Improving Japanese semantic-role-labeling performance with transfer learning as case for limited resources of tagged corpora on aggregated language

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Abstract

In this paper we proposed the use of effective features and transfer leaning to improve the accuracies of neural-network-based models for accurate semantic role labeling (SRL) of Japanese, which is an aggregated language. We first reveal that the final morphemes in each argument, which have not been discussed in previous work on English SRL are effective features in determining semantic role labels in Japanese. We then discuss the possibility of using large-scale training corpora annotated with different semantic labels from the target semantic labels by transfer learning on CNN, 3-LNN, and GRU models. The experimental results of Japanese SRL on the proposed models indicate that all of the neural-network-based models performed better with transfer learning as well as using the feature vectors of final moprhemes in each argument.

1 Introduction

Several studies on semantic role labeling (SRL) have been conducted, mainly for English texts with a wide coverage from revealing syntactic and grammatical features that impact SRL decisions (Gildea and Jurafsky, 2002) to end-to-end models without syntactic inputs. This is because current rich language resources are related to annotated corpora with semantic roles such as PropBank (Kingsbury et al., 2002), FrameNet (Baker et al., 1998), and shared tasks of CoNLL 2005 (Carreras and Màrquez, 2005), 2009 (Hajič et al., 2009), and 2012 (Pradhan et al., 2012).

Instead of English SRL, most studies (Taira et al., 2008; Imamura et al., 2009; Sasano and Kurohashi, 2011; Hayashibe et al., 2011; Ouchi et al., 2015; Shibata et al., 2016; Ouchi et al., 2017; Matsubayashi and Inui, 2018) on SRL for Japanese texts, the grammar of which is quite different from English, have been focused on detecting three types of case-marker-based labels, i.e., nominative, accusative, and dative. This is because large-scale corpora annotated with these three labels have been developed (Kyoto Corpus (Kawahara et al., 2002) and NAIST Text Corpus (Iida et al., 2007)) and widely used¹. There are, however, annotated corpora with semantic tags corresponding to semantic role labels (EDR corpus², BCCWJ-PT (Takeuchi et al., 2015) and Japanese FrameNet (Ohara et al., (2011)) or semantic categories (GDA corpus³) that contain semantic relations as cause and location. Thus, by constructing a Japanese SRL system using these resources, we can discuss the effective approaches and models for a situation without standard semantic-role-labeled corpora as well as effective features for Japanese SRL.

We address the following two issues: what is an effective grammatical feature for Japanese SRL, and what is a model when there are no standard labeled corpora for Japanese SRL. We first argue that the last two morphemes of arguments have

¹In CoNLL 2009 (Hajič et al., 2009), annotated corpora with semantic roles in multiple languages including Japanese were used; however, most semantic tags in the Japanese corpus were case-marker-based relations, which are different from semantic roles annotated in PropBank.

²http://www2.nict.go.jp/ipp/EDR/ENG/indexTop.html ³http://www.gsk.or.jp/catalog/gsk2009-b/

an effect on determining SRL. This is because Japanese grammar allows scrambling (Saito, 1989); thus, case markers and functional expressions located at the last part of arguments contribute to the selection of semantic relations. We then propose three neural-network-based models, i.e., a convolutional network (CNN), 3-layer neural-network (3-LNN) and GRU, by applying transfer learning for using different semantic-role-labeled corpora. With transfer learning, using annotated corpora with different tag sets from the target semantic role labels is expected.

We conducted experiments on the Japanese SRL accuracy of the proposed models that involved using the BCCWJ Predicate-Thesaurus (BCCWJ-PT) corpus, which is annotated with dependencies for target verbs in BCCWJ (Maekawa et al., 2014). The reasons of using BCCWJ-PT are 1) most of the semantic role labels correspond to the well-known categories of Agent, Theme, Goal, and Recipient, which are also used in other resources (e.g., Verb-Net and FrameNet); and 2) the semantic role labels and their verb senses (i.e., semantic frames) are defined with example sentences in the Predicate Thesaurus (PT), which are freely available on the Internet⁴.

The experimental results indicate that the last two morphemes of arguments sufficiently boosted the SRL performance of our neural-network-based models as well as a baseline, i.e., an SVM-based model. We also reveal that transfer learning improved the accuracy of recognizing labels annotated in BCCWJ-PT using different semantic tags annotated in GDA.

2 Characteristics of Japanese SRL

There are two main characteristics of Japanese SRL, i.e., Japanese grammatical features and language resources for SRL.

2.1 Japanese Grammatical Features for SRL

In Japanese syntax, the case markers located in the final part of each phrase, play important roles in determining the semantic relations (i.e., semantic roles) to the predicate. Not only the case markers but also certain functional multi-morphemes, attached to the final part of each phrase have an effect on determining the semantic relations to the predicate. The example sentence in Figure 1 shows

akutenkou-ni-yotte (no-tame-ni/de)	furaito-ga	kyanseru-sare-ta		
bad weather-due to	flight-NOM	cancel-PASSIVE-PAST		
The flight was canceled due to bad weather				

Fig. 1: Example of functional multi-morphemes

that the different functional morphemes ni-yotte, no-tame-ni, and de^5 can designate the same type of semantic relation, i.e., "Cause" to the verb kyanseru (cancel). Also, certain functional morphemes as well as case markers can provide different semantic relations depending on their contexts.

Unfortunately, there is no standard dictionary of functional morphemes⁶ nor morphological analyzers that can detect these functional morphemes⁷. Thus, we do not currently have language resources that can help determine the possible semantic relations that functional morphemes provide⁸.

With this background, we take the last two morphemes in each argument as a simple grammatical feature to take into account the functional morphemes and case markers of arguments in Japanese, as in a previous study (Ishihara and Takeuchi, 2016).

2.2 Language Resources of Japanese SRL

Several language resources have been constructed on internal semantic relations in predicates and their arguments for Japanese. The language resource EDR provides English and Japanese parsed corpora containing about 400,000 examples, which are annotated with semantic tags and original sense tags defined in the EDR dictionary. The semantic tags not only contain semantic role labels, such as Agent and Object, but also semantic relations

⁴http://pth.cl.cs.okayama-u.ac.jp/

⁵Most of the functional suffixes are written in Hiragana.

⁶There was a study on the collection of Japanese suffixes (Matsuyoshi et al., 2007); however, there are still no registered functional morphemes such as *to-issyoni (with)*.

⁷For example, the Japanese morphological analyzer MeCab (http://taku910.github.io/mecab/) with the IPA dictionary does not extract the functional suffix *no-tame-ni*.

⁸The functional morphemes are annotated in CoNLL2009 not as features but as semantic role tags (i.e., target of disambiguations). Thus, the semantic role tags in the Japanese corpus of CoNLL 2009 might be different from those for English SRL.

between main and subordinate clauses, e.g., Cooccurrence and Sequence; however, these similar semantic role tags are not connected to predicate concepts, such as frames, as defined in PropBank or FrameNet. Thus, we do not use EDR as the target SRL corpus.

Unlike the EDR corpus, the JFN (Ohara et al., 2003) was constructed in the same structure of English FrameNet, however, JFN is a closed corpus, and several essential information such as total amount of the annotated sentences and number of lexicons are not revealed. Thus, it does not seem to be easy to use the JFN corpus. The GDA corpus has 37,000 sentences that are annotated with 100 semantic tags that contain not only semantic role tags but discourse-related, syntactic, and grammatical tags. This can be regarded as a sufficient amount; however, the semantic role tags are not related to frames for predicates nor are lexical frames provided.

Instead of the above semantic role-related corpora in Japanese, BCCWJ-PT contains 64 semantic role labels that are based on the analysis of semantic relations between predicates and arguments for about 5,000 sentences. The semantic role labels are also connected to frames defined in the PT, which is freely published on the Web. This framework of tags and frames is the same as PropBank and FrameNet. We therefore use BCCWJ-PT as the target corpus of Japanese SRL.

3 Task Definition

To focus on the impact of how features and learning models can recognize semantic roles in Japanese texts, we apply the simple SRL task, i.e., SRL systems identify the semantic role labels for a pair of an argument and head verb that are correctly extracted in the preprocessing step.

Figure 2 shows an example of a partial sentence annotated with semantic roles in BCCWJ-PT.

The BCCWJ-PT corpus has not only semantic role labels but also annotated tags of morphemes, the target predicate, and its arguments; thus, we convert the tagged texts into the target data, which are separated into target semantic role labels and their features. Figure 3 shows an example of the target data converted from the annotated data in Figure 2. In the example features in Figure 3, basic forms as well as surface forms of the verbs are stored for normalization as the predicate features. The basic forms and/or the surface forms are selected as the predicate features depending on the models of neural networks.

4 Proposed Models and Approaches

Previous work has shown that neural-networkbased approaches models are powerful for English SRL (He et al., 2017) as well as Japanese case-marker disambiguation and anaphora detection (Ouchi et al., 2015; Shibata et al., 2016; Ouchi et al., 2017; Matsubayashi and Inui, 2018); however, neural-network-based models have various tuning parameters such as network structure, hyper parameters, and several methods of avoiding over fitting. Therefore, it is not easy to determine the cause-and-effect relations between models and the final results. Thus, we used simple neuralnetwork architectures to focus on clarifying what input features are effective, which learning models are powerful, and how different labeled corpora can be effective for the target label set.

As described above, several corpora annotated with different sets of semantic role labels for Japanese have been constructed, but the amount of labeled examples for each annotated corpus is limited. Thus, we applied transfer learning, which uses corpora annotated with different semantic labels from the target labels. Because of the flexibility of the neural-network structures, transfer learning can be easily implemented by changing the network structure.

In the following sections, we give details of the three proposed models, their input features, and the methods of transfer learning.

4.1 3-LNN

Our 3-LNN model is applied to determine semantic role labels by varying the following different input feature vectors to determine the effectiveness of the input feature vector.

 Bag-of-Words (BOW) for morphemes in an argument and its head verb. Each argument is separated into morphemes using the Japanese morphological analyzer MeCab with UniDic dictionary.

Japanese sentence:	[guranturisumo-4-o] Theme	[Shinpin-de] Complement_ACC	ka-ou-to-omotte-iru
	gran turismo-4-ACC	brand new-with	buy-want-think-ing
English sentence:	I would like to buy a brand n	ew Gran Turismo 4.	

Fig. 2: Example annotated sentence of semantic role labels in BCCWJ-PT

Semantic role label	Features		
	Argument Predicates		
		Basic form	Surface form
Theme	guranturisumo-4-o (gran turismo 4-ACC)	kau (buy)	ka-ou (buy-want)
Complement_ACC	shinpin-de (brand new-with)	kau (buy)	ka-ou (buy-want)

Fig. 3: Example of target data for Japanese SRL

- (2) Feature vector (1) with two skip-gram vectors: the content head morpheme and its verb in an argument. The skip-gram vectors are extracted from word embedding dataset from NINJAL Web Japanese Corpus (nwjc2vec) (Asahara, 2018) that are made from 1 billion corpus of Japanese using fasttext⁹. These vectors are expected to determine the tendency between semantic role tags and the combination of a content morpheme and verb.
- (3) Feature vector (2) with a BOW of the last two morphemes in an argument. This added feature is expected to capture functional suffixes in arguments, as described in Section 2.1.

For example, feature vector (1) for the first data in Figure 3 is a BOW vector of *granturisumo*, 4, o, and *kau*. In feature vector (2), the skip-gram vectors of the content morpheme-head, i.e., 4 and its verb *kau*, are added to feature vector (1). In feature vector (3), a BOW vector of the two morphemes 4 and o is added to feature vector (2).

Regarding the network structure and tuning methods, ReLU (Nair and Hinton, 2010) is applied to the non-linear function of the intermediate units, and softmax is used as the function of the units at the final layer.

To obtain better accuracy for test data, we applied a dropout method for the intermediate units with 50%; and used Adam as an optimization

method with the recommended setting 10 .

4.2 CNN

Instead of using BOW, we take certain sequential characteristics in verb-argument features with a simple CNN. Our CNN is a simple structure that consists of an input layer, convolution layer, pooling layer, and output layer (Figure 4). The input of the CNN is a sequence of feature morphemes in verb-argument order. The nwjc2vec was used to convert the input morphemes to the skip-gram vectors with 200 dimensions. We define the three types of filters that take into account three, four, and five successive morphemes. The number of filters for each type is 128.



Fig. 4: Semantic role labeling with CNN model

After the convolution layer, a pooling layer with max pooling is applied, then a fully connected layer is applied to the connection to the final output layer. In addition to the simple network, we also use a

⁹https://github.com/facebookresearch/fastText.git

 $^{^{10}\}text{The parameters of Adam were set to } \alpha = 0.001, \ \beta 1 = 0.9, \ \text{and} \ \beta 2 = 0.999.$

variation model in which the input features defined in the 3-LNN model are added into the previous final layer, as mentioned in Section 6.

4.3 GRU

To focus on the sequential feature of arguments and verbs, we use our GRU model, which is a type of recurrent neural network.



Fig. 5: Semantic role labeling with GRU model

Figure 5 shows the structure of how we apply our GRU model for SRL. Input feature morphemes are converted to dense vectors with nwjc2vec, the final GRU state is applied to a dense layer, then the final output is obtained.

To observe how the order and inflection of input morphemes can contribute to the accuracy of identifying semantic role labels, four types of input features are defined in Table 1. The slash in the examples denotes a delimiter of morphemes. The GRU model takes a verb with the final position in v1, but a verb or verbs at the first position in the other features. Feature vectors v3 and v4 have a surface form of the verb.

4.4 Transfer Learning

As described in Section 2.2, the amount of the target corpus, BCCWJ-PT, is limited; thus, we apply a method of using other annotated corpora whose semantic labels are even different from that of the target corpus, which is called transfer learning.

The basic procedure of transfer learning is as follows: 1) a neural network is trained using an annotated corpus of different semantic tags from the target corpus; 2) the units at the final layer of the neural network are replaced with new units for the target semantic tags; and 3) all the weights in the neural work are trained using the target corpus¹¹. Transfer learning is applied to the three proposed neural-network-based models.

4.5 Baseline Model

We apply an SVM-based model that has a linear kernel to the SRL task as a baseline model. For multi-class categorization, we use the one-versusrest method. The input feature is the BOW, which is the same as case (1) used in the 3-LNN model.

5 Experiments on Japanese SRL Accuracy

5.1 Experimental Setup

The BCCWJ-PT corpus was the target corpus containing 5069 sentences, 64 semantic role labels for 548 verb types¹². We extracted 10,390 instances of the target data whose format is shown in Figure 3, i.e., combinations of an argument and its verb. The target data were divided into the three parts: training (65%), development (5%), and test (30%). The GDA corpus containing 100 semantic tags, which are different from those in BCCWJ-PT, was selected as the corpus for transfer learning. We extracted 82,892 instances whose format is the same as that in Figure 3. The instances of GDA were divided into development (85%), training (5%), and test (10%) data. Table 2 shows the details of the data sets used in the experiments.

The top five most frequent semantic role labels contained in the BCCWJ-PT data are listed in Table 3. The semantic role labels of Theme and Agent were most frequent, which indicates the same tendency shown in PropBank (Palmer et al., 2005), which is an English semantic-role-labeled corpus.

We applied the proposed models to the training data for training parameters and applied them to the test data for evaluating their SRL accuracy.

The SRL accuracy of the SVM model was evaluated with 5-fold cross validation of all target data. This indicates that the SVM model is advantageous

¹¹In preliminary experiments, we found that training only the weights to the final layer does not perform well compared with training all the weights.

¹²The version of BCCWJ-PT we used is 0.9.

	description	example
v1	place argument followed	guranturisumo / 4 / o / kau
	by basic form of verb	
v2	place basic form of verb	kau / guranturisumo / 4 / o
	followed by argument	
v3	place surface form of verb	ka-ou guranturisumo 4 o
	followed by argument	
v4	place basic and surface from of verbs	ka-ou kau guranturisumo 4 o
	followed by argument	

TABLE 1. Variation of input feature vectors

TABLE 2. Size of each data set used in experiments

	02.1
6,753 (65%)	70,458 (85%)
520 (5%)	4,144 (5%)
3,117 (30%)	8,290 (10%)
	520 (5%)

TABLE 3. Top five most frequent labels in BCCWJ-PT data

Semantic role label	frequency
Theme	3,100
Agent	1,200
Manner	549
Modifier	443
Adverb	439

compared to our neural-network-based models, because the amount of training data is larger than that of our neural-network-based models.

The SRL accuracies of our models and the SVM model were evaluated based on the instances of the test data using the following accuracy formula:

$$accuracy = \frac{\#\text{instances correctly estimated labels}}{\#\text{total instances}}$$
(1)

In the SVM model, evaluation on test data in one hold was conducted with the above accuracy formula. The final accuracy of the SVM model was then an average evaluated based on all the test data in 5-fold cross validation.

The mini-batch size of all three proposed neuralnetwork-based models was set to 100, and the number of training iterations, i.e., epochs, was determined using the accuracy of the development data. To avoid overfitting to the training data, we used 20 epochs on the BCCWJ-PT data because almost all the proposed models converged in 20 epochs.

6 Experimental Results

Table 4 lists that experimental results of the SRL accuracies of the proposed and baseline models using only the BCCWJ-PT data.

TABLE 4. Results of SRL by using BCCWJ-PT data.

Model	Feature	Accuracy
SVM	BOW	0.508
	BOW + skip	0.562
	BOW + skip + two	0.598
3-LNN	BOW	0.538
	BOW + skip	0.610
	BOW + skip + two	0.650
GRU	v1	0.599
	v2	0.633
	v3	0.619
	v4	0.631
CNN	conv	0.641
	conv + BOW + skip + two	0.665

All three neural-network-based models outperformed the SVM model regarding SLR accuracy. When we look at the effectiveness of the features in the SVM and 3-LNN models, the skip-gram vectors significantly improved the accuracies of the both models. Adding a BOW of the last two morphemes in each argument further improved their accuracies.

For the GRU results, **v2** showed the best performance among the other feature sets. This indicates that the verb should come first in the input sequence by comparing to **v1**; and the base form of the verbs must be more effective than the inflected form compared to the results of **v3** and **v4**. The SRL accuracy of the GRU model, however, was inferior to that of the 3-LNN model. This indicates that the GRU model currently does not seem to fully use contextual information.

The best SRL accuracy of all the models was that of our CNN model. Compared to the 3-LNN model,

the convolution and pooling structure contributes to improve 0.015 points. The CNN model with only using the base feature vector **conv** did not perform as well as the 3-LNN model with the **BOW** + **skip** + **two** feature vector. This indicates that the manually designed feature vectors, i.e., **skip** + **two** with **BOW**, work well to obtain the characteristics of the semantic role labels.

TABLE 5. Results of transfer learning: SRL accuracy of proposed models with BCCWJ-PT for GDA data in pre-training.

Training epochs	Accuracy with BCCWJ-PT		
[with GDA data]	3-LNN	GRU	CNN
0	0.650	0.633	0.665
10	0.670	0.638	0.669
30	0.669	0.641	0.664
50	0.665	0.641	0.659
100	0.652	0.644	0.654
300	0.655	0.628	0.629
500	0.615	0.615	0.619

Table 5 shows the results of incorporating transfer learning, i.e., using the GDA data for training the initial values of the weights. All three proposed neural-network-based models improved their accuracies with transfer learning, but the increase in the accuracies differed depending on the model. The 3-LNN model had the most improvement with transfer learning and showed the best accuracy among all the models. The CNN model improved in accuracy, but was not as effective as the 3-LNN model. The accuracy of the GRU model also increased 0.011 points within the maximum score, but the best accuracy of the GRU model was lower than those of the other models.

According to the effects of the training epochs in the GDA data, too many training epochs for the GDA data will decrease the SLR accuracy with BCCWJ-PT for all three models. This indicates that neural-network-based models would have caused overfitting to the GDA data if the models were trained with too many iterations. Thus, we need to stop the training in GDA data with a small number of iterations. Table 5 shows that the best training epoch for the 3-LNN and CNN models is only ten iterations, which would be the best for obtaining the initial weights towards learning the final BCCWJ-PT data.

7 Discussions

The results of transfer learning in Table 5 indicate that transfer learning contributed to the improvement in the SRL accuracies of our neural-networkbased models, but the best accuracy score of 0.67 is not so different from 0.665 with the CNN model without transfer learning even though the GDA data are about ten times larger than the BCCWJ-PT data. The role of transfer learning is to obtain better initial weights in neural-network-based models than randomized initial weights. In transfer learning, all the units in the final layer for GDA tags are discarded; however, some of the tags are almost the same as the semantic role tags defined in BCCWJ-PT, such as Agent, Theme, and Goal. Therefore, we must consider how we can use the similar semantic tags in transfer learning.

As described in Section 2.1, the last two morphemes in each argument are defined to capture functional suffixes that have an effect on determining its semantic role of the argument. The experimental results listed in Table 4 reveal that the multi-word functional suffix i.e., two feature vector, improves the accuracy of the GRU model as well as those of the SVM and 3-LNN models. The three feature vectors v2, v3, v4 outperformed v1 in terms of SRL accuracy. Since v1 is only the case in which a verb comes at the end, the other case markers come last. In the GRU model, the final layer of the GRU loated at the final positions of a time sequence determines the label. Therefore, the last two morphemes located at the final positions of a time sequence are naturally taken into account in v2, v3, and v4. The accuracies of all the models show that the last morphemes have a positive effect on determining the semantic role labels in Japanese.

8 Related Work

Several SRL studies have been conducted mainly in English because of existing high-quality language resources such as FrameNet and PropBank as well as shared tasks of semantic role labels such as in CoNLL-2005 (Carreras and Màrquez, 2005), 2009 (Hajič et al., 2009) and 2012 (Pradhan et al., 2012).

In the early stage of SRL investigation, statistical modeling and effective features for SRL have been studied. Gildea and Jurafsky (2002) revealed that several syntactic features, such as parse tree path, phrase type, and voice, can improve the accuracy of a statistical learning model. More detailed features were studied by Surdeanu et al. (2003) and Xue and Palmer (2004). Toutanova et al. (2008) showed effective combinations of statistical joint models with rich features.

Syntactic features are powerful; however, parse errors will decrease the accuracies of SRL systems. Thus Zhou and Xu (2015) proposed an end-toend SRL model using bi-directional long shortterm memory (LSTM) without any syntactic features. Roth and Lapata (2016) used dependency information on LSTM. The dependency path is convenient, but He et al. (2017) revealed that higher accuracies on neural-network-based SRL models could be obtained if correct parsed information is available.

Most studies on Japanese SRL (Taira et al., 2008; Imamura et al., 2009; Sasano and Kurohashi, 2011; Hayashibe et al., 2011; Ouchi et al., 2015; Shibata et al., 2016; Ouchi et al., 2017; Matsubayashi and Inui, 2018) have been focused on recognizing three types of case-marker-based semantic roles with anoaphra resolutions.

Taira et al. (2008) have shown that the detailed noun categories of nominals in arguments improve the accuracy of statistical models for recognizing the three case-markers. Imamura et al. (2009) proposed effective grammatical features such as dependency path, phrase positions, and several detailed characteristics. Sassano and Kurohashi 2011 and Hnagyo et al. 2013 proposed models to use large-scale case frames to provide selectional preference between a head noun in an argument and its predicate.

Ouchi et al. (2015), Shibata et al. (2016), Ouchi et al. (2017) and Matsubayashi and Inui (2018) proposed neural-network-based models. These studies are focused on anaphora resolution, i.e., detecting arguments for a predicate without dependency relations and recognizing their semantic roles. Thus, these studies discussed how to incorporate the effectiveness of multiple predicates.

For SRL in Japanese, Ishihara and Takeuchi (2015) revealed that the last morphemes in an argument are effective on a linear-chain CRFs for determining 64 semantic roles for BCCWJ-PT.

Thus, the effective grammatical features as well

as approaches on neural-network-based models for Japanese SRL are required to be studied.

9 Conclusion

We propose three neural-network-based models and described the effective features and methods for Japanese SRL. We revealed that the last two morphemes in an argument, the dense morpheme vector concatenated with a head noun morpheme and its predicate, and bag-of-morphemes in an argument, are effective for our 3-LNN and CNN models. We conducted experiments on Japanese SRL with BCCWJ-PT containing 64 semantic roles, which was different from most previous studies, which focused on 3 semantic roles.

We applied transfer learning using GDA, which has different semantic role tags from BCCWJ-PT. After pre-training the weights using the GDA data, the neural network models were trained on the BCCWJ-PT data. The experimental results indicate that transfer learning improved the accuracies of all three proposed neural network models compared to the cases without transfer learning.

We are planning more detailed analyses of the combinations of features and neural network models on BCCWJ-PT.

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