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Screening Gender Transfer in Neural Machine Translation

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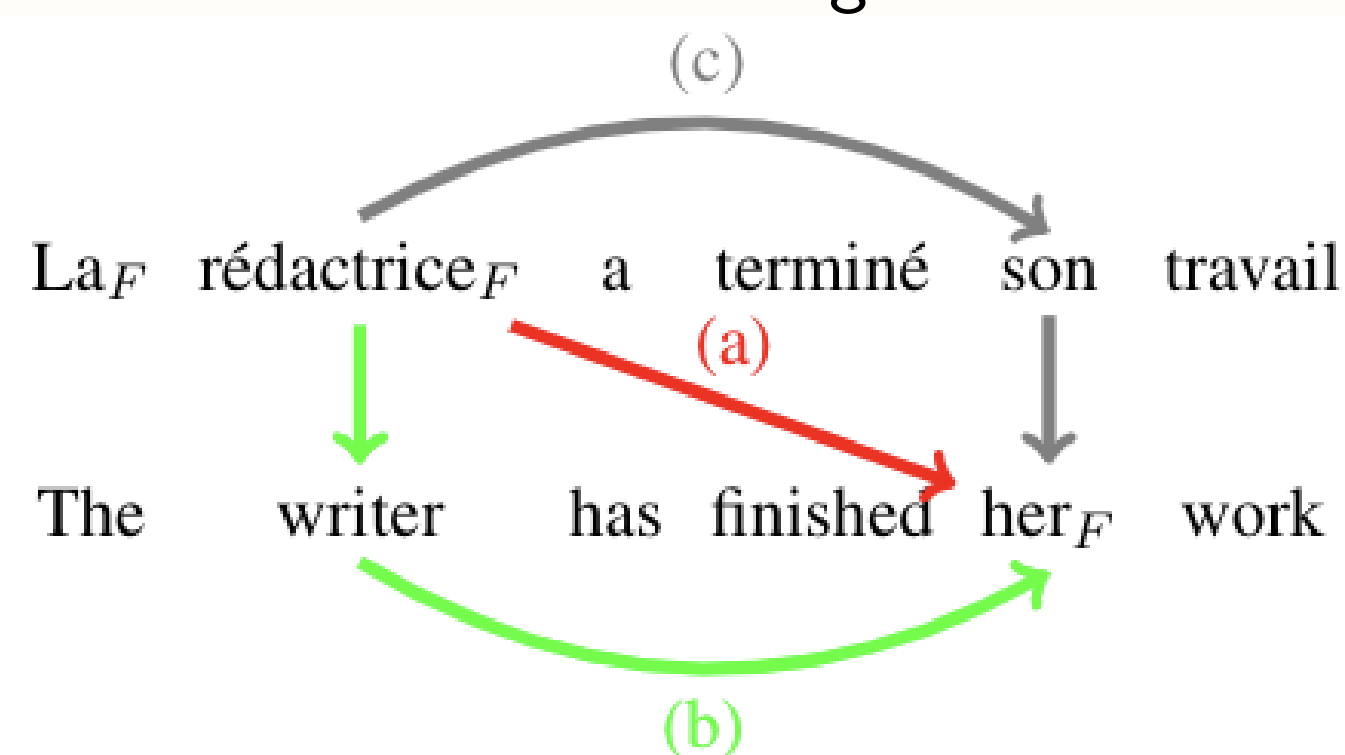
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Information flow within an encoder/decoder architecture

- key steps in interpreting NMT systems
 - which informations are captured by the decoder?
 - which informations are captured by the encoder?
 - which informations are transferred from the source to the target?
- how: study the transfer of gender information from French to English
 - using probes to find where this information is represented;
 - using causal models to determine when this information is used.

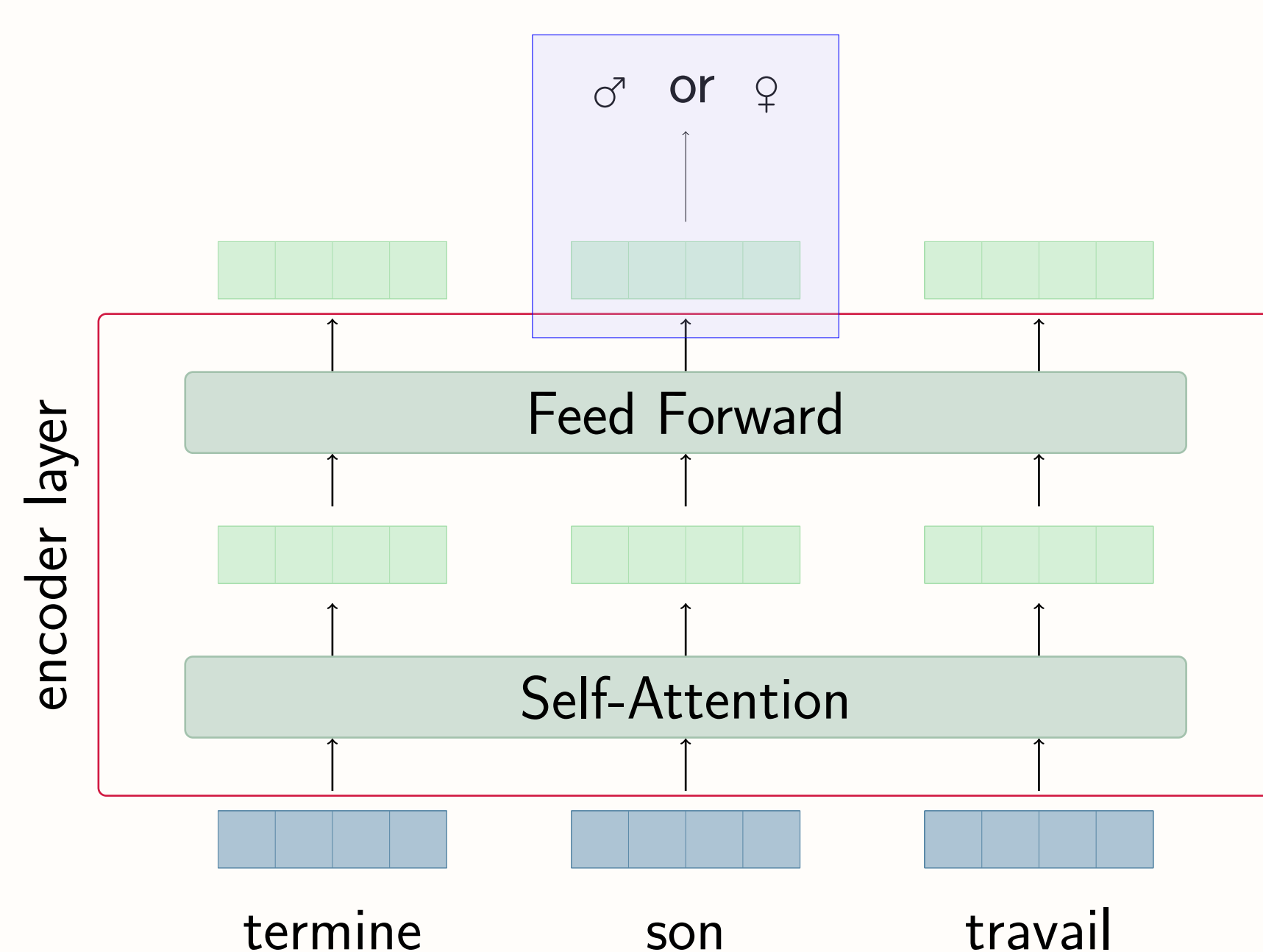
Gender Transfer between French and English

- challenge
 - in French: gender = property of all nouns \oplus agreement rules within noun phrase
 - in English: gender = only in rare constructs involving human agents and pronoun coreference
- focus on the following pattern:
 - [DET] [N] a terminé son travail.
 - The [N] has finished [PRO] work.
 - [N] = occupational noun either feminine or masculine
 - [DET] = French determiner in agreement with the noun
 - [PRO] = English possessive pronoun
- Dataset of 3,394 parallel sentences following this pattern
 - perfectly balanced between genders
- Hypothetical paths for transferring gender information from French to English



- (a) direct influence → cross-lingual attention;
- (b) indirect influence → monolingual encoding of gender in the representation of the English noun;
- (c) indirect influence → cross-lingual attention to the French possessive adjective.

Probing Representations



- linguistic probe: predict the gender of the French occupational noun from a source/target word representation
 - simple binary classification problem
 - evaluation: accuracy

In the source

layer	a	terminé	son	travail	.	eos
1	80.4%	75.1%	80.6%	76.4%	59.5%	73.3%
2	85.8%	80.8%	81.6%	78.3%	87.6%	88.3%
3	89.5%	88.2%	89.2%	82.0%	86.5%	87.6%
4	90.8%	89.3%	90.6%	85.9%	85.7%	85.6%
5	90.4%	89.3%	90.4%	85.5%	86.4%	85.2%
6	91.0%	89.3%	90.0%	86.0%	86.4%	85.1%

Gender information

- is more present in the deepest layer of the encoder
- spreads all over the representation of the source tokens
 - and not only the tokens involved in our hypothesis

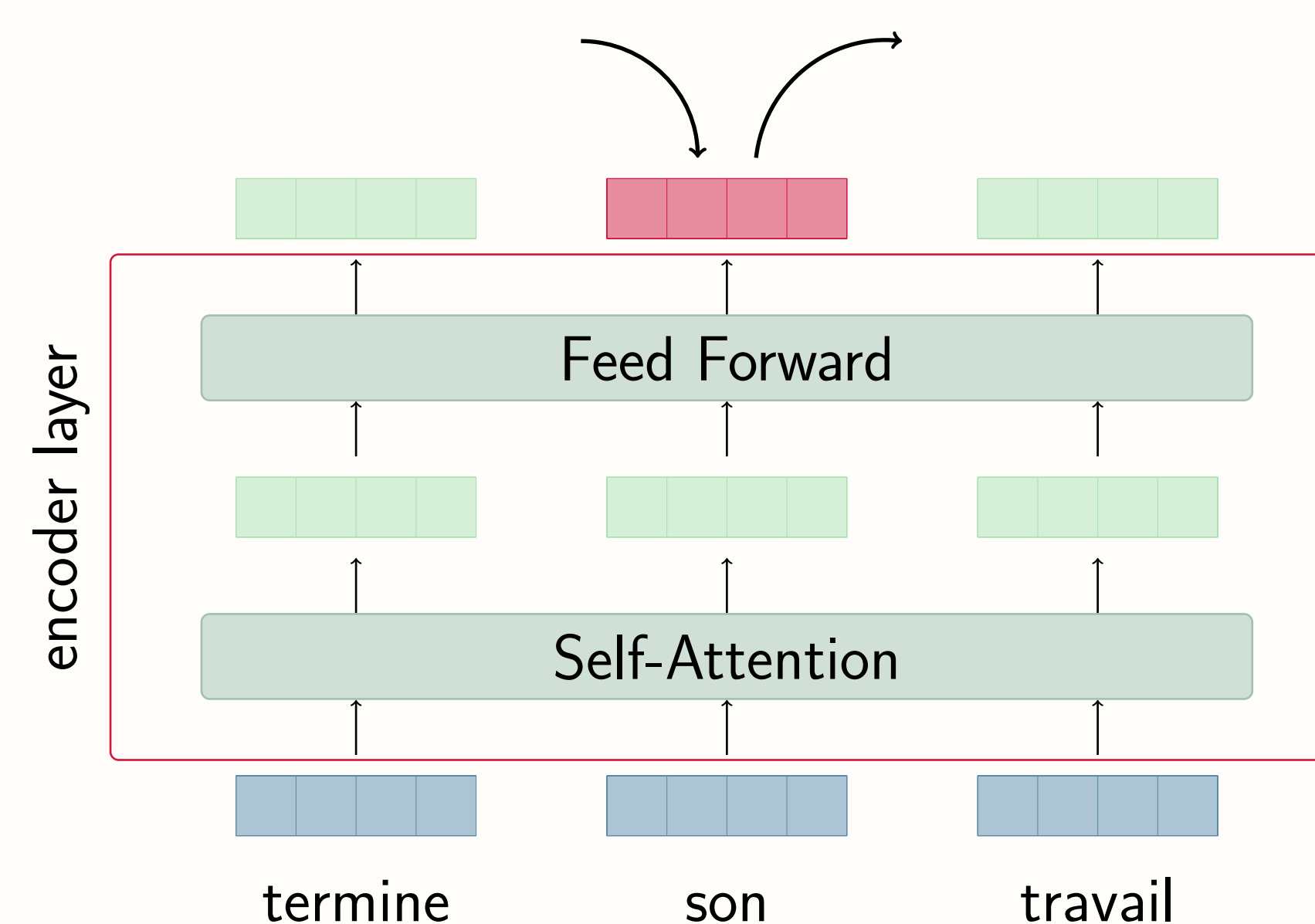
In the target

- target sentence not as 'regular' as source sentences (predicted by MT system)
 - accuracy of the probe computed over all tokens of the translation hypothesis

layer	decoder	
	the	all tokens
1	89.5%	71.6%
2	92.0%	76.3%
3	91.8%	78.1%
4	90.9%	79.1%
5	89.3%	82.4%
6	87.7%	84.7%

- gender information encoded in all target tokens
 - even those for which the information is useless

Manipulating Representations



- goal: identify if and when gender information is used
- how: intervention → replace the embedding of 'son' by a representation that triggers

- the generation of 'her' (feminine embedding)
- the generation of 'his' (masculine embedding)
- a neutral version of the embedding (average of son representation over all sentences)

- evaluation: distribution of pronoun in translation hypothesis

intervention	English pronoun	% sentences
none	her	13.4%
	his	57.1%
	other	29.5%
feminine	her	17.3%
	his	56.8%
	other	25.9%
gender-neutral	her	13.2%
	other	29.4%
	his	57.4%
masculine	her	13.8%
	other	29.2%
	his	57.0%

- representations of 'son' are not the only evidence used during the generation of the translation hypothesis
 - path (c) has only a limited influence

Conclusion

- Contributions: new dataset \oplus two techniques (probing & manipulating)
- Conclusions:
 - gender information in the representation of all tokens representations built by the encoder and the decoder
 - choice of English pronoun distributed
- future work:
 - generalization to other language & syntactic divergences
 - identify which information is used to choose the English pronoun

Code & Corpus

<https://github.com/neuroviz/neuroviz/tree/main/blackbox2021>

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