Entity Typing: A Critical Step for Mining Structures from Massive Unstructured Text

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ABSTRACT
We have been studying learning and mining graphs or networks. However, where do most real networks come from? Although some networks come from well-structured and explicitly connected nodes and links, a majority of networks come from massive unstructured text data, and it takes human effort to extract them and build them explicitly. Unfortunately, manual data curation and extraction of structures from unstructured data can be costly, unscalable, and error-prone. We have been investigating a data-driven approach to building structured networks from unstructured text data. First, quality phrases can be mined from massive text corpus, serving as basic semantic units, mostly being entities. Second, types can be inferred for such entities from such massive text data with distant supervision and relationships among entities can be uncovered by network embedding as well. Therefore, entity typing is a critical step for mining structures from unstructured text data.

In this study, we focus on how to conduct entity typing with a data-driven approach. We show that “rough” entity types can be identified from massive text data with a distant supervision approach via some domain-independent knowledge-bases. However, for refined typing, even the type labels in a knowledge bases can be noisy (i.e., incorrect for the entity mention’s local context). We propose a general framework, called PLE, to jointly embed entity mentions, text features and entity types into the same low-dimensional space where, in that space, objects whose types are semantically close have similar representations. Then we estimate the type-path for each training example in a top-down manner using the learned embeddings. We formulate a global objective for learning the embeddings from text corpora and knowledge bases, which adopts a novel margin-based loss that is robust to noisy labels and faithfully models type correlation derived from knowledge bases. Our experiments on three public typing datasets demonstrate the effectiveness and robustness of PLE, with an average of 25% improvement in accuracy compared to next best method.

1. INTRODUCTION
Converting data into knowledge is a critical research issue in the era of big data. Previous studies on structure-rich data have already achieved great success in gaining insights and knowledge by exploring and analyzing structured information. Recently, a new architecture, heterogeneous information network, has become a promising way of representing and organizing structured data, where nodes can be different types of entities, links can be typed, directed and weighted relationships, and both nodes and links may carry text or numeric attributes (e.g., Wikipedia and other knowledge bases, social networks like Facebook, and hyperlink networks like the World Wide Web). A variety of insightful knowledge can be uncovered by mining such semantic-rich heterogeneous information networks [29, 24, 6].

Unfortunately, the majority of massive amount of data in the real world are unstructured or loosely structured text (e.g., from news to social media, business and scientific documents, and web pages). To unlock the value of these unstructured text data, it is of great importance to uncover structures of real-world entities, such as people, products, and organizations. Identifying token spans of entity mentions in text and labeling their types enables effective structured analysis of text corpus. The extracted entity information can serve as primitives to progressively turn unstructured text corpora into heterogeneous information networks.

As intractable quantities of unstructured text data are produced, it would be infeasible to hire human editors to manually label the entities mentioned in text. Recent studies focus on automating entity recognition and typing. Traditional named entity recognition systems [20] are usually designed for several major types (e.g., person, organization, location) and general domains (e.g., news), and so require additional steps for adaptation to a new domain and new types. Entity linking techniques [27] map from given entity mentions detected in text to entities in KBs like Freebase, where type information can be collected. But most of such information is manually curated, and thus the set of entities so obtained is of limited coverage and freshness (e.g., over 50% entities mentioned in Web documents are unlinkable [14]). The rapid emergence of domain-specific text corpora (e.g., business reviews) poses significant challenges to traditional entity recognition and entity linking techniques and calls for methods of recognizing entity mentions of target types with minimal or no human supervision, and with no requirement that entities can be found in a KB.

There are broadly two kinds of efforts towards that goal: weak supervision and distant supervision. Weak supervision relies on manually-specified seed entity names in applying
This paper focuses on **distantly-supervised entity recognition in a domain-specific corpus**. Given a domain-specific corpus and a set of target entity types from a KB, we aim to effectively and efficiently detect entity mentions from that corpus, and categorize each by target types or Not-Of-Interest (NOI), with distant supervision. Existing distant supervision methods encounter the following limitations when handling a large, domain-specific corpus.

- **Domain Restriction**: They assume entity mentions are already extracted by entity detectors such as noun phrase chunkers. These tools are usually trained on general-domain corpora like news articles (clean, grammatical) and make use of various linguistic features, but do not work well on specific, dynamic or emerging domains (e.g., tweets).

- **Context Sparsity**: Previous methods leverage a variety of contextual clues to find sources of shared semantics across different entities. However, there are often many ways to describe even the same relation between two entities (e.g., “beat” and “won the game 34-28 over” in Fig. 1). This poses challenges on typing entity mentions when they are isolated from other entities or only share infrequent context.

- **Noisy Entity Label**: Many previous studies ignore the label noise in automatically labeled training corpora— **all** candidate types obtained by distant supervision are treated as “true” types in training classifiers [36, 15] (e.g., see Fig. 2). This has become an impediment to improving the performance of current entity typing systems as a majority of training mentions have noisy types (see Table. 1, row (1)).

To address the first two challenges, we develop a novel solution called ClusType. First, it extracts entity mentions by a domain-agnostic phrase mining algorithm. The proposed algorithm has minimal dependence of linguistic assumption (e.g., part-of-speech (POS) tagging requires fewer assumptions of the linguistic characteristics of a domain than semantic parsing), and demonstrates great cross-domain performance. Second, ClusType mines relation phrases co-occurring with entity mentions and infer synonymous relation phrases which express similar types of entities as arguments. This helps form connecting bridges among entities that do not share identical context but share synonymous relation phrases. To systematically integrate the above ideas, we construct a heterogeneous graph to faithfully represent entity mentions, entity surface names and relation phrases in a unified form (see Fig. 3). With the heterogeneous graph, we formulate a semi-supervised learning of two tasks jointly: (1) type propagation on graph, and (2) relation phrase clustering. By clustering synonymous relation phrases, we can propagate types among entities bridged via these synonymous relation phrases. Conversely, derived entity argument types serve as good features for clustering relation phrases. These two tasks mutually enhance each other and lead to quality recognition of unlinkable entity mentions.

To eliminate noisy entity labels, a few systems try to denoise automatically labeled training corpora by simple pruning heuristics such as deleting mentions with conflicting types [7]. However, such strategies significantly reduce the size of training set (Table 1, rows 2a-c) and lead to performance degradation [26]. The larger the target type set, the more severe the loss. This motivated us to define a new task: **Label Noise Reduction in Entity Typing (LNR)**, that is, identifying the correct types for each training example from its noisy candidate type set (generated by distant supervision with a given type hierarchy). While the typical entity typing task assumes that type labels in training data are all valid and focus on designing models to predict types for unlabeled mentions, LNR focuses on identifying the correct types for automatically labeled mentions, which is related to partial label learning [22, 1].

To approach LNR, a principled framework, **Heterogeneous Partial-Label Embedding (PLE)**, is proposed (see Fig. 5). PLE models the true types labels in a candidate type set as latent variables and require only the “best” type (measured under...
the proposed metric) to be relevant to the mention. It extracts a variety of text features from entity mentions and their local contexts, and leverage corpus-level co-occurrences between mentions and features to model mentions’ types. Moreover, it models type correlation (semantic similarity) jointly with mention-candidate type associations and mention-feature co-occurrences, to assist type-path inference, by exploiting the shared entities between two types in a KB. A heterogeneous graph is constructed to represent three kinds of objects: entity mentions, text features and entity types, and their relationships. Associations between mentions and their true types are kept as latent structures in the graph to be estimated. We formulate a global objective to jointly embed the graph into a low-dimensional space where, in that space, objects whose types are semantically close also have similar representations. With the learned embeddings, we can efficiently estimate the correct type-path for each entity mention in the training set in a top-down manner.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Sec. 2 summarizes the related work. Sec. 3 introduces the ClusType framework, and Sec. 4 describes the label noise reduction framework, and Sec. 5 and conclude the work in Sec. 6.

2. RELATED WORK

Entity Recognition and Typing. There have been extensive studies on entity recognition and typing. In terms of the dependence on context information, existing work can be categorized into context-dependent [20, 15] and context-independent approaches [21, 14]. Work along both lines can be further categorized in terms of the type granularity that is considered. Traditional named entity recognition systems [17] focus on coarse types (e.g., person, location) and cast the problem as multi-class classification following the type mutual exclusion assumption (i.e., one type per mention) [20]. Recent work has focused on a much larger set of fine-grained types [37, 15]. As type mutual exclusion assumption no longer holds, they cast the problem as multi-label multi-class (hierarchical) classification problems [7, 37, 15], or make use of various supervised embedding techniques [36] to jointly derive feature representations in classification tasks.

Most existing fine-grained typing systems use distant supervision to generate training examples and assume that all candidate types so generated are correct. By contrast, our framework instead seeks to remove false positives, denoising the data and leaving only the correct ones for each mention based on its local context. Output of our task, i.e., denoised training data, helps train more effective classifiers for entity typing. Gillick et al. [7] discuss the label noise issue in fine-grained typing and propose three type pruning heuristics. However, these pruning methods aggressively filter training examples and may suffer from low recall.

Partial Label Learning. Partial label learning (PLL) [22, 1] deals with the problem where each training example is associated with a set of candidate labels, where only one is correct. One intuitive strategy to solve the problem is to assume equal contribution of each candidate label and average the outputs from all candidate labels for prediction [1].

Another strategy is to treat true label as latent variable and optimize objectives such as maximum likelihood criterion and maximum margin criterion [22] by EM procedure.
Table 2: Performance comparison on entity mention extraction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>NYT</th>
<th>Yelp</th>
<th>Tweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prec</td>
<td>Recall</td>
<td>Prec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our method</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP chunker</td>
<td>0.220</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>0.296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heterogeneous Graph Construction. The basic idea for constructing the graph is that: the more two objects are likely to share the same label (i.e., \( t \in Y \) or NOI), the larger the weight will be associated with their connecting edge. The constructed graph \( G \) unifies three types of links: mention-name link, entity name-relation phrase link, and mention-mention link, leading to three subgraphs \( G_{M,C} \), \( G_{C,P} \) and \( G_M \) (see Fig. 3 for example, and [25] for details).

Fig. 4 provides an example output of the candidate generation on New York Times (NYT) corpus. We further compare our method with a popular noun phrase chunker\(^{1}\) in terms of entity detection performance, using the extracted entity mentions. Table 3 summarizes the comparison results on three datasets from different domains.

Table 3: Performance comparison on entity mention extraction.


within sentence, common neighbor mentions) between two candidate mentions that share the same name, then their type indicators tend to be similar.

3.2 Clustering-Integrated Type Propagation

In our solution, we formulate a joint optimization problem to minimize both a graph-based semi-supervised learning error and a multi-view relation phrase clustering objective.

Seed Mention Generation. We utilize a state-of-the-art entity name disambiguation tool [18] to map each candidate mention to Freebase entities. Only the mention candidates which are mapped with high confidence scores are considered as valid output. The linked mentions which associate with multiple target types are discarded to avoid type ambiguity. This leads to a set of labeled (seed) mentions \( M_L \).

Relation Phrase Clustering. We propose a general relation phrase clustering method to incorporate different features for clustering, which can be integrated with the graph-based type propagation in a mutually enhancing framework. Our hypothesis is that: two relation phrases tend to have similar cluster memberships, if they have similar (1) strings; (2) context words; and (3) left and right argument type indicators. In particular, type signatures of relation phrases have proven very useful in clustering of relation phrases which have infrequent or ambiguous strings and contexts. Our solution uses the features for multi-view clustering of relation phrases based on joint non-negative matrix factorization [25].

The Joint Optimization Problem. Our goal is to infer the label (type \( t \in Y \) or NOI) for each unlinkable entity mention candidate \( m \in M_U \), i.e., estimating \( Y \). We propose an optimization problem to unify two different tasks to achieve this gold: (i) type propagation over both the type indicators of entity names \( C \) and the type signatures of relation phrases on the heterogeneous graph \( G \) by way of graph-based semi-supervised learning, and (ii) multi-view relation phrase clustering. The seed mentions \( M_L \) are used as initial labels for the type propagation. Details of the joint optimization problem and the algorithm for solving it are introduced in [25].

3.3 Results

We test the proposed method on three real-world datasets\(^2\): (1) NYT: constructed by crawling 2013 news articles from New York Times; (2) Yelp: we collected 230,610 reviews from the 2014 Yelp dataset challenge; and (3) Tweet: we randomly selected 10,000 users in Twitter and crawled at most 100 tweets for each user in May 2011.

Compared Methods: We compared the proposed method (ClusType) with its variants which only model part of the proposed hypotheses. Several state-of-the-art entity recognition approaches were also implemented (or tested using their published codes): For ClusType, besides the proposed full-fledged model, ClusType-NoWm: This variant does not consider mention correlation subgraph; (2) ClusType-NoClus: It performs only type propagation on the heterogeneous graph; and (3) ClusType-TwoStep: It first conducts multi-view clustering to assign each relation phrase to a single cluster, and then performs ClusType-NoClus between entity names, candidate entity mentions and relation phrase clusters.

1. Comparing ClusType with the other methods on entity recognition. Table 4 summarizes the comparison results on

\(^{2}\)Code and datasets used in the ClusType paper [25] can be found at: https://github.com/shanzhenren/ClusType.
the three datasets. Overall, ClusType and its three variants outperform others on all metrics on NYT and Yelp and achieve superior Recall and F1 scores on Tweet.

2. Comparing ClusType with its variants. Comparing with ClusType-NoClus and ClusType-TwoStep, ClusType gains performance from integrating relation phrase clustering with type propagation in a mutually enhancing way. It always outperforms ClusType-NoWin on Precision and F1 on all three datasets. The enhancement mainly comes from modeling the mention correlation links, which helps disambiguate entity mentions sharing the same surface names.

3. Comparing with trained NER. Table 6 compares ours with a traditional NER method, Stanford NER, trained using classic corpora like ACE corpus, on three major types—person, location and organization. ClusType and its variants outperform Stanford NER on the corpora which are dynamic (e.g., NYT) or domain-specific (e.g., Yelp).

![Table 4: Performance comparisons on three datasets in terms of Precision, Recall and F1 score.](image)

![Table 5: Example output of ClusType and the compared methods on the Yelp dataset.](image)

5. Example output on two Yelp reviews. Table 5 shows the output of ClusType, SemTagger and NNPLB on two Yelp reviews: ClusType extracts more entity mention candidates (e.g., “BBQ”, “shop”) and predicts their types with better accuracy (e.g., “bacon”, “pulled pork sandwich”).

4. LABEL NOISE REDUCTION

Knowledge Base and Target Type Hierarchy. A KB with a set of entities $E$ contains human-curated facts on both entity-entity facts of various relationship types and entity-type facts. We denote entity-type facts in a KB $\Psi$ (with type schema $\mathcal{Y}_\Psi$) as $\mathcal{T}_\Psi = \{(e, y)\} \subset E \times \mathcal{Y}_\Psi$. A target type hierarchy is a tree where nodes represent types of interests from $\mathcal{Y}_\Psi$ (or types which can be mapped to those in $\mathcal{Y}_\Psi$).

Automatically Labeled Training Corpora. Formally, a labeled corpus for entity typing consists of a set of extracted entity mentions $M = \{m_i\}_{i=1}^N$, the context (e.g., sentence, paragraph) of each mention $(c_i)_{i=1}^N$, and the candidate type sets $(Y_i)_{i=1}^N$ automatically generated for each mention. We represent the training corpus using a set of mention-based triples $D = \{(m_i, c_i, Y_i)\}_{i=1}^N$.

Problem Description. Since $Y_i$ is annotated for entity $c_i$, it includes all possible types of $c_i$ and thus may contain types that are irrelevant to $m_i$’s specific context $c_i$. Ideally, the type labels for $m_i \in M$ should form a type-path (not required to end at a leaf) in $Y_i$ [36], which serves as a context-dependent type annotation for $m_i$. However, as discussed in [7] and shown in Fig. 2, $Y_i$ may contain type-paths that are irrelevant to $m_i$ in $c_i$. Even though in some cases $Y_i$ is already a type-path, it may be overly specific for $c_i$ and so insufficient to infer the whole type-path using $c_i$. We denote the true type-path for mention $m_i$ as $Y^*_i$. Label noise reduction task focuses on estimating $Y^*_i$ from $Y_i$ based on mention $m_i$ as well as its context $c_i$.

Framework Overview. Our solution [26] casts the problem as a weakly-supervised learning task, which aims to derive the relatedness between mentions and their candidate types using both corpus-level statistics and KB facts. We propose a graph-based partial-label embedding framework (see also Fig. 5) as follows:

1. Generate text features for each entity mention $m_i \in M$, and construct a heterogeneous graph using three kinds of objects in the corpus, namely entity mentions $M$, target types $Y$ and text features (denoted as $F$), to encode aforementioned signals in a unified form.

2. Perform joint embedding of the constructed graph $G$ into the same low-dimensional space where, in that space, close objects (i.e., whose embedding vectors have high similarity score) tend to also share the same types.

3. For each mention $m_i$ (in set $M$), search its candidate type sub-tree $Y_i^*$ in a top-down manner and estimate the true type-path $Y^*_i$ from learned embeddings.

4.1 Construction of Graphs

To capture the shallow syntax and distributional semantics of a mention $m_i \in M$, we extract various features from both $m_i$ itself (e.g., head token) and its context $c_i$ (e.g., bigram). Details of feature generation are introduced in [26].

With entity mentions $M$, text features $F$ and target types $Y$, we build a heterogeneous graph $G$ to unify three kinds of links: mention-type link represents each mention’s candidate type assignment; mention-feature link captures corpus-level co-occurrences between mentions and text features; and type-type link encodes the type correlation derived from
KB or target type hierarchy. This leads to three subgraphs $G_{MY}$, $G_{MF}$, and $G_{YY}$, respectively.

**Mention-Type Association Subgraph.** In the automatically labeled training corpus $D = \{m_i, c_i, y_i\}$, each mention $m_i$ is assigned a set of candidate types $\mathcal{Y}_i$ from the target type set $\mathcal{Y}$. This naturally forms a bipartite graph between entity mentions $\mathcal{M}$ and target types $\mathcal{Y}$, where each mention $m_i \in \mathcal{M}$ is linked to its candidate types $\mathcal{Y}_i$ with binary weight. However, some links are “false” links in the constructed mention-type subgraph—adopting the above assumptions may incorrectly yield mentions of different types having similar embeddings. We propose to model mention-type links based on the hypothesis that: A mention should be embedded closer to its most relevant candidate type than to any other non-candidate type, yielding higher similarity between the corresponding embedding vectors. During model learning, relevance between an entity mention and its candidate type is measured by the similarity between their current estimated embeddings. Text features, as complements to mention-type candidate links, also participate in modeling the mention embeddings, and help identify a mention’s most relevant type.

**Mention-Feature Co-occurrence Subgraph.** Intuitively, entity mentions sharing many text features (i.e., with similar distributions over $\mathcal{F}$) tend to have close type semantics; and text features which co-occur with many entity mentions in the corpus (i.e., with similar distributions over $\mathcal{M}$) likely represent similar entity types. Therefore, if two entity mentions share similar features, they should be close to each other in the embedding space (i.e., high similarity score). If two features co-occur with a similar set of mentions, their embedding vectors tend to be similar.

**Type Correlation Subgraphs.** In KB $\Psi$, types assigned to similar sets of entities should be more related to each other than those assigned to quite different entities [12] (e.g., actor is more related to director than to author in the right column of Fig. 6). Thus, if high correlation exists between two target types based on either type hierarchy or KB, they should be embedded close to each other. We build a homogeneous graph $G_{YY}$ to represent the correlation between types. Given two target types $y_i, y_j \in \mathcal{Y}$, the correlation (i.e., the edge weight in $G_{YY}$) between them is proportional to the number of entities they share in the KB.

**Figure 5:** Framework Overview of Heterogeneous Partial-Label Embedding (PLE).

**Figure 6:** Example of constructing type correlation graph.

### 4.2 Heterogeneous Partial-Label Embedding

In our solution, we formulate a global objective [26], by extending a margin-based rank loss to model noisy mention-type links in $G_{MY}$ and leveraging the distributional assumption [19] to model subgraphs $G_{MF}$ and $G_{YY}$.

To effectively model the noisy mention-type links in subgraph $G_{MY}$, we extend the margin-based loss in [22] (used to learn linear classifiers) to enforce the hypothesis on mention-type association. The intuition of the loss is simple: for mention $m_i$, the maximum score associated with its candidate types $y_i$ is greater than the maximum score associated with any other non-candidate types $\hat{y}_i = \mathcal{Y} \setminus y_i$, where the scores are measured using current embedding vectors.

To model mention-feature co-occurrences represented by links in $G_{MF}$, we follow the idea that nodes with similar distributions over neighbors are similar to each other. This idea is similar to that found in Second-order Proximity model [32], and Skip-gram model [19]—it models text corpora following the distributional hypothesis [9] which says that you should know a word by the company it keeps.

Finally, type correlation links can be modeled with a method similar to that used in modeling the mention-feature subgraph—two types are similar to each other if they are correlated to the same set of types. As link $(m_i, f_j)$ in bipartite graph $G_{MF}$ is directed, we treat each undirected link $(y_i, y_j)$ in the homogeneous graph $G_{YY}$ as two directed links [31].

**The Global Optimization Objective.** Our goal is to embed the heterogeneous graph $G$ into a $d$-dimensional vector space, following the three proposed hypotheses in Sec. 4.1. Intuitively, one can collectively minimize the objectives of
4.3 Results

Our experiments use three public datasets: \(^3\) Wiki [15], OntoNotes [35], and BBN [34].

**Compared Methods.** We compared the proposed method (PLE) with its variants which model parts of the hypotheses, and three pruning heuristics [7]. Several state-of-the-art embedding methods and partial-label learning methods were also implemented (or tested using their published codes). For PLE, besides the proposed model, PLE, which adopts KB-based type correlation subgraph, we compare (1) PLE-\text{NoCo}: This variant does not consider type correlation subgraph \(G_{YY}\) in the objective; and (2) PLE-\text{CoH}: It adopts type hierarchy-based correlation subgraph.

**Example output on news articles.** Table 8 shows the types estimated by PLE, PTE and WSABIE on three news sentences from OntoNotes dataset.

**Performance on Label Noise Reduction.** We first conduct **intrinsic evaluation** on how accurately PLE and the other methods can estimate the true types of mentions from its noisy candidate type set. Table 7 summarizes the comparison results on the Wiki and OntoNotes datasets. For embeddings learned on different pruned corpora, we only show the combination that yields the best result.

**Fine-Grained Entity Typing.** In Table 9, we further conduct **extrinsic evaluation** on fine-grained typing to study the performance gain from denoising the automatically generated training corpus \(D\). Two state-of-the-art fine-grained type classifiers, HYENA [37] and FIGER [15], are trained on the denoised corpus which is generated using PLE or the other compared methods. Trained classifiers are then tested on the evaluation set. We also compare with partial-label learning methods PL-SVM [22] and CLPL [1].

5. FROM TYPING TO INFORMATION NETWORK CONSTRUCTION

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\(^3\) Codes and datasets used in this paper can be downloaded at: https://github.com/shanzhenren/PLE.
Table 9: Study of performance improvement on fine-grained typing systems FIGER [15] and HYENA [37] on the three datasets.

5. Mining needed knowledge from structured heterogeneous networks: Mining methods have been and will be further developed for effective mining of various kinds of knowledge in such networks, as shown in [29]. This will lead to the query-based flexible generation of different kinds of knowledge needed.

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we presented a data-driven approach to effective entity typing and demonstrated its power on mining different types of massive data sets via our extensive experiments. We believe entity typing plays a critical role at turning unstructured text data into structured heterogeneous networks, which in turn can be mined systematically for user-interested knowledge. Thus, it may substantially enlarge the kinds of datasets to be examined in learning and mining graphs or networks.

Lots of interesting research frontiers are worth further exploration. Especially, mining fine-grained relationships among typed entities in massive text corpora is our current focus of study.

References