PyTorch Basics

Ling 282/482: Deep Learning for Computational Linguistics
C.M. Downey
Fall 2025



PyTorch

- Most popular library for Deep Learning
- Handles Backpropagation for builtin and user-defined models
- Libraries like Huggingface are built on top of PyTorch
 - (Model definitions in Huggingface are written in PyTorch syntax)
- Handles GPU integration



torch.Tensor

- A tensor is an abstraction on vectors and matrices
 - Instead of just rows and columns, can have many "dimensions"
- PyTorch Tensors work a lot like Numpy arrays
 - Essentially Numpy with extra stuff on top
- Shown: defining a vector, matrix, and
 3D Tensor

```
>>> import torch
>>> x = torch.Tensor([1.0, 2.0, 3.0])
[>>> X
tensor([1., 2., 3.])
>>> A = torch.Tensor([[1.0, 2.0, 3.0],[4.0, 5.0, 6.0]])
[>>>
[>>> A
tensor([[1., 2., 3.],
        [4., 5., 6.]])
>>> A.size()
torch.Size([2, 3])
>>> B = torch.Tensor([[[1.0, 2.0],[3.0, 4.0]],[[4.0, 3.0],[2.0, 1.0]]])
>>> B
tensor([[[1., 2.],
         [3., 4.]],
        [[4., 3.],
         [2., 1.]]])
>>> B.size()
torch.Size([2, 2, 2])
```

Using a Module

- Once defined, a Module class can be instantiated as a Python object
- Module can be called on some input x with my_module(x)
 - This runs the forward function
- Module.parameters() returns the trainable model parameters
- Notice the output tensor has a gradient function attached
 - This is used in the backward pass

```
[>>> my_ffnn = feedforward(4, 2)
>>> my_ffnn
feedforward(
  (linear): Linear(in_features=4, out_features=2, bias=True)
  (sigmoid): Sigmoid()
[>>> [p for p in my_ffnn.parameters()]
[Parameter containing:
tensor([[-0.3182, -0.1286, -0.0936, -0.0154],
        [-0.4639, 0.1249, 0.2100, -0.2978]], requires_grad=True)
tensor([-0.0233, -0.3502], requires_grad=True)]
>> x = torch.Tensor([1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0])
|>>>
>>> y = my_ffnn(x)
[>>>
[>>> y
tensor([0.2806, 0.2450], grad_fn=<SigmoidBackward0>)
>>>
```

Training Loop

- This is the general PyTorch training loop
- net` is a Module defining the model we want to train
 - We call the model on the inputs
- The loss function is usually also a Module
 - PyTorch defines most common loss functions
- loss.backward() runs the Backpropagation
 algorithm with respect to the loss value
 - Just calculates the gradients, doesn't update yet
- optimizer.step() updates the parameters
 - optimizer defines the optimization algorithm (e.g.
 Stochastic Gradient Descent, but others too)

```
for epoch in range(2): # loop over the dataset multiple times

running_loss = 0.0
for i, data in enumerate(trainloader, 0):
    # get the inputs; data is a list of [inputs, labels]
    inputs, labels = data

# zero the parameter gradients
    optimizer.zero_grad()

# forward + backward + optimize
    outputs = net(inputs)
    loss = criterion(outputs, labels)
    loss.backward()
    optimizer.step()
```

Word2Vec in PyTorch

- Here's an example of Skip-Gram with
 Negative Sampling, implemented as a
 PyTorch Module
- You'll learn how this works as part of Homework 2
- What are the learnable parameters in this model?
- Remember: PyTorch handles the backward pass for any Module we define
 - As long as each operation defines a gradient (see torch.sum, torch.mul)

```
class SGNS(nn.Module):
   def ___init___(self, vocab_size: int, embedding_dim: int):
       super().__init__()
       self.embeddings = nn.Embedding(vocab_size, embedding_dim)
       self.context_embeddings = nn.Embedding(vocab_size, embedding_dim)
   def forward(self, batch: dict[str, Tensor]) -> Tensor:
       """TODO: your docstring summary here
       Args:
            TODO: document the arguments
       Returns:
            TODO: document what the function returns
        target_embeddings_batch = self.embeddings(batch['target_ids'])
       context_embeddings_batch = self.context_embeddings(batch['context_ids'])
       similarities = torch.sum(
            torch.mul(target_embeddings_batch, context_embeddings_batch), dim=1
        return similarities
```

```
>>> from word2vec import SGNS
>>>
>>> my_sgns = SGNS(vocab_size=4, embedding_dim=2)
>>>
>>> my_sgns
SGNS(
   (embeddings): Embedding(4, 2)
   (context_embeddings): Embedding(4, 2)
)
```

