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Tslearn, A Machine Learning Toolkit for Time Series Data

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Abstract

tslearn is a general-purpose Python machine learning library for time series that offers tools for pre-processing and feature extraction as well as dedicated models for clustering, classification and regression. It follows scikit-learn’s Application Programming Interface for transformers and estimators, allowing the use of standard pipelines and model selection tools on top of tslearn objects. It is distributed under the BSD-2-Clause license, and its source code is available at https://github.com/tslearn-team/tslearn.

Keywords: time series, clustering, classification, pre-processing, data mining

1. Introduction

Temporal data are ubiquitous in many application domains, such as medicine, robotics, or videos. Dealing with such data requires dedicated methods that take into account the
high correlation between consecutive samples in a time series. Moreover, in many cases, one
would like a time series approach to encode invariance to small time shifts, which once again
implies using specific methodologies. \texttt{tslearn} is a Python package that provides tools to fit
relevant models to time series data. In the following, time series data is understood as series
of features collected over time. It includes pre-processing routines, feature extractors, and
machine learning models for classification (Bagnall et al., 2017; Fawaz et al., 2019), regres-
sion and clustering (Aghabozorgi et al., 2015). Both univariate and multivariate time series
can be handled in \texttt{tslearn}. Further, data sets can contain time series of variable-length,
as discussed below. \texttt{tslearn} follows \texttt{scikit-learn}'s API for transformers and estimators,
allowing the use of \texttt{scikit-learn}'s pipelines and model selection tools on \texttt{tslearn}
objects. We use continuous integration tools to test each contribution to the library and
target a coverage of at least 90% to detect bugs as early as possible. Online documentation
is available at \url{https://tslearn.readthedocs.io/} and semantic versioning is used (this
document describes version 0.3.1). \texttt{tslearn} is distributed under the BSD-2-Clause license.
In the following, we present basic usage of the library, an overview of the implemented
algorithms and a comparison to other related software.

\section{Implementation Description}

\texttt{tslearn} v0.3.1 is a cross-platform software package for Python 3.5+. It depends on
\texttt{numpy} (Van Der Walt et al., 2011) & \texttt{scipy} (Virtanen et al., 2020) packages for basic array
manipulations and standard linear algebra routines and on \texttt{scikit-learn} (Pedregosa et al.,
2011) for its API and utilities. It also utilizes \texttt{Cython} (Behnel et al., 2011), \texttt{numba} (Lam et al.,
2015) and \texttt{joblib} (Varoquaux et al., 2010) for efficient computation. Finally, \texttt{keras}
(Chollet et al., 2015) with \texttt{tensorflow} (Abadi et al., 2016) backend is an optional dependency
that is necessary to use the \texttt{shapelets} module in \texttt{tslearn} that provides an efficient imple-
mentation of the shapelet model by Grabocka et al. (2014).

In \texttt{tslearn}, a time series data set can be represented through a three-dimensional \texttt{numpy}
array of shape \((n, T, d)\) where \(n\) is the number of time series in the set, \(T\) their length, and \(d\)
their dimensionality. If time series from the set are not equal-sized, NaN values are appended
to the shorter ones and \(T\) is hence the maximum of sizes for time series in the set:

\begin{lstlisting}[language=Python]
from tslearn.utils import to_time_series_dataset

my_first_time_series = [1, 3, 4, 2]
my_second_time_series = [1, 2, 4, 2, 1]
formatted_dataset = to_time_series_dataset([my_first_time_series,
                                         my_second_time_series])

# formatted_dataset.shape is then (2, 5, 1)
\end{lstlisting}

Then, data can be fed to transformers that are available in the \texttt{preprocessing} and
\texttt{piecewise} modules and/or estimators that follow the \texttt{scikit-learn} API\textsuperscript{1}. Note that
\texttt{scikit-learn}'s pipelines and model-selection tools can be used in conjunction with \texttt{tslearn}
transformers and estimators, as shown in the code snippet below:

\textsuperscript{1} One noticeable difference when compared with \texttt{scikit-learn} estimators and transformers, though, is
that \texttt{tslearn} ones expect 3-dimensional arrays which can contain NaN values, as this is the basic format
for \texttt{tslearn} data sets.
from sklearn.model_selection import KFold, GridSearchCV
from tslearn.neighbors import KNeighborsTimeSeriesClassifier

knn = KNeighborsTimeSeriesClassifier(metric="dtw")
p_grid = {"n_neighbors": [1, 5]}
cv = KFold(n_splits=2, shuffle=True, random_state=0)
clf = GridSearchCV(estimator=knn, param_grid=p_grid, cv=cv)
clf.fit(X, y)

3. Contents

Our package first offers basic utilities to format data sets for use with tslearn transformers and estimators, and to cast time series data sets from and to other Python time series toolkit formats. It also provides standard pre-processing techniques and feature extraction methods, implemented as scikit-learn-compatible transformers.

Many of our learning algorithms rely on the use of time series specific metrics that are themselves made available in a dedicated metrics module.

In terms of machine learning methods, we provide implementations of clustering algorithms (some of which rely on barycenter computation routines that are also part of our public API) specifically tailored for temporal data. Supervised learning methods (for regression and classification) are also provided. All these are implemented as scikit-learn-compatible estimators.

The importance of providing time-series specific methods for machine learning is illustrated in the example below and the corresponding Figure 1, where standard Euclidean $k$-means fails while DTW-based ones (Sakoe and Chiba, 1978; Petitjean et al., 2011; Cuturi and Blondel, 2017) can distinguish between different time series profiles:

```python
from tslearn.clustering import TimeSeriesKMeans
from tslearn.datasets import CachedDatasets

# Load the 'Trace' data set
X_train = CachedDatasets().load_dataset('Trace')[0]

# Define parameters for each metric
euclidean_params = {'metric': 'euclidean'}
dba_params = {'metric': 'dtw'}
sdtw_params = {'metric': 'softdtw', 'metric_params': {'gamma': .01}}

# Perform clustering for each metric
y_preds = []
for params in (euclidean_params, dba_params, sdtw_params):
    km = TimeSeriesKMeans(n_clusters=3, random_state=0, **params)
    y_preds.append(km.fit_predict(X_train))
```

4. Comparison to Related Software

tslearn is not the only Python package to focus on machine learning for time series. Some packages, like cesium-ml\(^2\) and seglearn (Burns and Whyne, 2018) focus on pre-

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2. The cesium-ml package can be found here: http://cesium-ml.org
processing time series data to feed scikit-learn models. Similarly, tsfresh (Christ et al., 2018) specializes in feature extraction from time series. pyts (Faouzi and Janati, 2020) and sktime (Löning et al., 2019), on the other hand, focus on supervised learning. Other packages focus on some families of methods, such as statsmodels (Seabold and Perktold, 2010) that provides standard statistical models for time series analysis, hmmlearn\(^3\) that focuses on Hidden Markov Models, stumpy (Law, 2019) that relies on the matrix profile data structure (Yeh et al., 2016), or pyflux (Taylor, 2016), which offers a large panel of probabilistic models aimed at forecasting.

Compared to these packages, tslearn is a general-purpose machine learning library for time series that offers pre-processing and feature extraction tools as well as dedicated models for clustering, classification and regression. Note however that, since the packages listed above are more focused than tslearn, they tend to incorporate a wider range of algorithms for their task of interest than our library. This is why we have included utilities to cast data sets between tslearn format and the ones used by these libraries, in order to help facilitate interoperability.

5. Conclusion

tslern is a general-purpose Python machine learning library for time series. It implements several standard estimators for time series for problems such as clustering, classification and regression. It is under active development with aim at the integration of additional methods.

\(^3\) The hmmlearn package can be found here: https://github.com/hmmlearn/hmmlearn.
Specific attention will be paid to keep tslearn’s genericity rather than focus, for example, on supervised settings for which other tools exist.

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