

# Multilingual Pre-Training and Cross-Lingual Transfer for MT and NLP

Erweiterungsmodul: Machine Translation  
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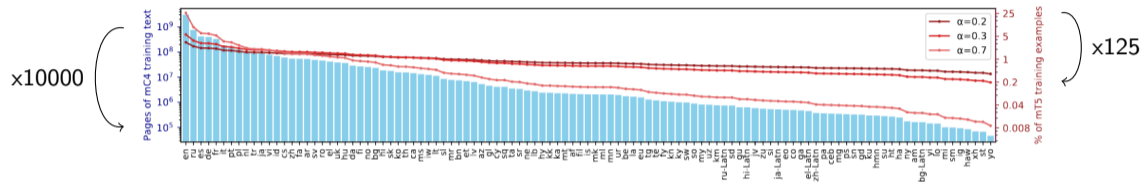
August 02, 2023

- 1 Motivation
- 2 Towards Multilingual MT
- 3 Multilingual Pre-Trained Models
- 4 Multilinguality in LLMs
- 5 Summary

# Motivation

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# Data matters

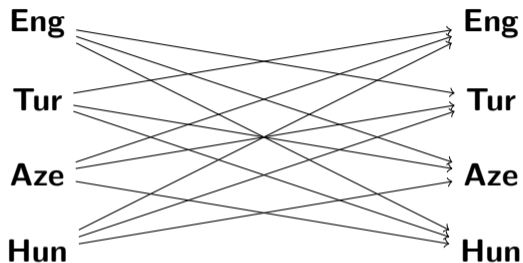


- mC4 dataset, from mT5 paper
- Monolingual datasets → Situation is at least this bad for parallel data

Xue et al. 2021. mT5: A Massively Multilingual Pre-trained Text-to-Text Transformer. NAACL 2021

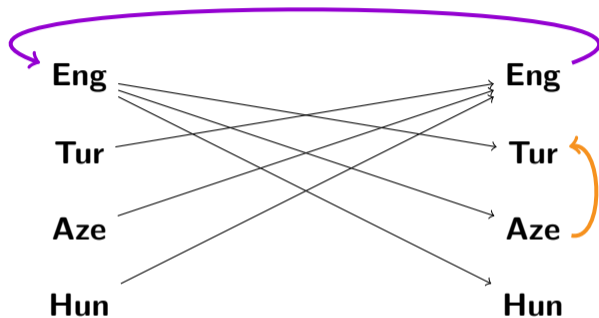
*First part of slides adapted from Xinyi Wang, CMU*

# Supporting many language pairs is hard



→ Just translating from 4 to 4 languages requires  $4*3=12$  NMT models

# Supporting many language pairs is hard

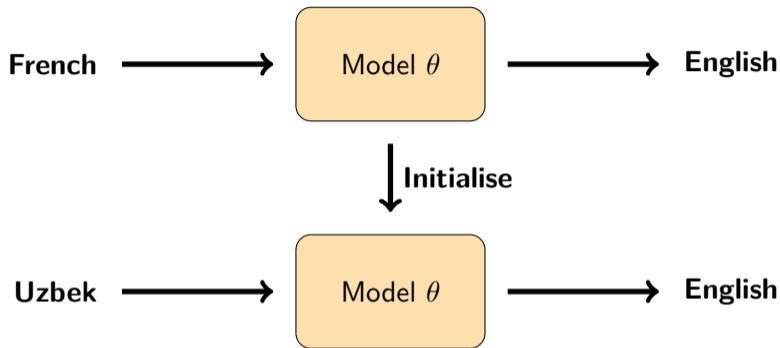


- Instead: pivot translation, but this adds time and can introduce extra errors
- Related but low-resource language pairs suffer especially

# Towards Multilingual MT

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- 2 Towards Multilingual MT**
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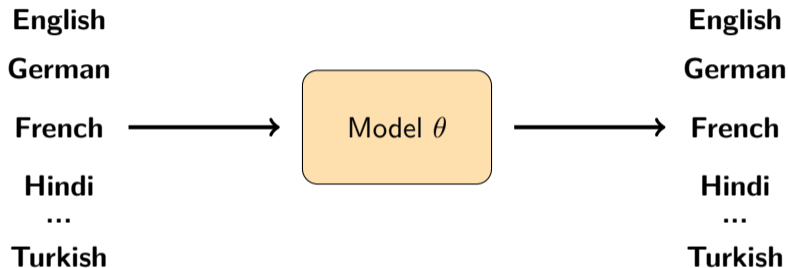
# Cross-Lingual Transfer



- Train a model on high-resource language pair
- Finetune on small low-resource language pair

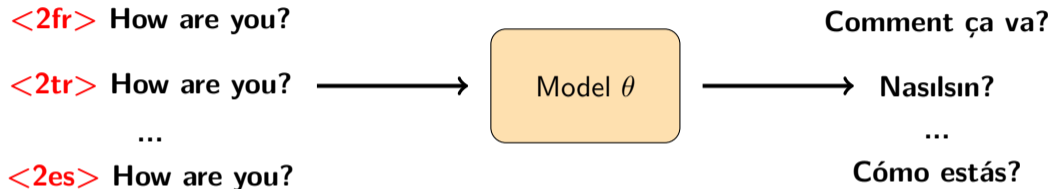
Zoph et al. 2016. Transfer learning for low-resource neural machine translation. EMNLP 2016.





- Train a single model on a mixed dataset from multiple languages (e.g., five languages in the paper)

Johnson et al. 2017. Google's multilingual neural machine translation system: Enabling Zero-Shot Translation. TACL.



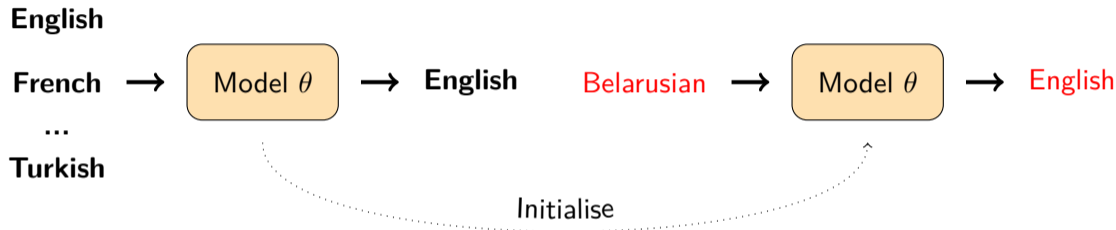
- NMT needs to generate into many languages, simply add target language label

Johnson et al. 2017. Google's multilingual neural machine translation system: Enabling Zero-Shot Translation. TACL.

## Combining the Two Methods

- We just covered the two main paradigms for multilingual methods
  - Cross-lingual transfer
  - Multilingual training
- How best to combine the two to train a good model for a new language?

# Rapid Adaptation to New Languages



- First, do multilingual training on many languages (eg. 58 languages in the paper)
- Next fine-tune the model on a new low-resource language

Neubig and Hu. 2018. Rapid adaptation of Neural Machine Translation to New Languages. EMNLP 2018.

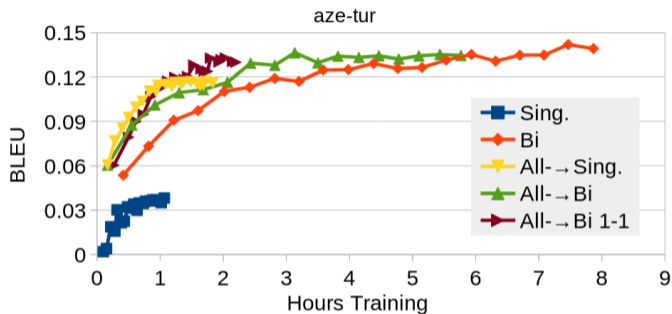
# Rapid Adaptation to New Languages



- Regularized fine-tuning: fine-tune on low-resource language and its related high-resource language to avoid overfitting

Neubig and Hu. 2018. Rapid adaptation of Neural Machine Translation to New Languages. EMNLP 2018.

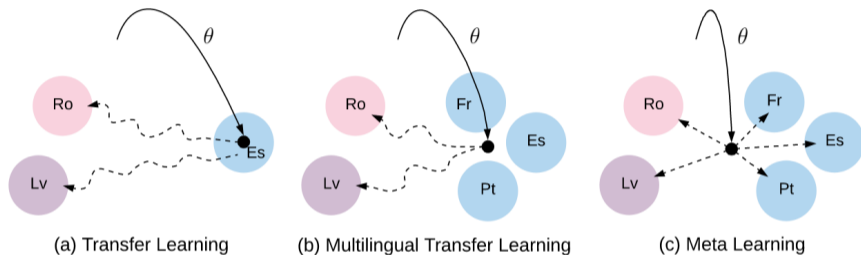
# Rapid Adaptation to New Languages



- All  $\rightarrow$  xx models: adapting from a multilingual model makes convergence faster
- Regularized fine-tuning yields better final performance

Neubig and Hu. 2018. Rapid adaptation of Neural Machine Translation to New Languages. EMNLP 2018.

# Meta-Learning for Multilingual Training



- Learning a good initialization of model for fast adaptation to all languages
- Inner loop: optimize/learn for each language
- Outer loop (meta objective): learn how to quickly optimize for each language

Gu et al. 2018. Meta-learning for low-resource neural machine translation. EMNLP 2018.

# Zero-shot Transfer

- Train models that work for a language without annotated data in that language
- Allowed to train using **monolingual** data for the test language or **annotated data for other languages**



# Zero-shot Transfer in MT

**Zulu - English**

← some Bible data

**Italian - English**

← News, European Parliament documents,....

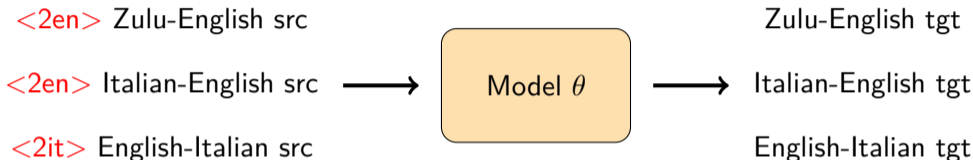
**Zulu - Italian**

← not much data available

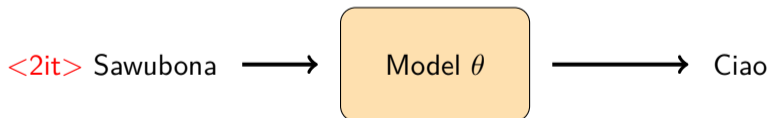
→ Parallel data are English centric

# Zero-shot Transfer in MT

## Training:



## Testing:

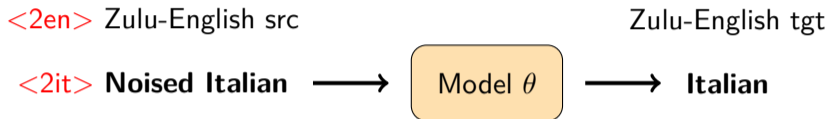


- Multilingual training allows zero-shot transfer
- Train on {Zulu-English, English-Zulu, English-Italian, Italian-English}
- Zero-shot: Translate Zulu to Italian without Zulu-Italian parallel data

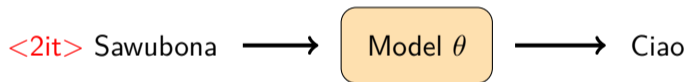
Johnson et al. 2017. Google's multilingual neural machine translation system: Enabling Zero-Shot Translation. TACL.

# Improving Zero-Shot Transfer in NMT: Noised Monolingual Data

## Training:



## Testing:

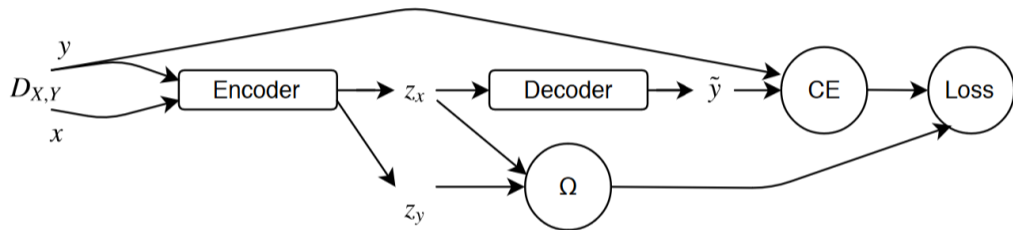


- Add monolingual data by asking the model to reconstruct the noisy version of the monolingual data
- Use masked language model objective

Siddhant et al. 2020. Leveraging Monolingual Data with Self-Supervision for Multilingual NMT. ACL 2020.

Tang et al. 2021. Multilingual Translation from Denoising Pre-Training. ACL Findings 2021.

# Improving Zero-Shot Transfer in NMT: Alignment of Multilingual Representations



- Translation objective alone might not encourage language-invariant representation
- Add an extra loss to align source and target encoder representation

Arivazhagan et al. 2019. The Missing Ingredient in Zero-Shot Neural Machine Translation. arXiv, CoRR.

# Multilingual Pre-Trained Models

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- We've been talking about multilingual MT specifically
  - Pre-training (on monolingual data) is used in MT to get better language modelling, better results
  - Pre-training is a generalisable principle
  - Multilingual, monolingual, encoder, decoder,...
- Kind of a detour from MT, but we'll come back around!

# Why Multilingual Pre-Training?

- Reusable models for multiple languages
- Fewer resources than maintaining individual models
- Faster adaptation or no adaptation to use for different languages
- Better for lower-resource languages than training individual models
- Can model languages where there is not enough data for a monolingual model



## Encoder-Only

- Typically trained on masked language modelling or similar
- Outputs vectors/matrices
- Fine-tuned for, e.g., classification tasks
- Includes BERT-type models

## Encoder-Decoder

- Trained on sequence-to-sequence data, or e.g. span corruption
- Outputs text
- Can be fine-tuned for various tasks
- Includes (most) MT models

## Decoder-Only

- Typically trained on autoregressive LM or similar
- Outputs text
- Often used with prompts and in-context learning
- Includes GPT-type models

- Two similar, famous **encoder** models
- mBERT supports 104 languages, XLM-R 100.
- Both: Concatenate data from all training languages → MLM
- XLM-R is trained on more data, better optimised, has a Large version (more recently, up to XXL)
- Show cross-lingual representations despite **no explicit** cross-lingual signal
- Due to overlapping tokens, compression/limited capacity,...?

Devlin et al. 2019. BERT: Pre-training of Deep Bidirectional Transformers for Language Understanding. NAACL 2019.

Conneau et al. 2020. Unsupervised Cross-lingual Representation Learning at Scale. ACL 2020.

Dufter and Schütze. 2020. Identifying Elements Essential for BERT's Multilinguality. EMNLP 2020.

Goyal et al. Larger-Scale Transformers for Multilingual Masked Language Modeling. Repl4NLP 2021.

# Zero-Shot Cross-Lingual Transfer

## Pre-Training:

English

...

Malay

Model  $\theta$

Encoder  
Representation

## Fine-Tuning:

English sentence

Model  $\theta + \text{Head}$

POS tags

## Testing:

Malay sentence

Model  $\theta + \text{Head}$

POS tags

# Transfer Performance

Task	Model	EN	ZH	TR	RU	AR	HI	EU	FI	HE	IT	JA	KO	SV	VI	TH	ES	EL	DE	FR	BG	SW	UR	
		$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$	$\Delta$
DEP	B	91.2	-43.9	-46.0	-28.1	-56.4	-36.1	-50.2	-30.7	-36.1	-17.1	<b>-60.1</b>	-56.1	-14.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	X	92.0	<b>-85.4</b>	-44.2	-29.7	-54.6	-39	-49.5	-26.7	-39	-23.5	-80.5	-56.0	-16.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
POS	B	95.8	-38.0	-35.9	-16.0	-40.1	-33.4	-34.6	-21.9	-33.4	-19.8	<b>-46.1</b>	-42.0	-9.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	X	96.3	-69.2	-27.7	-14.3	-37.1	-27.3	-31.9	-17.9	-27.3	-19.0	<b>-77.0</b>	-37.3	-10.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NER	B	92.4	-23.3	-11.6	-10.7	<b>-31.7</b>	-11.1	-12.8	-3.8	-11.1	-2.6	-25.7	-13.8	-6.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	X	91.6	<b>-34.8</b>	-6.2	-13.7	-24.6	-16.5	-8.0	-0.9	-16.5	-2.4	-30.1	-15.6	-2.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
XNLI	B	82.8	-13.6	-20.6	-13.5	-17.3	-21.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-11.9	-28.1	-8.1	-14.1	-10.5	-7.8	-13.3	<b>-33.0</b>	-23.4	
	X	84.3	-11.0	-11.3	-9.0	-13.0	-14.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-9.7	-12.3	-5.8	-8.9	-7.8	-6.1	-6.6	<b>-20.2</b>	-17.3	
XQuAD	B	71.1	-22.9	-34.2	-19.2	-24.7	-28.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-22.1	<b>-43.2</b>	-16.6	-28.2	-14.8	-	-	-	-	
	X	72.5	<b>-26.2</b>	-18.7	-15.4	-24.1	-22.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-19.7	-14.8	-14.5	-15.7	-16.2	-	-	-	-	

Table 1: Zero-shot cross-lingual transfer performance on five tasks (DEP, POS, NER, XNLI, and XQuAD) with mBERT (B) and XLM-R (X). We show the monolingual EN performance and report drops in performance relative to EN for all target languages. Numbers in bold indicate the largest zero-shot performance drops for each task.

Lauscher et al. 2020. From Zero to Hero: On the Limitations of Zero-Shot Language Transfer with Multilingual Transformers. EMNLP 2020.

# How Language-Neutral Are These Models?

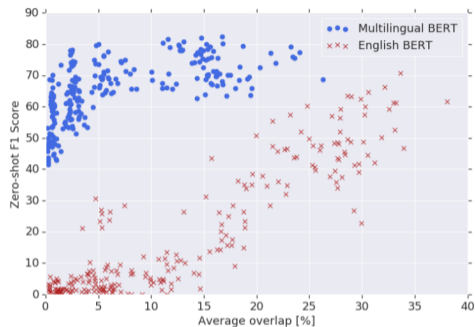
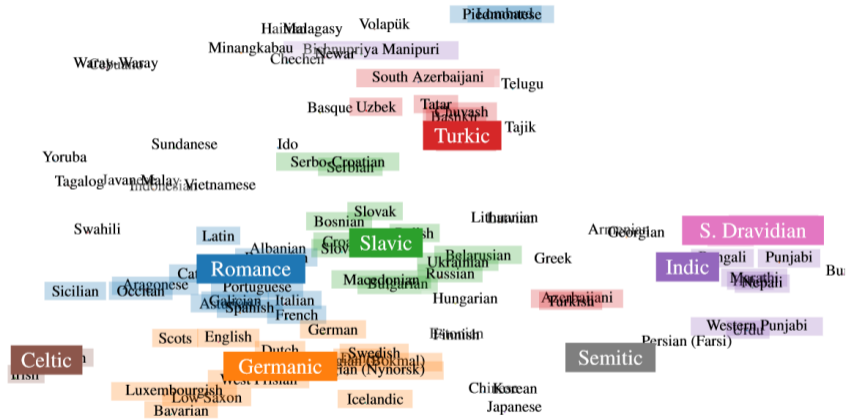


Figure 1: Zero-shot NER F1 score versus entity word piece overlap among 16 languages. While performance using EN-BERT depends directly on word piece overlap, M-BERT's performance is largely independent of overlap, indicating that it learns multilingual representations deeper than simple vocabulary memorization.

- x-axis: Average token overlap of the sequences with English
- Interpretation: Cross-lingual representation is responsible for better transfer performance in mBERT
- Works well even with different scripts for some pairs (Hindi-Urdu) but not others (English-Japanese)

Pires et al. 2019. How Multilingual is Multilingual BERT? ACL 2019.

# How Language-Neutral Are These Models?



Libovický et al. 2020. On the Language Neutrality of Pre-trained Multilingual Representations. EMNLP 2020.

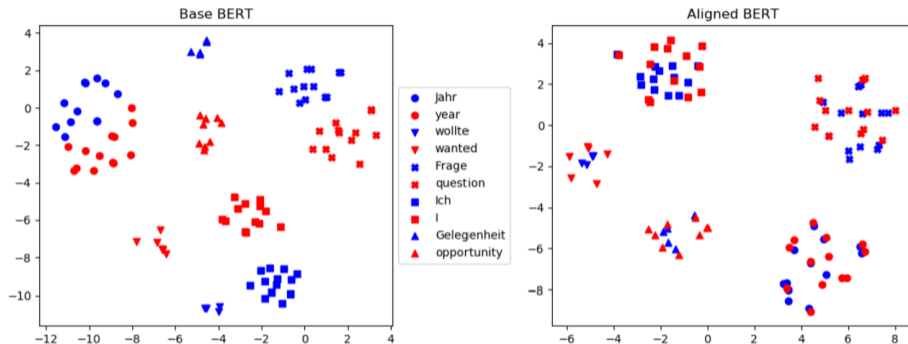
# How Language-Neutral Are These Models?

Task	Model	SYN		PHON		INV		FAM		GEO		SIZE	
		P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
DEP	XLM-R	0.77	0.78	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.77</b>	0.46	-0.04	0.68	0.61	0.80	0.81	0.62	0.47
	mBERT	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.91</b>	0.79	0.74	0.55	-0.01	0.76	0.62	0.64	0.69	0.79	0.59
POS	XLM-R	0.68	0.79	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.81</b>	0.38	0.02	0.58	0.74	0.80	0.73	0.54	0.46
	mBERT	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.87</b>	0.86	0.81	0.57	0.02	0.82	0.80	0.66	0.72	0.47	0.39
NER	XLM-R	0.49	0.49	<b>0.80</b>	<b>0.83</b>	0.27	0.14	0.47	0.55	0.77	0.81	0.37	0.35
	mBERT	0.60	0.74	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.84</b>	0.34	-0.04	0.53	0.58	0.59	0.73	0.42	0.38
XNLI	XLM-R	<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.90</b>	0.29	0.27	0.31	-0.11	0.63	0.54	0.54	0.74	0.70	0.76
	mBERT	<b>0.87</b>	0.86	0.21	0.08	0.29	0.04	0.61	0.47	0.55	0.67	0.77	<b>0.91</b>
XQuAD	XLM-R	0.69	0.53	<b>0.85</b>	<b>0.81</b>	0.62	-0.01	<b>0.81</b>	0.54	0.43	0.50	<b>0.81</b>	0.55
	mBERT	0.84	0.89	0.56	0.48	0.55	0.22	0.79	0.64	0.51	0.55	<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.96</b>

Table 2: Correlations between zero-shot transfer performance with mBERT and XLM-R for different downstream tasks with linguistic proximity features (SYN, PHON, INV, FAM and GEO) and pretraining size of target-language corpora (SIZE). Results reported in terms of Pearson (P) and Spearman (S) correlation coefficients.

Lauscher et al. 2020. From Zero to Hero: On the Limitations of Zero-Shot Language Transfer with Multilingual Transformers. EMNLP 2020.

# Aligning Representations in Multilingual Models

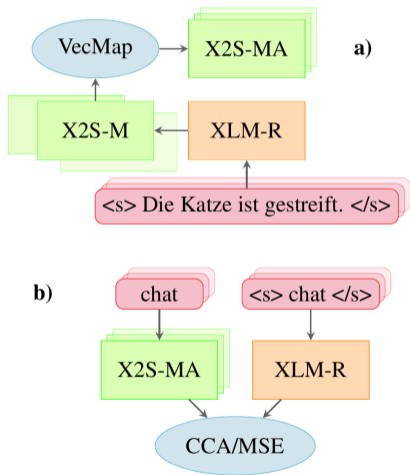


- Minimise distance between aligned words in parallel text
- Regularise to stay close to initial representations

Cao et al. 2020. Multilingual Alignment of Contextual Word Representations. ICLR 2020.



# Aligning Representations in Multilingual Models



- Part of the model's appeal is training without parallel data. How can we align without resorting to parallel text?
- Extracted static embeddings from the model and applied traditional embedding alignment
- Minimise distance between contextual word embeddings and aligned static embeddings
- Regularise by adding masked language modelling

Hämmerl et al. 2022. Combining Static and Contextualised Multilingual Embeddings. ACL Findings 2022

# The “Curse of Multilinguality”

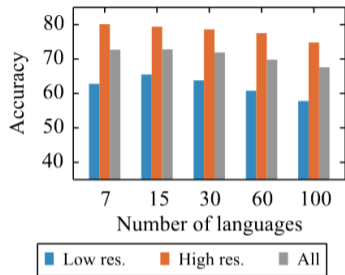


Figure 2: The transfer-interference trade-off: Low-resource languages benefit from scaling to more languages, until dilution (interference) kicks in and degrades overall performance.

Conneau et al. 2020. Unsupervised Cross-lingual Representation Learning at Scale. ACL 2020.

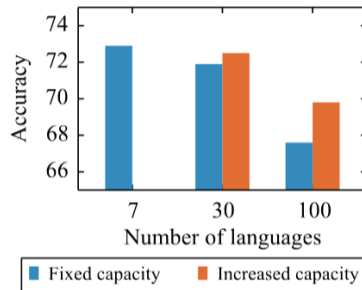
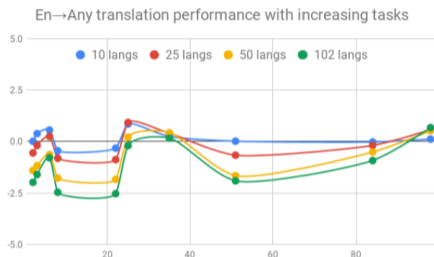


Figure 4: Adding more capacity to the model alleviates the curse of multilinguality, but remains an issue for models of moderate size.

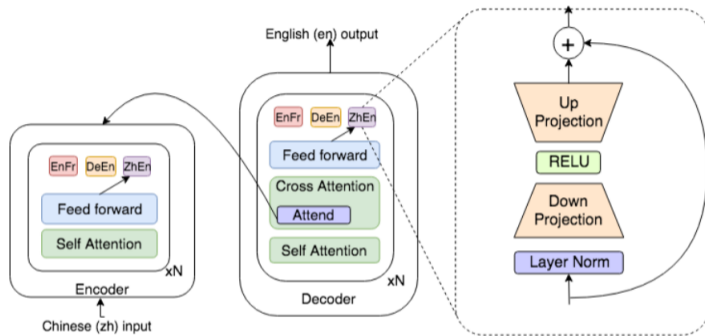
# ..and what it looks like in MT



- x-axis: Rank of language w.r.t. data size—10 languages plotted
- y-axis: BLEU score relative to bilingual models
- Interpretation: Lower-resource languages benefit more from multilingual training, high-resource languages suffer. All get worse as language pairs added

Arivazhagan et al. 2019. Massively Multilingual Neural Machine Translation in the Wild. arXiv, CoRR.

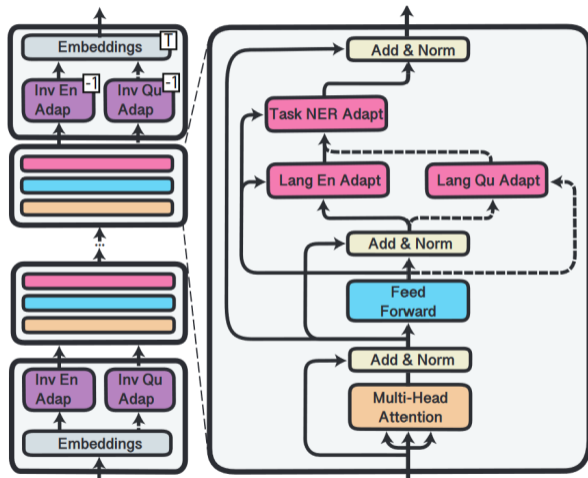
# One Solution: Adding Language-Specific Layers



- Add a small module for each language pair ( $\sim$  adapter concept)
- Much better at matching bilingual baseline for high-resource languages

Bapna et al. 2019. Simple, Scalable adaptation for neural machine translation. EMNLP 2019.

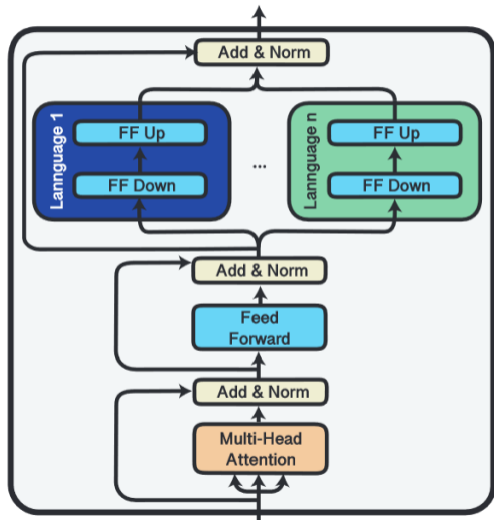
# MAD-X Framework



- Cross-lingual transfer by training task adapters and language adapters & combining them
- Swap language adapters for transfer
- Plus invertible adapters for embeddings

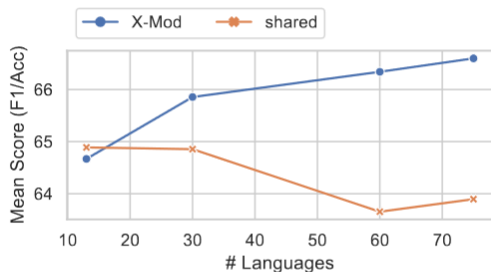
Pfeiffer et al. 2020. MAD-X: An Adapter-Based Framework for Multi-Task Cross-Lingual Transfer. EMNLP 2020.

# Modular Transformers



- Schematic of a modular transformer layer (green and dark blue are language modules)
- Allocate some fraction of parameters to each language
- Unlike previous slides, already pre-train with modules
- Can add further languages by training more modules

Pfeiffer et al. 2022. Lifting the Curse of Multilinguality by Pre-training Modular Transformers. NAACL 2022.



(b) Mean Performance on XNLI and NER.

- Left: NER and XNLI performance
- Why is this unfair?
- SHARED model has one module for all languages, but the more languages, the more modules for X-MOD
- Still promising!
- Disadvantage: Swapping parameters, need to always know language

Pfeiffer et al. 2022. Lifting the Curse of Multilinguality by Pre-training Modular Transformers. NAACL 2022.

# Multilingual vs Cross-Lingual Pre-Training

- There are other models that do make use of parallel data!
- Terminology, roughly: *cross-lingual training* = parallel data; *multilingual training* = not necessarily parallel
- Different possible objectives, for example:
  - Translation Language Modelling (TLM) concatenates translation pair in input  $\rightarrow$  MLM. Also others that are versions of monolingual objectives  
Lample and Coneau. 2019. Cross-lingual Language Model Pretraining. NeurIPS 2019.
  - Cross-Lingual Contrastive Learning (XLCO): Maximise sequence-level mutual information between parallel sentences  
Chi et al. 2021. INFOXLM: An Information-Theoretic Framework for Cross-Lingual Language Model Pre-Training. NAACL 2021.



## Encoder-Only

- Typically trained on masked language modelling or similar
- Outputs vectors/matrices
- Fine-tuned for, e.g., classification tasks
- Includes BERT-type models

## Encoder-Decoder

- Trained on sequence-to-sequence data, or e.g. span corruption
- Outputs text
- Can be fine-tuned for various tasks
- Includes (most) MT models

## Decoder-Only

- Typically trained on autoregressive LM or similar
- Outputs text
- Often used with prompts and in-context learning
- Includes GPT-type models

# Multilingual Encoder-Decoder Models (Examples)

- mBART: Denoising Auto-Encoder for 25/50 langs. Can be fine-tuned for MT

Liu et al. 2020. Multilingual Denoising Pre-training for Neural Machine Translation. TACL.

- mT5: Span masking, models in different sizes, for 101 languages (C4 corpus). They show fine-tuned results for XTREME benchmark

Xue et al. 2021. mT5: A Massively Multilingual Pre-trained Text-to-Text Transformer. NAACL 2021.

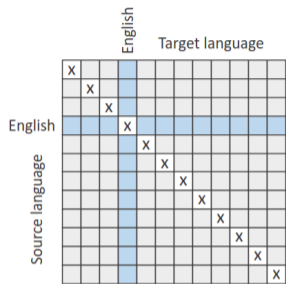
- nmT5: Similar setup, but add parallel data with (denoised) NMT objective

Kale et al. 2021. nmT5 - Is parallel data still relevant for pre-training massively multilingual language models? ACL 2021.

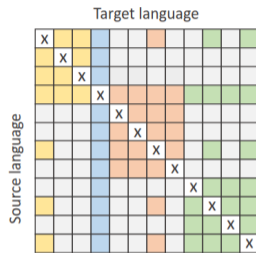
- M2M-100: Many-to-many parallel data training for 100 languages

Fan et al. 2021. Beyond English-Centric Multilingual Machine Translation. JMLR 2021.

# M2M-100: More Details

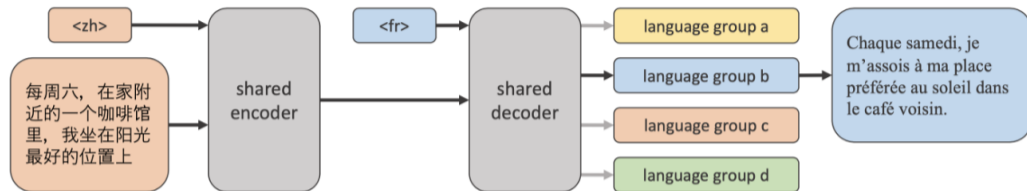


(a) English-Centric Multilingual



(b) M2M-100: Many-to-Many Multilingual Model

- Used mined many-to-many data partly from existing corpora, partly extended themselves
- Worked with language groupings to constrain global search, as well as *bridge languages* between groups



Translating from Chinese to French with Dense + Language-Specific Sparse Model

- Also add language-specific (“sparse”) layers to the model
- Group languages with less than 100M sentences
- Increase capacity but training/inference time stays similar
- Largest model they train this way has 15.4B parameters

# Multilinguality in LLMs

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- 4 Multilinguality in LLMs**
- 5 Summary

## Encoder-Only

- Typically trained on masked language modelling or similar
- Outputs vectors/matrices
- Fine-tuned for, e.g., classification tasks
- Includes BERT-type models

## Encoder-Decoder

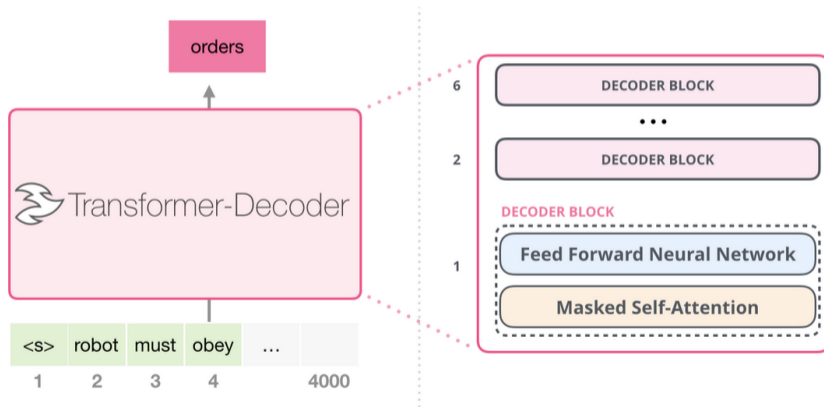
- Trained on sequence-to-sequence data, or e.g. span corruption
- Outputs text
- Can be fine-tuned for various tasks
- Includes (most) MT models

## Decoder-Only

- Typically trained on autoregressive LM or similar
- Outputs text
- Often used with prompts and in-context learning
- Includes GPT-type models

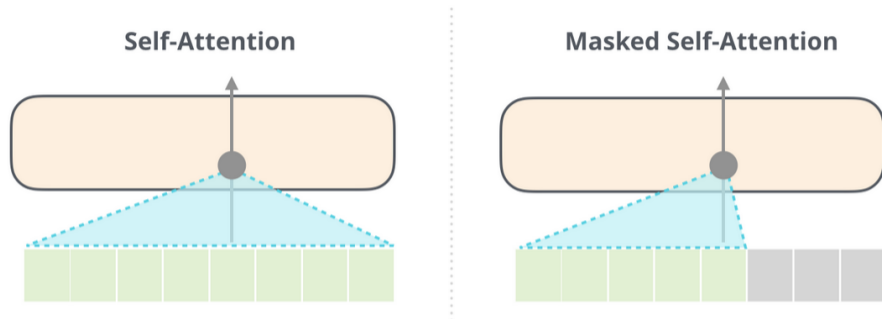
# Pre-Trained Decoder Models

- Many “Large Language Models” (LLMs) are *decoder-only*
- How to train a decoder-only model?



Jay Alammar. 2018. The Illustrated GPT-2. Blog post.

# Pre-Trained Decoder Models

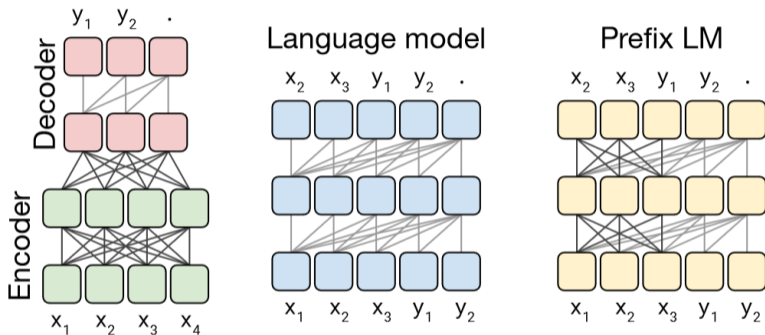


- *Autoregressive* (start-to-end of sequence) training objective
- Unlike BERT, does not have bi-directional context; context after current token is completely masked out for self-attention
- Difference in training between GPT-2 and later versions is in details

Jay Alammar. 2018. The Illustrated GPT-2. Blog post.



## Side Note: Causal LM vs Prefix LM



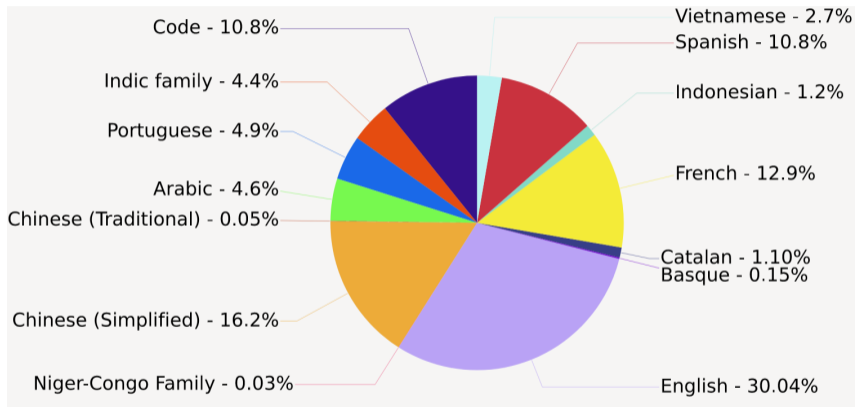
- Alternative to masking options we already know: Prefix LM
- Full attention over an input sequence (similar to encoder); left-to-right over target

Raffel et al. 2020. Exploring the Limits of Transfer Learning with a Unified Text-to-Text Transformer. JMLR 2020.

- LLMs today take huge amounts of resources
- So training is most often done by or with huge companies/organisations
- OpenAI (GPT-3/4, ChatGPT), Google (PaLM 1/2, Bard),... have trained *closed* models
- There are technical reports that reveal *some* information and advertise evaluation results
- But they are *not publicly released* and *not reproducible*
- Even running inference would be a challenge (!)

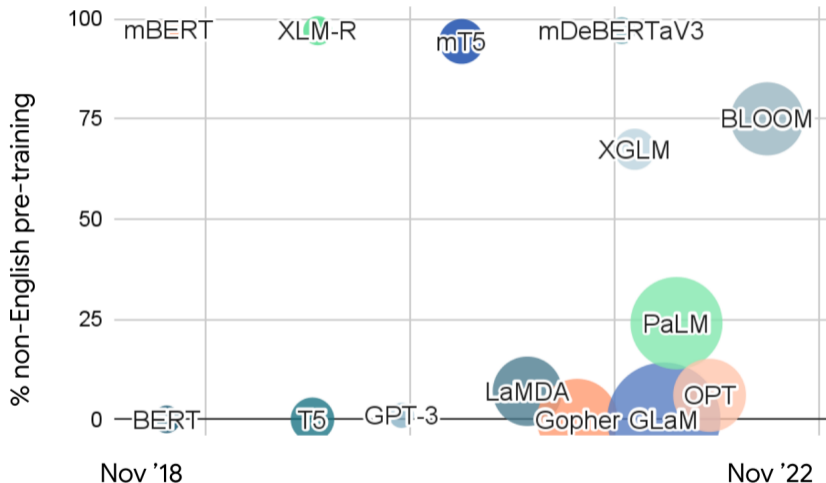
## What does an open model look like?

- A way to access, reproduce, search the training data
  - Should also be *documented* for understanding without going through all of it
  - Detailed training documentation: number of parameters, hyperparameters, resources, ..
  - A way to download, re-train, inspect the model weights
  - Ideally *also* a demo/API running somewhere
  - Appropriate licensing
- Many models have some but not all of these
- ! We cannot do science without model transparency



BigScience Workshop. 2022. BLOOM Model Card. BigScience Workshop. Web page.

# State of Multilingual LLMs



Sebastian Ruder. 2022. The State of Multilingual AI. Blog post.

# Documenting Data

- Models are only as good as their data
- We need to know who is represented, what kind of language is in there (varieties, toxicity, biases,..)
- We need to know if test sets are in the pre-training data (contamination)
- And more!

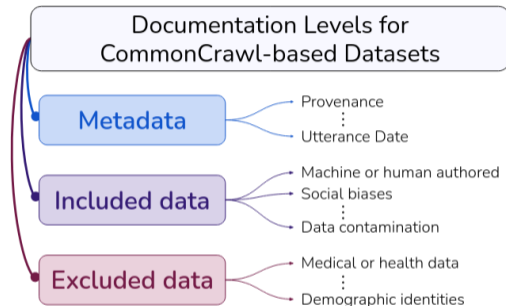


Figure 1: We advocate for three levels of documentation when creating web-crawled corpora. On the right, we include some example of types of documentation that we provide for the C4.EN dataset.

Dodge et al. 2021. Documenting Large Webtext Corpora: A Case Study on the Colossal Clean Crawled Corpus. EMNLP 2021

# Auditing Data

- A 2022 audit of multiple multilingual corpora found significant problems in quality of low-resource language data in particular
- Had speakers of 70 languages rate 100 lines per audited sub-corpus (sometimes based on educated guesses)
- Labelled “correct” data vs. multiple categories of issues

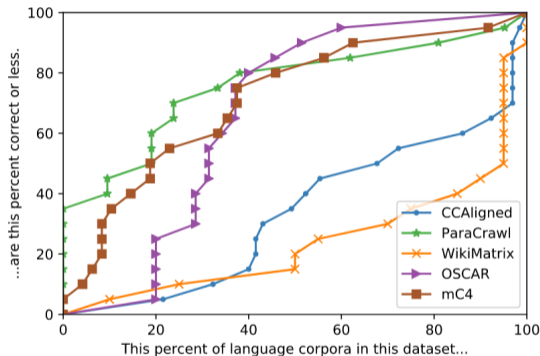


Figure 1: Fraction of languages in each dataset below a given quality threshold (percent correct).

# How Well Can LLMs Translate?

- Multiple studies collecting data points/snapshots of MT quality in LLMs
- Typically look at 0-shot, 1-shot, 5-shot
- 5-shot does reasonably well
- GPT-3.5 showed good/competitive results on a few very high-resource pairs
- But it did poorly on low-resource pairs and a direct-translation pair compared to WMT models

Hendy et al. 2023. How Good Are GPT Models at Machine Translation? A Comprehensive Evaluation. arXiv, CoRR.

- Good results from PaLM-540B in another paper, but only evaluated on few high-resource pairs
- Not quite competitive with the WMT systems chosen in this paper

Vilar et al. 2023. Prompting PaLM for Translation: Assessing Strategies and Performance. ACL 2023



# Summary

- 1 Motivation
- 2 Towards Multilingual MT
- 3 Multilingual Pre-Trained Models
- 4 Multilinguality in LLMs
- 5 Summary

- Introduced cross-lingual transfer from an MT perspective
- Discussed multilingual training and adaptation
- Zero-shot transfer
- Expanded to pre-trained multilingual models more generally
- Discussed language neutrality and transfer performance
- Adapters and modular models
- Situated multilingual LLMs
- Highlighted issues around data and documentation

- Very broad view of multilingual pre-training, cross-lingual transfer, and related topics
- Aim to give a high-level view/understanding
- Many papers mentioned
  - Possible starting points for learning more
- Thanks for listening even after end of term!