CS11-747 Neural Networks for NLP

Debugging Neural Networks for NLP

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Site
https://phontron.com/class/nn4nlp2021/

In Neural Networks, Debugging is Paramount!

- Models are often **complicated and opaque**
- **Everything is a hyperparameter** (network size, model variations, batch size/strategy, optimizer/learning rate)
- Non-convex, stochastic optimization has **no guarantee of decreasing/converging loss**

Understanding Your Problem

A Typical Situation

- You’ve implemented a nice model
- You’ve looked at the code, and it looks OK
- Your accuracy on the test set is bad
- **What do I do?**

Possible Causes

- **Training time problems**
  - Lack of model capacity
  - Inability to train model properly
  - Training time bug
- **Decoding time bugs**
  - Disconnect between test and decoding
  - Failure of search algorithm
- **Overfitting**
- **Mismatch between optimized function and eval**

Don't debug all at once! Start top and work down.

Debugging at Training Time

Identifying Training Time Problems

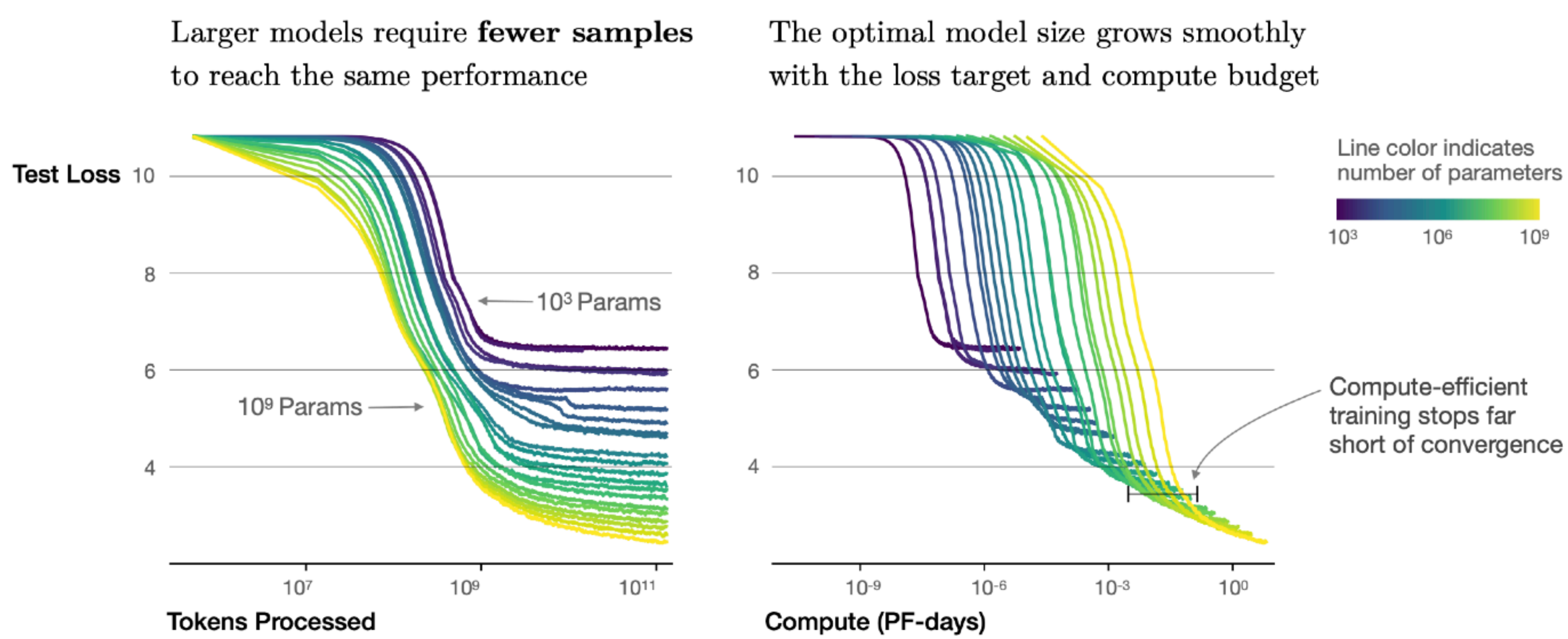
- Look at the **loss function** calculated on the **training set**
  - Is the loss function going down?
  - Is it going down basically to zero if you run training long enough (e.g. 20-30 epochs)?
  - If not, does it go down to zero if you use very small datasets?

Is My Model Too Weak?

- Larger models tend to perform better, esp. when pre-trained (e.g. Raffel et al. 2020)

Model	GLUE Average	CoLA Matthew's	SST-2 Accuracy	MRPC F1	MRPC Accuracy	STS-B Pearson	STS-B Spearman
Previous best	89.4[a]	69.2[b]	97.1[a]	**93.6**[b]	**91.5**[b]	92.7[b]	92.3[b]
T5-Small	77.4	41.0	91.8	89.7	86.6	85.6	85.0
T5-Base	82.7	51.1	95.2	90.7	87.5	89.4	88.6
T5-Large	86.4	61.2	96.3	92.4	89.9	89.9	89.2
T5-3B	88.5	67.1	97.4	92.5	90.0	90.6	89.8
T5-11B	**90.3**	**71.6**	**97.5**	92.8	90.4	**93.1**	**92.8**

- Larger models can learn with fewer steps (Kaplan et al. 2020, Li et al. 2020)



Trouble w/ Optimization

- If increasing model size doesn't help, you may have an optimization problem
- **Possible causes:**
  - Bad optimizer
  - Bad learning rate
  - Bad initialization
  - Bad minibatching strategy

Reminder: Optimizers

- **SGD:** take a step in the direction of the gradient
- **SGD with Momentum:** Remember gradients from past time steps to prevent sudden changes
- **Adagrad:** Adapt the learning rate to reduce learning rate for frequently updated parameters (as measured by the variance of the gradient)
- **Adam:** Like Adagrad, but keeps a running average of momentum and gradient variance
- **Many others:** RMSProp, Adadelta, etc.
(See Ruder 2016 reference for more details)

Learning Rate

- Learning rate is an important parameter
  - Too low: will not learn or learn vey slowly
  - Too high: will learn for a while, then fluctuate and diverge
- **Common strategy:** start from an initial learning rate then gradually decrease
- **Note:** need a different learning rate for each optimizer! (SGD default is 0.1, Adam 0.001)

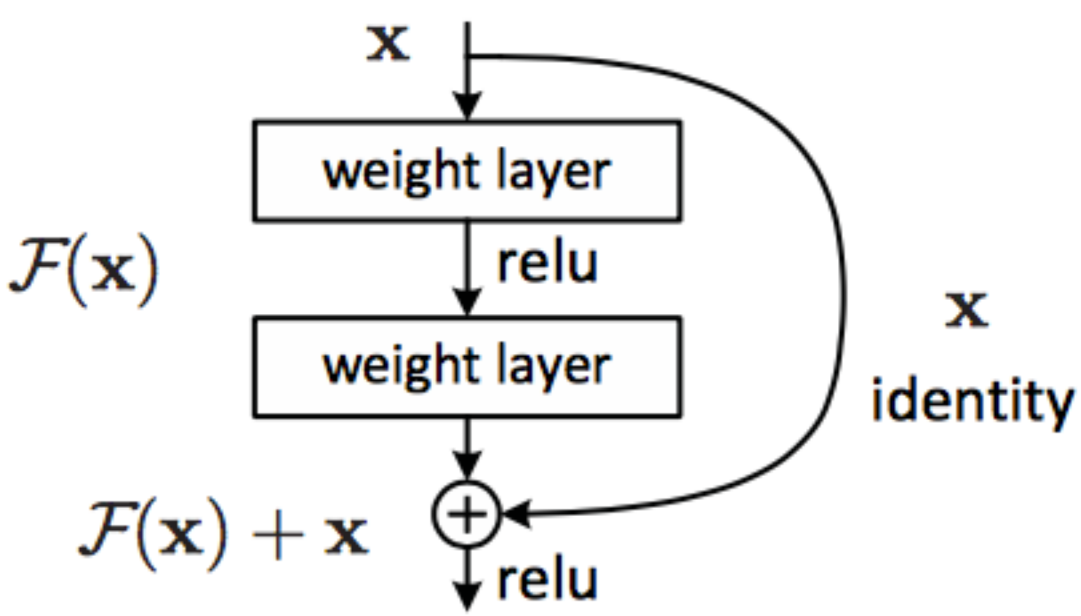
Initialization

- Neural nets are sensitive to initialization, which results in different sized gradients
- Standard initialization methods:
  - **Gaussian initialization:** initialize with a zero-mean Gaussian distribution
  - **Uniform range initialization:** simply initialize uniformly within a range
  - **Glorot initialization, He initialization:** initialize in a uniform manner, where the range is specified according to net size
- Latter is common/default, but read prior work carefully

Be Careful of Multi-layer Models

- Extra layers can help, but can also hurt if you're not careful due to vanishing gradients
- Solutions:

Residual Connections (He et al. 2015)



Highway Networks (Srivastava et al. 2015)

$$\mathbf{y} = H(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{W_H}) \cdot T(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{W_T}) + \mathbf{x} \cdot (1 - T(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{W_T}))$$

Debugging at Test Time

Training/Decoding Disconnects

- Usually your loss calculation and prediction will be implemented in different functions
- Especially true for structured prediction models (e.g. encoder-decoders)
  - See `enc_dec.py` example from this class, which has `calc_loss()` and `generate()` functions
- Like all software engineering: **duplicated code is a source of bugs**!
- Also, usually loss calculation is minibatched, generation not.

Debugging Minibatching

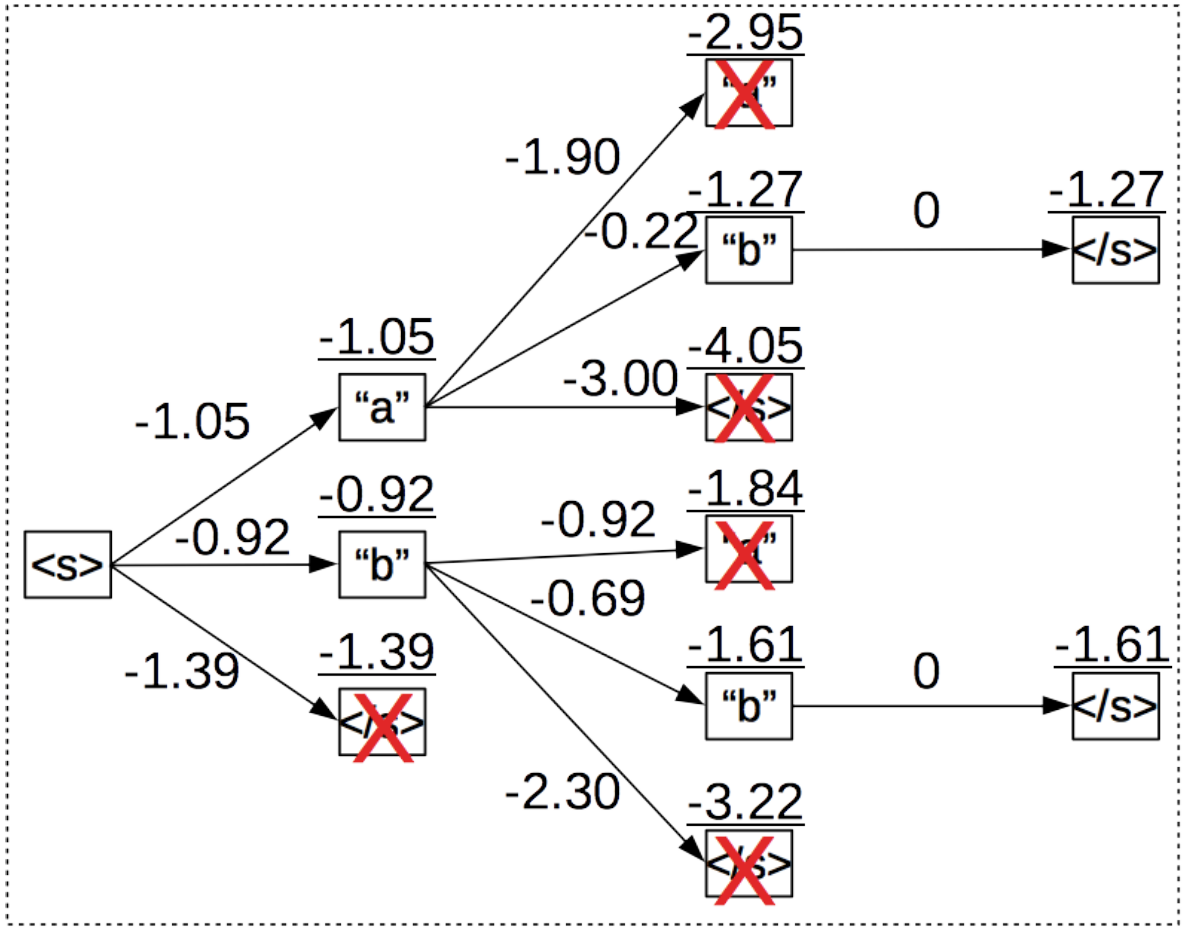
- Debugging mini-batched loss calculation
  - Calculate loss with **large batch size** (e.g. 32)
  - Calculate loss for **each sentence individually and sum**
  - The values should be the same (modulo numerical precision)
- Create a unit test that tests this!

Debugging Structured Generation

- Your decoding code should get the same score as loss calculation
- Test this:
  - Call **decoding function**, to generate an output, and keep track of its score
  - Call **loss function** on the generated output
  - The score of the two functions should be the same
- Create a unit test doing this!

Beam Search

- Instead of picking one high-probability word, maintain several paths



- More in a later class

Debugging Search

- As you make search better, the model score should get better (almost all the time)

- Run search with varying beam sizes and make sure you get a better overall model score with larger sizes

- Create a unit test testing this!

Look At Your Data!

- Decoding problems can often be detected by looking at outputs and realizing something is wrong

- e.g. The first word of the sentence is dropped every time
  > went to the store yesterday
  > bought a dog

- e.g. our system was <unk>ing University of Nebraska at Kearney

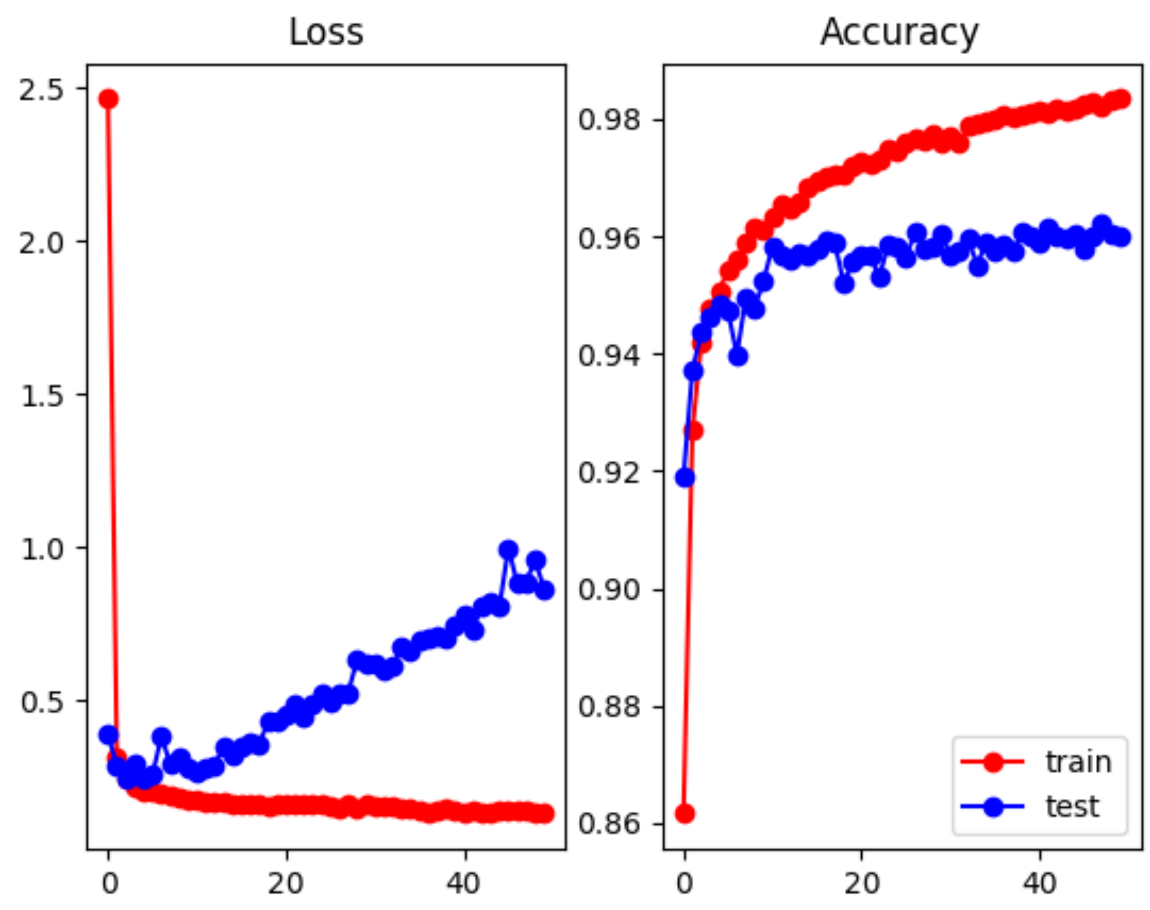
Mismatch b/t Optimized Function and Evaluation Metric

Loss Function, Evaluation Metric

- It is very common to optimize for maximum likelihood for training
- But even though likelihood is getting better, accuracy can get worse

Example w/ Classification

- Loss and accuracy are de-correlated (see dev)

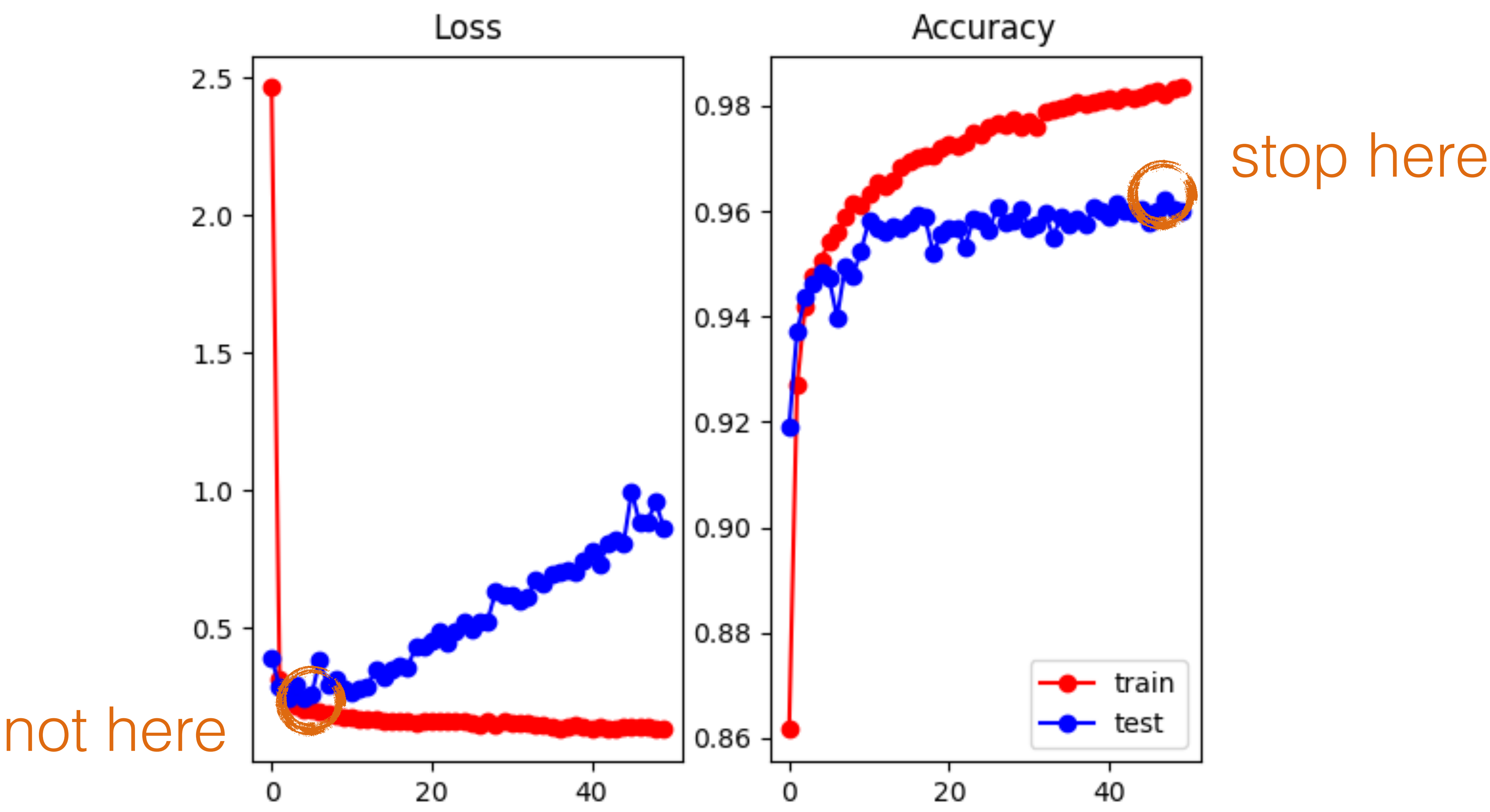


- Why? Model gets more confident about its mistakes.

Managing Loss Function/ Eval Metric Differences

- Most principled way: use structured prediction techniques to be discussed in future classes
    - Structured max-margin training
    - Minimum risk training
    - Reinforcement learning
    - Reward augmented maximum likelihood

A Simple Method:
Early Stopping w/ Eval Metric



Final Words

Reproducing Previous Work

- Reproducing previous work is hard because everything is a hyper-parameter
- If code is released, find and reduce the differences one by one
- If code is not released, try your best
- Feel free to contact authors about details, they will usually respond!

Questions?