on N-gram-to-N-gram transitions corresponding to token breaking points.
- TF “peak values” defined in Wrenn et al.’s (2007) work as a value of TF derivative on



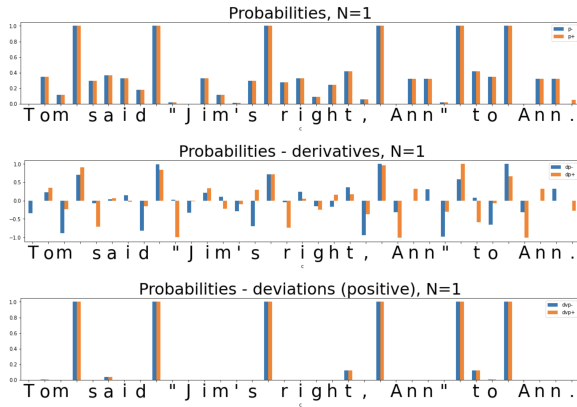


Figure 1: Using probabilities ( $p$ ) and derived metrics such as variance ( $dvp$ ) and derivatives in forward ( $dp+$ ) and backward ( $dp-$ ) traversals. It is clearly seen that punctuation marks cannot be isolated from words.

the previous transition minus the value of TF derivative on the following transition. Such peak values outline sharp positive extremums of the TF curve along the processed sequence of N-grams, indicating the token boundaries. They can be interpreted as negative second derivatives shifted one point back.

- Lexicon-based tokenization in “greedy” mode, so that either the longest or most frequent token entry present in the language-specific lexicon dictionary is identified as a next token when traversing the input text forward from left to right (blending the two criteria of length and the logarithm of frequency has also been explored). As this is not an unsupervised approach, being based on a pre-created lexicon, this tokenization was used only for reference.
- Reference “hardcoded tokenizer” used to assess the  $F_1$  scores of the unsupervised tokenizer. In the cases of English and Russian, it was a simple text splitter based on white spaces with quotes, brackets, periods, commas, semicolons, and other punctuation symbols detached from the split token sequence. For Chinese, it was the Jieba Tokenizer, which uses a combination of hardcoded rules, built-in dictionaries, and probabilistic measures (Jiang and Li, 2018).

For all methods relying on CP and TF metrics above, two alternative ways of identifying token boundaries are possible. First, as suggested by Wrenn et al. (2007), the “mean” metric is computed on forward and backward traversals over the

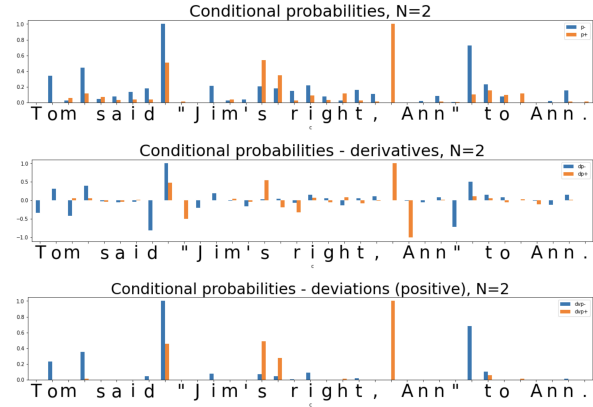


Figure 2: Using conditional probabilities ( $p$ ) and derived metrics such as derivative in forward ( $dp+$ ) and backward ( $dp-$ ) transitions and variance ( $dvp+$  and  $dvp-$ , respectively) computed on bigrams. It is clearly seen that punctuation marks cannot be isolated from words, and some of the words are disassembled into pieces.

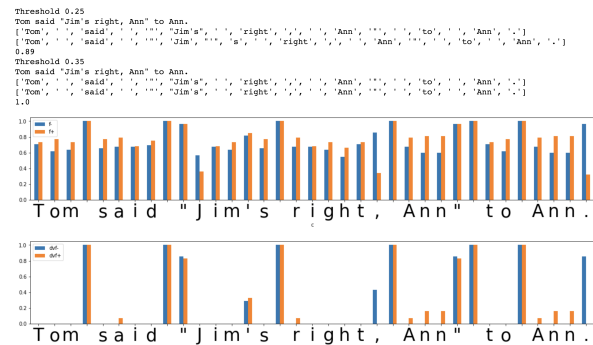


Figure 3: Using transition freedoms in forward ( $f+$ ) and backward ( $f-$ ) directions and their variances ( $dvf+$  and  $dvf-$ ) computed on unigrams. All words as well as punctuation marks are identified clearly, with threshold values of 0.25 and 0.35.

sequence of N-grams referring to corresponding subgraphs in the model. Second, the token break is identified as a metric derived from either P, CP, or TF exceeding the threshold on either forward or backward transitions along the text (i.e., the “max” was used instead of the “mean”). Cursory checks across corpora have shown that the “mean” method is not quite reliable compared to the “max” alternative, so the latter method was used in the studies presented below.

In trying to reach superior  $F_1$  scores during the studies, we also explored if it would help to “compress” the model by eliminating edges on the graph with weights below a certain threshold measured relative to the maximum N-gram or transition frequency in the local subgraph segment—that is, if a model derived from the raw model with removal

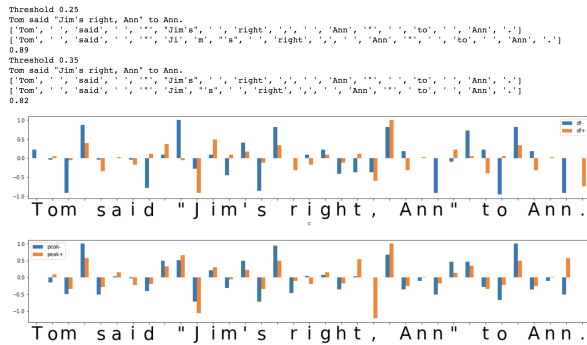


Figure 4: Using TF derivatives in forward (df+) and backward (df-) directions and their “peak values” (peak+ and peak-) computed on unigrams. Some words are not identified clearly and punctuation marks are not separated. Threshold values are 0.25 and 0.35.

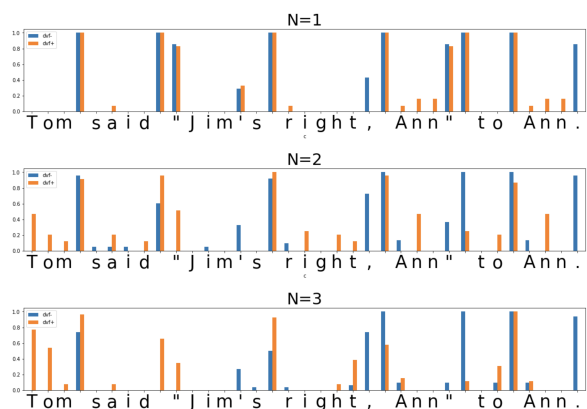


Figure 5: Variances of transition freedoms in forward (dfv+) and backward (dfv-) directions with N-grams of varying  $N$ -values. It is clearly apparent that  $N = 1$  allows for the most accurate identification of whitespaces as well as punctuation marks.

of all low-frequency N-grams and low-frequency transitions for any given N-gram can increase  $F_1$ .

### 3.4 Tokenization $F_1$ Score and Precision of Lexicon Discovery

$F_1$  scores were calculated to evaluate our unsupervised tokenizer by comparing its performance to that of the reference tokenizer based on “hard-coded” logic. The scores were computed based on a non-unique set of tokens with counted occurrences (e.g., each repetition of the determiner “the” in a tokenized text is considered separately).

The other evaluative metric we used was the unsupervised tokenizer’s capacity to discover lexical entities for an unknown language, called precision of lexicon discovery. This metric was evaluated as the ratio of all tokens found in an input text present in a reference lexicon dictionary to the total number

of tokenized entries.

### 3.5 Tokenization Hyperparameters

As mentioned above, there were a few hyperparameters explored in further experiments on unsupervised tokenization in a unified manner across all three languages studied:

- Tokenization metric: use either P/CP or TF as a base metric and then use either the base metric value itself or an offshoot of it such as variance, derivative, or “peak value.”
- The combination of  $N$  ranks used to perform model graph traversal and the “mean” metric computation based on a specified subset of N-grams. We have explored every possible individual value of  $N$  as well as arbitrary combinations of  $N$ -values.
- Model compression threshold used to remove low-frequency N-grams (corresponding to vertices and transitions between them on the model graph). We have used the following values: 0.0 (corresponding to no compression at all), 0.0001, 0.001, 0.01, and 0.1.
- Tokenization metric threshold: the value of a metric exceeding this level would correspond to a token boundary. We have used the following values: 0.0001, 0.0005, 0.001, 0.005, 0.01, 0.02, 0.05, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, 0.9.

“Grid search” was employed to find the best configuration of these four hyperparameters—that is, the setup providing superior  $F_1$  scores.

The “winning” configuration of the hyperparameters obtained for the full test set of 100 sentences per language was validated as follows: independent splits of the test set into two sets of 50 sentences obtained nearly the same results for the same combinations of hyperparameters without changing the configuration.

## 4 Experimental Results

### 4.1 English

We obtained a maximum tokenization  $F_1$  score of 0.99 using the TF variance metric after training on the smallest Brown corpus;  $N = 1$  (unigrams); model compression thresholds of 0.0001 and 0.001; and tokenization thresholds of 0.4 and 0.5. Using larger or blended corpora allowed for

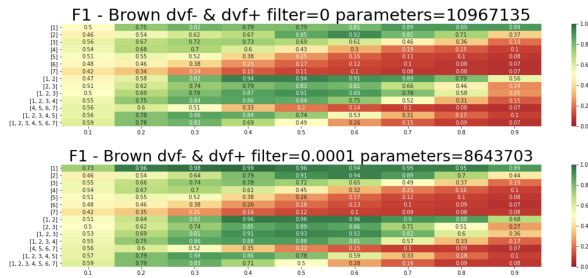


Figure 6: Heat-maps rendering  $F_1$  scores obtained for unsupervised tokenization after training on the Brown corpus with no model compression (top) and model compression with a threshold of 0.0001 (bottom) with different combinations of  $N$  (vertical axes) and different tokenization thresholds (horizontal axes). It is seen that the highest  $F_1$  scores above 0.96 correspond to models compressed with threshold 0.0001,  $N = 1$  (unigrams), and tokenization thresholds from 0.3 to 0.4. Model parameters are indicated in the plot titles, where each parameter corresponds to the weight or frequency count for either N-grams or transitions between N-grams.

$F_1$  scores above 0.93 but below 0.99 with similar hyperparameter configurations.

Lexicon-based tokenization in “greedy” mode, driven by token lengths, provided the same level of performance with  $F_1 = 0.99$ , after having delimiting symbols added to the reference lexicon dictionary.

Precision of word discovery with unsupervised tokenization turned out to be 0.99 (after correction for proper English words missed in the reference lexicon dictionary)—a result comparable to reference delimiter-based tokenization (1.0). The 0.01 error was caused primarily by the unsupervised tokenizer’s inability to recognize question marks attached to the ends of words as separate tokens. This expectedly might be solved with larger corpora involving a greater variety of question marks included in different contexts, because all other punctuation marks have been identified correctly as separate tokens.

## 4.2 Russian

We obtained a maximum tokenization  $F_1$  score of 1.0 using the TF variance metric after training on any corpora;  $N = 1$  (unigrams); a model compression threshold of 0.0001 for all training corpora (and even no compression at all for smaller corpora); and a tokenization threshold of 0.7.

Lexicon-based tokenization in “greedy” mode provided a lower level of performance ( $F_1 = 0.94$ ) due to the words missed in the lexicon, after having

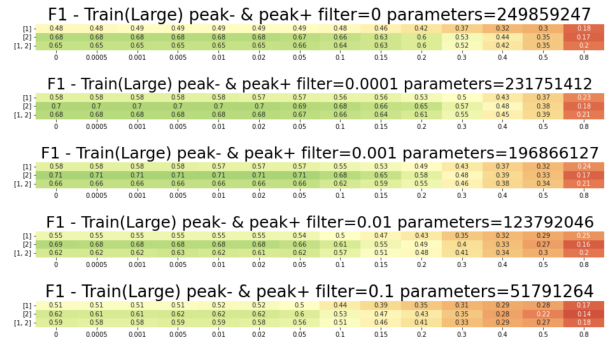


Figure 7: Heat-maps rendering  $F_1$  scores obtained for unsupervised tokenization after training on the Chinese CLUE Benchmark News 2016 corpus with no model compression (top) and model compression thresholds (bottom) with different combinations of  $N$  (vertical axes) and different tokenization thresholds (horizontal axes).

delimiting symbols added to the reference lexicon dictionary.

Precision of word discovery with unsupervised tokenization turned out to be 1.0 (after correction for proper Russian words missed in the reference lexicon dictionary), equal to that of reference delimiter-based tokenization.

## 4.3 Chinese

We obtained a maximum tokenization  $F_1$  score of 0.71 using the TF “peak” metric;  $N = 2$  (bigrams); model compression thresholds of 0.001 on larger training corpora; and any tokenization threshold between 0.0 and 0.05, inclusive. Unfortunately, we were not able to explore N-grams with  $N > 3$  for smaller lexicons and  $N > 2$  for larger lexicons due to the 32G memory limit on our model, which was implemented in Python using plain dictionaries for graph model storage.

Lexicon-based tokenization in “greedy” mode provided a higher level of performance ( $F_1 = 0.83$ ).

Regardless, it seems that the mistakes made by the tokenizer for Chinese tests did not significantly impact the meaning of the tokenized output, assuming that translations of alternative combinations of symbols looked up in Google Translate were accurate (the authors have minimal firsthand knowledge of the Chinese language).

## 5 Conclusion

$F_1$  scores for TF-based unsupervised tokenization—for English and Russian, especially—appear high enough for this technique to inform future

Language	Tokenizer	Tokenization $F_1$	Lexicon Discovery Precision
English	Freedom-based	<b>0.99</b>	<b>0.99</b> (vs. 1.0)
English	Lexicon-based	0.99	-
Russian	Freedom-based	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b> (vs. 1.0)
Russian	Lexicon-based	0.94	-
Chinese	Freedom-based	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.92</b> (vs. 0.94)
Chinese	Lexicon-based	0.83	-

Table 1: Summary of the presented research on tokenizers relying on Transition Freedom (“Freedom-based”) or on loaded lexicons (“Lexicon-based”). The last column provides reference numbers for rule-based tokenizers (models based on hardcoded rules)/hybrid tokenizers (models combining hardcoded rules, lexicons, and/or statistical measures such as mutual/conditional probabilities) in parentheses. **English:** Both tokenization and lexicon discovery are solved with freedom-based tokenizers no worse than with lexicon-based ones ( $F_1$  and Precision = 0.99). **Russian:** Both tokenization and lexicon discovery tasks are solved better ( $F_1$  and Precision = 1.0) with freedom-based tokenizers than with lexicon-based ones ( $F_1 = 0.94$ ). **Chinese:** Tokenization is solved less accurately by freedom-based tokenizers than by lexicon-based ones (0.71 vs. 0.83). However, freedom-based tokenizers perform lexicon discovery relatively well compared to rule-based/hybrid tokenizers (0.92 vs. 0.94).

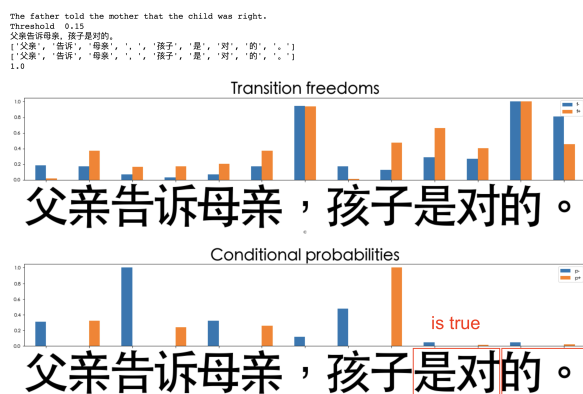


Figure 8: Using transition freedoms in forward (f+) and backward (f-) directions computed on bigrams for Chinese. All proper words and punctuation marks are identified clearly with a threshold value of 0.15 (top chart). When probabilities (p+ and p- on the bottom chart) computed on bigrams are used, the Chinese period “。” is not correctly identified as a separate token (rightmost bounding box at the bottom); however, the “token” containing these two symbols still appears semantically valid in the broader context of the sentence (“is true” makes sense as used above). As with question marks in English, this problem might be solved using richer training corpora with a greater diversity of contexts in which the given punctuation is used.

experiments in self-reinforcement learning or interpretable unsupervised grammar/language learning.

A new state-of-the-art (SOTA) baseline for unsupervised tokenization has been introduced. This baseline may be further reinforced by increasing the complexity and richness of the test corpora.

Optimal thresholds and offshoots of the TF metric vary by language. The process and policy of their discovery and adjustment in an unsupervised

manner should be further explored.

Hybridization of TF-based tokenization approaches with lexicon-based ones might be efficient for low-resource and domain-specific languages.

Further unsupervised grammar learning experiments, advancing earlier studies such as those by Glushchenko et al. (2018) and Glushchenko et al. (2019), can be run on the basis of our proposed unsupervised tokenization framework.

Using TF-based segmentation to identify natural boundaries of states and actions for the application of “global feedback” may be explored in the context of reinforcement or experiential learning environments such as in Kolonin’s (2022) work, including ones with delayed/sparse reward.

## Limitations

The following limitations are known and should be considered when applying the results of this work or relying on them in future studies:

- In some cases, tokenization with  $N = 1$  will not work (e.g., decimal points and dots in web addresses are used as token boundaries). This might be improved with  $N > 1$ , but given the slightly worse performance of such a setup on the explored test set, further studies are needed. Potentially, the notion of “broad tokenization context” (a variant of Vaswani et al.’s (2017) “attention” concept) should be introduced to scale the proposed technology when dealing with richer test corpora.
- The test corpus of 100 sentences covers a quite limited subject domain (personal fi-



nance), so evaluation on larger and richer corpora is recommended for further studies and applications.

- While the use of unsupervised parsing based on MI has been found impractical, no full-scale evaluation of this approach has been performed, so no firm claim of its futility can be made; it should be explored and verified further.
- While the use of TF “peak values” has been explored, no similar “peak values” have been systematically tried for CP (Kearsley, 2016; Wrenn et al., 2007). cursory checks rendering low performance of CP offshoots for English and Russian tests indicate that CP “peak values” will not be useful, but a more systematic study is needed for final confirmation.
- The lack of available memory (32G) made it impossible to explore  $N > 3$  for the smaller Chinese training corpus and  $N > 2$  for the larger corpus. While the smaller Chinese corpus has shown  $N = 2$  providing higher scores compared to  $N = 1$ , and the larger Chinese corpus has shown  $N = 2$  to be likewise superior, it would be best to confirm this by testing tokenization with  $N = 3$  on the larger corpus with a  $>32G$  memory limit.
- The authors’ lack of Chinese knowledge has prevented reliable interpretations of and judgments regarding the tokenization  $F_1$  score, so further exploration involving Chinese tokenization might be required for a more reliable assessment of the presented study’s applicability to the Chinese language.

## Ethics Statement

The presented work appears to have an immediate ethical benefit, due to its contribution to increased inclusiveness in respect to cultures relying on so-called “low-resource” languages and dialects which cannot easily be studied via contemporary linguistic approaches. Presumably, the proposed technology might simplify the study of such languages, providing initial lexicon dictionaries based on raw field data and thereby opening the way for further studies of these languages and their grammars.

The other long-term positive ethical impact is associated with the “interpretable” nature of this work. Our model contributes to the movement

towards open, transparent, and human-friendly linguistic models that can be developed for any human language and delivered to production, thereby precluding “black-box” NLP models from potentially decreasing quality of life.

No negative ethical impacts appear to be connected with this work.

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## A Additional Experiments

### A.1 Symbol Category Clustering

#### A.1.1 Exploration Methodology

We have tried to explore the extent to which our TF-based model can be used to identify categories of different symbols. For this purpose, we have performed agglomerative clustering of symbols into a dendrogram based on the similarity of symbols (N-grams with  $N = 1$ ) stored in the model in the vector space of their adjacent transitions both in forward and backward transitions, based on Cosine and Jaccard similarity measures.

#### A.1.2 Experimental Results

Symbol category clustering experiments have shown a general ability to identify proper groups of English and Russian symbols and letters as well as universal language-agnostic punctuation marks. It is interesting that, even using the Russian corpus, the model was able to properly categorize English letters. It is even more interesting that the symbol category trees for English, when obtained while relying on the Russian corpus, had a cleaner separation of vowels and consonants into individual tree branches, as well as cleaner categorization of punctuation marks (like opening/closing brackets and quotation marks), digits, etc. This can be probably explained by the increased “cleanness” of the English texts embedded in the Russian texts (recall that the best unsupervised tokenization results for English reported above were obtained on the smallest Brown corpus). Both the Cosine and Jaccard similarity measures delivered similar results, while the categorical trees based on the Jaccard measure appeared more well-balanced and reliable.

#### A.1.3 Conclusion

Clustering of parts of speech may provide insights on the morphology and punctuation structure of low-resource and domain-specific languages.

### A.2 Spaceless (“Fluent”) Text Segmentation

#### A.2.1 Exploration Methodology

We ran tokenization experiments on the input English and Russian texts with white spaces removed to understand the limits of our approach given corpora with continuous (“fluent”) text or speech with



paper body, we performed tokenization on the same model with the original test set of 100 sentences split into two independent subsets of 50 sentences each; in this kind of validation scenario, the difference in  $F_1$  scores for the best-performing configurations of hyperparameters turned out to be less than 1% (for English, we had  $F_1 = 0.99$  for both test subsets).

**Explanation of evaluation metrics used, with links to code:** Descriptions of the evaluation metrics can be found in subsection 3.3 of the paper.  $F_1$  score assessments were performed using the `evaluate_tokenizer_F1` function (available in <https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token.py>) relying on set-based  $F_1$  assessment (i.e., calculating the harmonic mean of precision and recall) performed by the `calc_F1` function (<https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/util.py>).

**The exact number of training and evaluation runs:** Each training set (smaller corpus, larger corpus, and splits of both) was given a single “clean” run, with a certain number of trial/debugging runs before the final one.

**Bounds for each hyperparameter:**  $N$ : [1, 7]. Model compression threshold: [0, 0.1]. Tokenization threshold: [0, 0.9].

**Hyperparameter configurations for the best-performing models:** Reported in subsections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 in the body of the paper.

**Number of hyperparameter search trials:** The goal of the presented study was to find the top  $F_1$  values possible for completely unsupervised tokenization along with the best-performing hyperparameters, so each unique combination of training corpus, test corpus (or subset of it), and combination of hyperparameters was given exactly one final “clean” run (not counting a certain number of trial/debugging runs before the final one).

**The method of choosing hyperparameter values (e.g., uniform sampling, manual tuning, etc.) and the criterion used to select among them (e.g., accuracy):** We employed 3D grid search to find the best configurations of hyperparameters, with grid parameters adjusted based on the tokenization  $F_1$  scores produced by experimental trial/debugging runs.

**Summary statistics of the results (e.g., mean, variance, error bars, etc.):** Top results are shown in Table 1. The variance of  $F_1$  scores within intervals of best-performing hyperparameters across

corpora was under 3%.

**For all datasets used, relevant details such as languages, and number of examples:** Reported in section 2 of the paper.

**Details of train/validation/test splits:** Reported in subsection 3.5 of the paper.

**Explanation of any data that were excluded, and all preprocessing steps:** No data were excluded. Preprocessing steps are briefly covered in section 2 of the paper and explained with more detail in the following section of Appendix B.

**Data or link to a downloadable version of the data:** All data and links to data are contained in <https://github.com/aigents/pygents>, with usage instructions contained in the following section of Appendix B.

## B.2 Obtaining the Corpora

### B.2.1 English Training Data

The Brown training corpus (6M size) was downloaded from [http://www.sls.hawaii.edu/bley-vroman/brown\\_nolines.txt](http://www.sls.hawaii.edu/bley-vroman/brown_nolines.txt) (6026059 bytes, 19810 lines). For extra validation purposes not presented in the paper, we have used random subsets of 100 sentences selected from the Brown corpus.

The Gutenberg Children training corpus (29M size) was obtained from <https://www.gutenberg.org>, based on the books used in the Babi CBT corpus (<https://research.fb.com/downloads/babi>). As in Castillo-Domenech and Suarez-Madrigal’s (2018) work, we downloaded the books’ raw text from UTF8 links such as <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/35688/pg35688.txt>, without their original formatting.

The Gutenberg Adult training corpus (140M size) was obtained from <https://www.gutenberg.org>, based on the selection of 361 Gutenberg project books with IDs in the range [53000, 53499]. Once again, raw text was downloaded manually from UTF8 links such as <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/53000/53000-0.txt> without formatting.

### B.2.2 Russian Training Data

Training corpora was downloaded from <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/oldaandozerskaya/fiction-corpus-for-agebased-text-classification>. The two enclosed folders, Test (141M size) and Previews (825M size), were used independently as alternative training corpora. In further discussion the corpora can be referred to as RusAge Test and RusAge Previews, respectively.





the model on the entire corpus at once (number of model parameters = 52502749).

```

brown_text = url_text("http://www.sls.hawaii
    .edu/bley-vroman/brow
    n_nolines.txt")
brown_chars =
    FreedomTokenizer(<model file name>,
        max_n=7,
        mode='chars',
        debug=False)
brown_chars.train([brown_text])
brown_chars.store(<model file name>)
print(brown_chars.count_params())

```

To build the model on the Gutenberg Children and Adult corpora for English, the following code has been used to train the model on the entire corpus at once (number of model parameters = 12321620 and 44900866, respectively).

```

def tokenizer_train_folder(t,path):
    onlyfiles = [f for f in listdir(path)
        if.isfile(join(path, f))]
    for file in onlyfiles:
        with open(join(path, file),
            errors='ignore') as f:
            lines = f.readlines()
            t.train(lines)
mode = 'chars'
child_chars = FreedomTokenizer(max_n=7,
    mode=mode,
    debug=False)
tokenizer_train_folder(child_chars,
    <corpus folder
    name>)
child_chars.store(<model file name>)
print(child_chars.count_params())

```

Model building is performed via the train function in the FreedomTokenizer class contained in <https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token.py>. The train function calls the grams\_count\_with\_gram\_freedoms function residing in the internal module <https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/text.py>.

Two different kinds of models could be built based on the mode parameter, which could be either chars or grams (corresponding to either N-gram-to-N-char or N-gram-to-N-gram, respectively).

The same code as for the Gutenberg Children and Adult corpora was used to build the model on the RusAge Test and RusAge Previews corpora (number of model parameters = 28998065 and 207808799, respectively).

Each phase of model building took up to 1 hour for smaller corpora and several hours for larger

corpora. While building the CLUE News 2016 Valid model the maximum N-gram rank was  $N = 3$ , and while building the CLUE News 2016 Train model, it was  $N = 2$ , due to the given memory limit. Building the largest model (CLUE News 2016 Train,  $N = 2$ ) took 11 hours, which was the maximum training time across all models and languages.

## B.5 Performing Tokenization

All tokenization experiments were run via the evaluate\_freedom\_tokenizer\_options function ([https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token\\_plot.py](https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token_plot.py)). The primary argument passed to the function is the tokenizer class (FreedomBasedTokenizer), which is supplied with the metrics used for tokenization in forward and backward directions, a list of different combinations of  $N$ , and a list of tokenization thresholds, as shown in the following example of English tokenization.

```

test_df=pd.read_csv(os.path.join(path,
    'CORPUS_ZH_EN_RU.txt'),delimiter='\t')
test_texts = list(test_df['en'])
# or 'zh'/'ru'
ref_tokenizer = DelimiterTokenizer()
ngram_params = [[1],[2],[3],[4],[5],[6],
    [7],[1,2],[2,3],[1,2,3],
    [1,2,3,4],[4,5,6,7],
    [1,2,3,4,5],
    [1,2,3,4,5,6,7]]
compression_thresholds = [0,0.0001,0.001,
    0.01,0.1]
tokenization_thresholds = [0.1,0.2,0.3,
    0.4,0.5,0.6,
    0.7,0.8,0.9]
base=FreedomTokenizer(name=<model file
    name>,
    max_n=7,
    mode='chars',
    debug=False)
title = '$F_1$ - Brown ddf- & ddf+'
for filter_threshold in
    compression_thresholds:
        if filter_threshold > 0:
            model_compress_with_loss(
                base.model,
                filter_threshold
            )
            parameters = base.count_params()
            title="{ } filter={ } parameters={ }"
                .format(title,
                    filter_threshold,
                    parameters)
            evaluate_freedom_tokenizer_options(
                test_texts,
                ref_tokenizer,
                FreedomBasedTokenizer(base, 'ddf-',
                    'ddf+'),
                ngram_params,
                tokenization_thresholds,
                title=title

```

)

Hyper-parameters for metrics passed to the `FreedomBasedTokenizer` class constructor above could be ‘p+’ or ‘p-’ for conditional probabilities in forward and backward directions, ‘dp+’ or ‘dp-’ for derivatives of CP, ‘dvp+’ or ‘dvp-’ for variances of CP, ‘f+’ or ‘f-’ for TFs in forward and backward directions, ‘df+’ or ‘df-’ for derivatives of TF, ‘dvf+’ or ‘dvf-’ for variances of TF, and ‘peak+’ or ‘peak-’ for “peak values” of TF.

For English and Russian, the reference tokenizer `DelimiterTokenizer` (<https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token.py>) was used for rule-based tokenization (separating words by spaces and detaching any punctuation marks, counting the latter along with spaces and words as individual tokens):

```
ref_tokenizer = DelimiterTokenizer()
```

The following combinations of N-gram ranks, model compression thresholds, and tokenization thresholds were used as hyperparameters for English and Russian.

```
ngram_params = [[1],[2],[3],[4],[5],[6],[7],
                 [1,2],[2,3],[1,2,3],[1,2,3,
                 4],[4,5,6,7],[1,2,3,4,5],
                 [1,2,3,4,5,6,7]]
compression_thresholds = [0,0.0001,0.001,
                           0.01,0.1]
tokenization_thresholds = [0.1,0.2,0.3,0.4,
                           0.5,0.6,0.7,0.8,
                           0.9]
```

For Chinese, `JiebaTokenizer` (available in <https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token.py>) was used as a reference tokenizer.

```
ref_tokenizer = JiebaTokenizer()
```

The following combinations of N-gram ranks, model compression thresholds, and tokenization thresholds were used as hyperparameters for Chinese.

```
ngram_params = [[1],[2],[3],[1,2],[2,3],
                 [1,2,3]]
compression_thresholds = [0,0.0001,0.001,
                           0.01,0.1]
tokenization_thresholds = [0.0001,0.0005,
                           0.001,0.005,
                           0.01,0.02,0.05,
                           0.1,0.2,0.4,
                           0.8]
```

All sets of hyperparameters, including metrics based on CP and TF, different N-gram ranks, model

compression thresholds, and tokenization thresholds, were applied for different models across all languages against the same test set.

For additional validation purposes, in order to confirm the reliability of hyperparameters providing the best  $F_1$  scores, the same tokenization experiments were run using different splits of the test set (all 100 lines, first 50 lines, last 50 lines) as well as random sets of 100 lines selected from the Brown corpus, ensuring that the same hyper-parameters were providing the highest  $F_1$  scores with close score values.

Each tokenization trial for an individual pre-built model given the selected tokenization metrics, involving a 3-dimensional hyperparameter grid search (`ngram_params`, `compression_thresholds`, and `tokenization_thresholds`), took no more than 2 hours per trial with 1 hour as an average.

## B.6 Evaluation

The `evaluate_freedom_tokenizer_options` function used to run the experiments discussed previously performed  $F_1$  score assessments internally by calling the `evaluate_tokenizer_F1` function (<https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token.py>), which calculated the average  $F_1$  score across all input test texts by comparing outputs of the evaluated and reference tokenizers.

Evaluation of lexicon-based tokenization for reference was done by merging the reference lexicon dictionary with a list of conventional punctuation symbols and using the `LexiconIndexedTokenizer` class (<https://github.com/aigents/pygents/blob/main/pygents/token.py>), as shown in the below code. The `sortmode` variable denotes whether greedy search is based on token length (0), token frequency (1), or the product of token length and the logarithm of frequency (2).

```
test_df = pd.read_csv(os.path.join(path,
                                   'CORPUS_ZH_EN_RU.txt'), delimiter='\t')
test_texts = list(test_df['en']) # or 'zh'
                                   # or 'ru'
ref_tokenizer = DelimiterTokenizer()
                                   # use JiebaTokenizer() for Chinese

# Get raw lexicon list, use respective
# source lexicons for English/Russian/
# Chinese
en_lex = list(pd.read_csv("https://raw.githubusercontent.com/aigents/
aigents-java/master/lexicon_english\
.txt",
```

```

        sep='\t',
        header=None,
        na_filter=False
    ).to_records(
        index=False
    )
)

# Add delimiters to the list
delimiters = ' \t\n\r\`\'\"'+-_/|\\*()[]
              <>#^@~,;:;!?'
lex = en_lex + [(i, top_weight) for i
                in list(delimiters)]
en_lex0_tokenizer =
    LexiconIndexedTokenizer(
        lexicon=lex, sortmode=0, cased=True
    )
en_lex1_tokenizer =
    LexiconIndexedTokenizer(
        lexicon=lex, sortmode=1, cased=True
    )
en_lex2_tokenizer =
    LexiconIndexedTokenizer(
        lexicon=lex, sortmode=2, cased=True
    )
print(t,en_lex0_tokenizer.count_params())

# sort by token length
print(evaluate_tokenizer_F1(test_texts,
    del_tokenizer,en_lex0_tokenizer,
    debug=False))

# sort by frequency
print(evaluate_tokenizer_F1(test_texts,
    del_tokenizer,en_lex1_tokenizer,
    debug=False))

# sort by token length and frequency
print(evaluate_tokenizer_F1(test_texts,
    del_tokenizer,en_lex2_tokenizer,
    debug=False))

expected = {}
actual = {}
tokenization_F1 =
    evaluate_tokenizer_F1(
        test_texts,
        del_tokenizer,
        test_tokenizer,
        expected_collector=expected,
        actual_collector=actual
    )

expected_count = sum([expected[key]
    for key in expected])
relevant_count = sum([expected[key]
    for key in expected if key.lower()
    in en_lex_delimited_dict])
irrelevant_count = sum([expected[key]
    for key in expected if not key.lower()
    in en_lex_delimited_dict])
print(expected_count,
    relevant_count,
    irrelevant_count,
    relevant_count/expected_count,
    (relevant_count)/expected_count)

actual_count = sum([actual[key]
    for key in actual])
relevant_count = sum([actual[key]
    for key in actual if key.lower()
    in en_lex_delimited_dict])
irrelevant_count = sum([actual[key]
    for key in actual if not key.lower()
    in en_lex_delimited_dict])
print(actual_count,
    relevant_count,
    irrelevant_count,
    relevant_count/actual_count,
    (relevant_count)/actual_count)

```

Calculation of lexicon discovery precision was achieved by passing extra parameters to the `evaluate_tokenizer_F1` function, so that all tokens identified by the evaluated (freedom-based) and reference (lexicon-based or rule-based) tokenizers could be collected. Upon the collection of the actual (evaluated tokenizer) and expected (reference tokenizer) tokens, the precision values of both the actual and expected counts of tokens were computed (in the below code, “relevant” tokens are those present in the lexicon).

```

base = FreedomTokenizer(
    name=<model file name>,
    max_n=7,mode='chars',
    debug=False
)
model_compress_with_loss(base.model,
    0.0001)
test_tokenizer = FreedomBasedTokenizer(
    base,'dvf-', 'dvf+') # for English/Russian
test_tokenizer.set_options(nlist = [1],
    threshold=0.4) # for English and Russian

```