Machine Learning

Boosting
(based on Rob Schapire’s IJCAI’99 talk and slides by B. Pardo)
Horse Race Prediction
How to Make $$$ In Horse Races?

• Ask a professional.

• Suppose:
  – Professional cannot give single highly accurate rule
  – …but presented with a set of races, can always generate better-than-random rules

• Can you get rich?
Idea

1) Ask expert for rule-of-thumb
2) Assemble set of cases where rule-of-thumb fails (hard cases)
3) Ask expert for a rule-of-thumb to deal with the hard cases
4) Goto Step 2

- Combine all rules-of-thumb
- Expert could be “weak” learning algorithm
Questions

• **How to choose** races on each round?
  – concentrate on “hardest” races
    (those most often misclassified by previous rules of thumb)

• **How to combine** rules of thumb into single prediction rule?
  – take (weighted) majority vote of rules of thumb
Boosting

- **boosting** = general method of converting rough rules of thumb into highly accurate prediction rule

- more technically:
  - given “weak” learning algorithm that can consistently find hypothesis (classifier) with error $\leq 1/2 - \gamma$

  - a boosting algorithm can **provably** construct single hypothesis with error $\leq \varepsilon$
This Lecture

• Introduction to boosting (AdaBoost)
• Analysis of training error
• Analysis of generalization error based on theory of margins
• Extensions
• Experiments
A Formal View of Boosting

- Given **training set** \( X = \{(x_1, y_1), \ldots, (x_m, y_m)\} \)
- \( y_i \in \{-1, +1\} \) correct label of instance \( x_i \in X \)

- for timesteps \( t = 1, \ldots, T \):
  - construct a distribution \( D_t \) on \( \{1, \ldots, m\} \)
  - Find a **weak hypothesis** \( h_t : X \rightarrow \{-1, +1\} \)
    with error \( \varepsilon_t \) on \( D_t \):  \( \varepsilon_t = \text{Pr}_{D_t}[h_t(x_i) \neq y_i] \)

- Output a **final hypothesis** \( H_{\text{final}} \) that combines the weak hypotheses in a good way

**HOW?**
Weighting the Votes

- $H_{\text{final}}$ is a weighted combination of the choices from all our hypotheses.

$$H_{\text{final}}(x) = \text{sgn}\left(\sum_{t} \alpha_t h_t(x)\right)$$

How seriously we take hypothesis $t$

What hypothesis $t$ guessed
The Hypothesis Weight

- $\alpha_t$ determines how “seriously” we take this particular classifier’s answer

\[
\alpha_t = \frac{1}{2} \ln \left( \frac{1 - \varepsilon_t}{\varepsilon_t} \right)
\]

The error on training distribution $D_t$
The Training Distribution

• \( D_t \) determines which elements in the training set we focus on.

\[
D_1(i) = \frac{1}{m}
\]

\[
D_{t+1}(i) = \frac{D_t(i)}{Z_t} \cdot \begin{cases} 
  e^{-\alpha_t} & \text{if } y_i = h_t(x_i) \\
  e^{\alpha_t} & \text{if } y_i \neq h_t(x_i)
\end{cases}
\]

Size of the training set

The right answer

What we guessed

Normalization factor
The Hypothesis Weight

\[ \alpha_t = \frac{1}{2} \ln \left( \frac{1 - \varepsilon_t}{\varepsilon_t} \right) > 0 \]

\[ D_{t+1} = \frac{D_t}{Z_t} \cdot \begin{cases} 
  e^{-\alpha_t} & \text{if } y_i = h_t(x_i) \\
  e^{\alpha_t} & \text{if } y_i \neq h_t(x_i) 
\end{cases} \]
AdaBoost [Freund & Schapire ’97]

- constructing $D_t$:
  - $D_1(i) = \frac{1}{m}$
  - given $D_t$ and $h_t$:
    
    $$
    D_{t+1} = \frac{D_t}{Z_t} \begin{cases} 
    e^{-\alpha_t} & \text{if } y_i = h_t(x_i) \\
    e^{\alpha_t} & \text{if } y_i \neq h_t(x_i) 
    \end{cases}
    $$

    $$
    = \frac{D_t}{Z_t} \cdot \exp(-\alpha_t \cdot y_i \cdot h_t(x_i))
    $$

    where: $Z_t$ = normalization constant

    $$
    \alpha_t = \frac{1}{2} \ln \left( \frac{1 - \varepsilon_t}{\varepsilon_t} \right) > 0
    $$

- final hypothesis:
  
  $$
  H_{\text{final}}(x) = \text{sgn} \left( \sum_t \alpha_t h_t(x) \right)
  $$
Toy Example

$D_1$
Round 1

$h_1$

$\varepsilon_1 = 0.30$

$\alpha_1 = 0.42$

$D_2$
Round 2

\[ \varepsilon_2 = 0.21 \]
\[ \alpha_2 = 0.65 \]
Round 3

\[ \varepsilon_3 = 0.14 \]
\[ \alpha_3 = 0.92 \]
$H_{\text{final}} = \text{sign} \left( \begin{array}{cc} 0.42 & +0.65 \\ +0.92 & \end{array} \right)$
Analyzing the Training Error

• Theorem [Freund & Schapire ’97]:

write $\varepsilon_t$ as $\frac{1}{2} - \gamma_t$

then, training error($H_{\text{final}}$) $\leq \exp \left( -2 \sum \gamma_t^2 \right)$

so if $\forall t: \gamma_t \geq \gamma > 0$ then

then, training error($H_{\text{final}}$) $\leq e^{-2\gamma^2 T}$
So what? This means AdaBoost is adaptive:

- does not need to know $\gamma$ or $T$ a priori
- Works as long as $\gamma_t > 0$
Proof Intuition

• on round $t$:
  increase weight of examples incorrectly classified by $h_t$

• if $x_i$ incorrectly classified by $H_{\text{final}}$
  then $x_i$ incorrectly classified by weighted majority of $h_t$'s
  then $x_i$ must have “large” weight under final dist. $D_{T+1}$

• since total weight $\leq 1$:
  number of incorrectly classified examples “small”
we expect:

- training error to continue to drop (or reach zero)
- test error to increase when $H_{\text{final}}$ becomes “too complex” (Occam’s razor)
A Typical Run

- Test error does not increase even after 1,000 rounds (~2,000,000 nodes)
- Test error continues to drop after training error is zero!
- Occam’s razor wrongly predicts “simpler” rule is better.

(boosting on C4.5 on “letter” dataset)
**A Better Story: Margins**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>all $h_t$’s incorrect</th>
<th>$H_{final}$ equally divided</th>
<th>all $h_t$’s correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key idea: Consider **confidence** (margin):

- **with**
  
  $$H_{final}(x) = \text{sgn}(f(x)) \quad f(x) = \frac{\sum \alpha_t h_t(x)}{\sum_{t} \alpha_t} \in [-1,1]$$

- **define:** margin of $(x,y) = y \cdot f(x)$
Margins for Toy Example

\[ f = 0.42 + 0.65 + 0.92 \]

\[ \frac{1}{(0.42 + 0.65 + 0.92)} \]
The Margin Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>epoch</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>training error</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test error</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%margins ≤ 0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum margin</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boosting Maximizes Margins

- Can be shown to minimize

\[ \sum_{i} e^{-y_i f(x_i)} = \sum_{i} e^{-y_i \sum_{t} \alpha_t h_t(x_i)} \]

\( \propto \) to margin of \((x_i, y_i)\)
Analyzing Boosting Using Margins

generalization error bounded by function of training sample margins:

\[
\text{error} \leq \Pr[\text{margin}_f(x, y) \leq \theta] + \tilde{O}\left(\sqrt{\frac{\text{VC}(H)}{m\theta^2}}\right)
\]

- larger margin ⇒ better bound
- bound independent on # of epochs
- boosting tends to increase margins of training examples by concentrating on those with smallest margin
Relation to SVMs

SVM: map $x$ into high-dim space, separate data linearly
Relation to SVMs (cont.)

\[ H(x) = \begin{cases} +1 & \text{if } 2x^5 - 5x^2 + x > 10 \\ -1 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \]

\[ \tilde{h}(x) = (1, x, x^2, x^3, x^4, x^5) \]

\[ \tilde{\alpha} = (-10, 1, -5, 0, 0, 2) \]

\[ H(x) = \begin{cases} +1 & \text{if } \tilde{\alpha} \cdot \tilde{h}(x) > 0 \\ -1 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \]
Relation to SVMs

- Both maximize margins:

\[
\theta \doteq \max_w \min_i \left( \frac{(\vec{\alpha} \cdot \vec{h}(x_i)) y_i}{\| \vec{\alpha} \|} \right)
\]

- SVM: \( \| \vec{\alpha} \|_2 \) Euclidean norm \((L_2)\)
- AdaBoost: \( \| \vec{\alpha} \|_1 \) Manhattan norm \((L_1)\)

- Has implications for optimization, PAC bounds

See [Freund et al ‘98] for details
Extensions: Multiclass Problems

• Reduce to binary problem by creating several binary questions for each example:

  • “does or does not example $x$ belong to class 1?”
  • “does or does not example $x$ belong to class 2?”
  • “does or does not example $x$ belong to class 3?”
Extensions: Confidences and Probabilities

• Prediction of hypothesis \( h_t: \) \( \text{sgn}(h_t(x)) \)

• Confidence of hypothesis \( h_t: \) \( |h_t(x)| \)

• Probability of \( H_{\text{final}}: \) \( \Pr_f[y = +1| x] = \frac{e^{f(x)}}{e^{f(x)} + e^{-f(x)}} \)

[Schapire&Singer ‘98], [Friedman, Hastie & Tibshirani ‘98]
Practical Advantages of AdaBoost

• (quite) fast
• simple + easy to program
• only a single parameter to tune ($T$)
• no prior knowledge
• flexible: can be combined with any classifier (neural net, C4.5, …)
• provably effective (assuming weak learner)
  • shift in mind set: goal now is merely to find hypotheses that are better than random guessing
• finds outliers
Caveats

- performance depends on **data** & **weak learner**
- AdaBoost can **fail** if
  - weak hypothesis too complex (overfitting)
  - weak hypothesis too weak ($\gamma_t \rightarrow 0$ too quickly),
    - underfitting
    - Low margins $\rightarrow$ overfitting
- empirically, AdaBoost seems susceptible to noise
Comparison with

- C4.5 (Quinlan’s Decision Tree Algorithm)
- Decision Stumps (only single attribute)
Text Categorization

database: Reuters
Conclusion

- **boosting useful tool for classification problems**
  - grounded in rich theory
  - performs well experimentally
  - often (but not always) resistant to overfitting
  - many applications

- **but**
  - slower classifiers
  - result less comprehensible
  - sometime susceptible to noise
Other Ensembles

• Bagging

• Stacking
Background

- [Valiant’84]
  introduced theoretical PAC model for studying machine learning
- [Kearns&Valiant’88]
  open problem of finding a boosting algorithm
- [Schapire’89], [Freund’90]
  first polynomial-time boosting algorithms
- [Drucker, Schapire&Simard ’92]
  first experiments using boosting
• [Freund & Schapire ’95]
  – introduced AdaBoost algorithm
  – strong practical advantages over previous boosting algorithms

• experiments using AdaBoost:
  [Drucker & Cortes ’95]  [Schapire & Singer ’98]
  [Jackson & Cravon ’96]  [Maclin & Opitz ’97]
  [Freund & Schapire ’96]  [Bauer & Kohavi ’97]
  [Quinlan ’96]           [Schwenk & Bengio ’98]
  [Breiman ’96]           [Dietterich ’98]

• continuing development of theory & algorithms:
  [Schapire, Freund, Bartlett & Lee ’97]  [Schapire & Singer ’98]
  [Breiman ’97]            [Mason, Bartlett & Baxter ’98]
  [Grive and Schuurmans ’98]  [Friedman, Hastie & Tibshirani ’98]