

Guest Editorial

Communication-Efficient Distributed Learning Over Networks

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Distributed machine learning is envisioned as the bedrock of future intelligent networks, where agents exchange information with each other to train models collaboratively without uploading data to a central processor. Despite its broad applicability, a downside of distributed learning is the need for iterative information exchange between agents, which may lead to high communication overhead unaffordable in many practical systems with limited communication resources. To resolve this communication bottleneck, we need to devise communication-efficient distributed learning algorithms and protocols that can reduce the communication cost and simultaneously achieve satisfactory learning/optimization performance. Accomplishing this goal necessitates synergistic techniques from a diverse set of fields, including optimization, machine learning, wireless communications, game theory, and network/graph theory. This Special Issue is dedicated to communication-efficient distributed learning from multiple perspectives, including fundamental theories, algorithm design and analysis, and practical considerations.

The Special Issue received 100 submissions, which demonstrated the timeliness and importance of research on communication-efficient distributed learning. After a rigorous and selective two-round peer-review procedure, 25 high-quality papers were accepted.

The Special Issue starts with an overview article [A1], in which Cao et al. present a comprehensive survey of pre-

vailing methodologies for communication-efficient distributed learning, including reduction of the number of communication rounds, compression and quantization of exchanged information, radio resource management, and game-theoretic mechanisms. The tutorial paper is then followed by 25 technical papers.

I. REDUCING THE NUMBER OF COMMUNICATION ROUNDS OF DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

In [A2], Hu et al. study an asynchronous federated learning, with periodic aggregation to ameliorate the straggler effect due to asynchronous updates. They also study scheduling policies based on wireless link quality to improve the aggregated model updates, providing theoretical convergence analysis and numerics.

In [A3], Chiu et al. study communication efficient decentralized learning inspired by an existing method called MATCHA, which showed that not all links are equally important for convergence. Therefore, the authors design communication patterns during decentralized learning by activating different links with different frequencies using Laplacian matrix sampling, and design communication payload to obtain communication efficiency without hurting convergence. They provide theoretical analysis and numerics to support this.

In [A4], Chen et al. exploit the correlation between federated learning accuracy loss and the synchronization frequency, and seek to fine-tune the synchronization frequency at training runtime. They propose a metric called gradient consistency, which can effectively reflect the training status despite the instability of realistic FL scenarios. A feedback-driven algorithm called Gradient-Instructed Frequency Tuning (GIFT), which adaptively increases or decreases the synchronization frequency based on gradient consistency, is then developed which improves FL accuracy by up to 10.7% with a time reduction of 58.1%.

In [A5], Yang et al. propose two client selection schemes, Distributed Stein Variational Gradient Descent (DSVGD) based on the Kernelized Stein Discrepancy (KSD) and the Hilbert Inner Product (HIP), for federated Bayesian learning. Comprehensive experiments using real datasets confirmed the performance gain of the proposed schemes. In particular, it is shown that the KSD-based scheme has smaller overhead but the HIP-based scheme has faster convergence.

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In [A6], Ayache et al. consider the problem of parameter server that wishes to learn a model that fits data distributed on the nodes of a graph, with federated learning as a canonical application. They consider a random walk learning algorithm that addresses the issues of communication limitations between the nodes and the parameter server and of data heterogeneity across nodes. Casting this problem as a sleeping multi-armed bandit problem, the authors design a near-optimal sampling strategy with guaranteed convergence and that outperforms existing algorithms.

II. COMPRESSING THE COMMUNICATIONS OF DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

In [A7], Ge et al. develop a sparsity-preserving sketch-based collective communication method, which preserves gradient sparsity and reduces communication costs via a bitmap-informed count sketch structure. It is shown that the method has the same convergence rate as vanilla data-parallel training and a much smaller communication overhead than those of state-of-the-art methods.

In [A8], Park and Choi consider communication-efficient federated learning by exploiting the correlations between consecutive local model update, and proposed a projection-based compression mechanism. They analyze the convergence behavior of such methods as well as provide evidence through numerics of its advantages over some benchmark methods.

In [A9], Jahani-Nezhad et al. study the communication overhead of secure aggregation for federated learning by using a group-based decentralized communication topology and secure multi-party computing (MPC) techniques, which they name SwiftAgg+ (building on existing SwiftAgg). This is mainly a theoretical paper that analyzes the privacy and communication load for the proposed schemes, and compares it to information-theoretic lower bounds, establishing it to be close to optimal for some cases.

In [A10], Chen et al. propose a service delay efficient Federated learning (SDEFLL) scheme over mobile devices via the joint design of local computing control, weight quantization, and gradient quantization. In particular, it investigates the impacts of the weight quantization, gradient quantization, and local computing control strategies on the service delay, and provides the convergence rate of federated learning with compression from a theoretical perspective. Furthermore, it develops an optimization scheme to minimize the service delay of federated learning over heterogeneous devices. Extensive experimental results are presented to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of the proposed SDEFLL scheme, and its advantages over peer designs in various learning and wireless transmission settings.

III. RADIO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

In [A11], Yang et al. propose to deploy split machine learning in a wireless MIMO communication network by utilizing the intricate interplay between MIMO-based over-the-air computation and neural networks. This can alleviate the communication load substantially.

In [A12], Guo et al. address the challenges presented by radio resource management (RRM) schemes in the context of spectrum sharing in cellular vehicle-to-everything (C-V2X), and propose a hybrid centralized-distributed RRM scheme and a distributed RRM scheme, designed toward maximizing the system capacity while guaranteeing the reliability of V2V links. Toward that end, they introduce a decoupling method that provides a theoretical lower bound so that channel allocation and power control can be optimized independently, which they proceed within the article. Specifically, the hybrid centralized-distributed RRM scheme they employ is based on graph matching and reinforcement learning, and the distributed RRM scheme employed requires only local channel state information with the hybrid-framework reinforcement learning. The article also includes numerical demonstrations of both schemes, out-performing competing ones.

In [A13], Du et al. propose a dynamic device scheduling mechanism for federated learning via AirComp, which can select qualified edge devices to transmit their local models with a proper power control policy. In this mechanism, the data importance measured by the gradient of local model parameters, channel condition, and energy consumption of devices are jointly considered. The simulation results validate that the proposed scheduling mechanism can achieve higher training accuracy and faster convergence rate, and is robust against different channel conditions.

In [A14], Wu et al. consider a training latency reduction problem in Split learning (SL) over wireless networks. In contrast to existing approaches, the paper introduces a low-latency SL scheme, named Cluster-based Parallel SL (CPSL), which parallelizes the device-side model training in order to reduce training latency. In addition, it proposes a two-timescale resource management algorithm for the CPSL to minimize the training latency in wireless networks by taking network dynamics and device heterogeneity into account. Extensive simulation results are presented to validate the effectiveness of the proposed solutions compared with the existing solutions.

In [A15], Ben-Hur et al. consider binary classification via an ensemble of functions communicating real-value confidence levels. They propose a solution by optimizing the transmission gain and aggregation coefficients, and develop a post-training optimization algorithm to minimize the error probability.

In two-companion papers [A16], [A17], Liu et al. consider communication-efficient distributed learning of time-varying states over networks. They first propose encoding strategies for generating messages and present a sufficient condition for bounding the total inference errors of all agents over time. Then, they derive a necessary condition in terms of the sensing and communication capabilities of the network for bounding the learning error over time. By comparing the necessary condition with the sufficient condition, they show that the gap between the two conditions is small in some cases.

IV. APPLICATIONS OF COMMUNICATION-EFFICIENT DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

In [A18], Schynol and Pesavento address coordinated weighted sum-rate maximization in multicell MIMO networks with intra- and inter-cell interference and local channel state at the base stations, and propose an unrolled archi-

texture (which they name GCN-WMMSE) based on the classical weighted minimum mean squared error (WMMSE) algorithm. GCN-WMMSE uses ideas from graph signal processing and is agnostic to different wireless network topologies while exhibiting a low number of trainable parameters and high efficiency with respect to training data. The authors also provide favorable comparison of GCN-WMMSE to earlier unrolled WMMSE architectures despite its generality.

In [A19], Zhou et al. address the dynamic pricing problem for distributed machine learning jobs, while jointly taking the placement into consideration. The algorithm they propose estimates the unknown input by leveraging a multi-armed bandit online learning framework, and calculates rewards based on feedback of job runtime. Their algorithm consists of two subroutines: a dynamic pricing mechanism that determines the provider-profit maximizing price upon the arrival of each job, and a placement strategy that minimizes the runtime of accepted jobs. The authors also show that their algorithm achieves sub-linear regret with both the timespan and the total job number.

In [A20], Wang et al. consider the communication efficiency, low latency, and accuracy for distributed relative state estimation involving vision data in UAV networks. In particular, they investigate the node-based local graph model (NBM) and patch-based local graph model (PBM), and propose a communication-efficient initialization scheme together with a distributed state iteration method. The communication costs for the initialization and online iteration processes are then analyzed theoretically.

In [A21], Huang et al. design incentive mechanisms for the problem of information elicitation without verification (IEWV). They study a scenario where the data requester cannot access workers' heterogeneous information quality and costs ex-ante. They propose a continuum-armed bandit-based incentive mechanism that dynamically learns the optimal reward level from workers' reported information. The resulting inference problem is non-convex but is reformulated as a bi-convex problem. They then show that the proposed mechanism achieves a sub-linear regret and outperforms several celebrated benchmarks.

In [A22], Liu et al. study optimal resource allocation with batching and early exiting, which is an NP-complete integer program. A set of efficient algorithms are designed under the criterion of maximum throughput. The experimental results demonstrate that the proposed resource allocation algorithms can leverage integrated batching and early exiting to achieve 200% throughput gain over conventional schemes.

In [A23], Rodrigues and Kato propose a hybrid centralized and distributed learning solution to train a deep Q network (DQN) model in Multi-Access Edge Computing (MEC) equipped satellite networks. They then analyze the learning costs behind centralized and distributed learning and propose a hybrid solution that adaptively uses the advantages of both in cloud server-equipped satellite networks. The extensive results demonstrate that the proposal is not only efficient in solving machine learning tasks but also dynamic to react to different configurations while maintaining excellent performance.

In [A24], Zhang et al. consider the sensitivity to network conditions of real-time collaborative inference based on large volumes of image data. In particular, the present RTCoInfer, a framework for providing accurate and timely stream analytics in practical fluctuating networks. Extensive experiments show that this method achieves better efficiency than the prior state-of-the-art.

In [A25], Xie and Song also address the issues of communication bottleneck and data heterogeneity in federated learning, but in the context of reinforcement learning. In particular, they consider the imposition of a Kullback–Leibler-based penalty on the divergence between local and global policies, which achieves a favorable tradeoff between training speed (i.e., step-size) and convergence. The experiment results on two popular RL experiment platforms demonstrate the advantage of the proposed algorithm over existing methods in accelerating and stabilizing the training process with heterogeneous data.

In [A26], Xu et al. propose a multi-cell cluster-free NOMA framework that is designed to simultaneously mitigate both intra-cell and inter-cell interference. They treat the joint design problem as a sum rate maximization problem and develop a distributed auto-learning graph neural network (AutoGNN) architecture to achieve communication-efficient distributed scheduling.

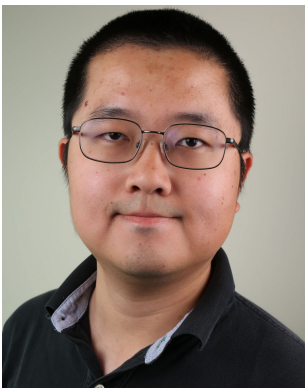
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APPENDIX: RELATED ARTICLES

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