DELIGHT: DEEP AND LIGHT-WEIGHT TRANSFORMER

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ABSTRACT

We introduce a deep and light-weight transformer, DeLighT, that delivers similar or better performance than standard transformer-based models with significantly fewer parameters. DeLighT more efficiently allocates parameters both (1) within each Transformer block using the DeLighT transformation, a deep and light-weight transformation and (2) across blocks using block-wise scaling, that allows for shallower and narrower DeLighT blocks near the input and wider and deeper DeLighT blocks near the output. Overall, DeLighT networks are 2.5 to 4 times deeper than standard transformer models and yet have fewer parameters and operations. Experiments on benchmark machine translation and language modeling tasks show that DeLighT matches or improves the performance of baseline Transformers with 2 to 3 times fewer parameters on average.

1 INTRODUCTION

Attention-based transformer networks (Vaswani et al., 2017) are widely used for sequence modeling tasks, including language modeling and machine translation. To improve performance, models are often scaled to be either wider, by increasing the dimension of hidden layers, or deeper, by stacking more transformer blocks. For example, T5 (Raffel et al., 2019) uses a dimension of 65K and GPT-3 (Brown et al., 2020) uses 96 transformer blocks. However, such scaling increases the number of network parameters significantly (e.g., T5 and GPT-3 have 11 billion and 175 billion parameters, respectively), and complicates learning, i.e., these models either require very large training corpora (Raffel et al., 2019; Devlin et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020) or careful regularization (Hinton et al., 2012; Wan et al., 2013; Merity et al., 2018a). In this paper, we introduce a new parameter-efficient attention-based architecture that can be easily scaled to be both wide and deep.

Our Deep and Light-weight Transformer architecture, DeLighT, extends the transformer architecture of Vaswani et al. (2017) and delivers similar or better performance with significantly fewer parameters and operations. At the heart of DeLighT is the DeLighT transformation that uses the group linear transformations (GLTs) of Mehta et al. (2018) with an expand-reduce strategy for varying the width and depth of the DeLighT block efficiently. Since GLTs are local by nature, the DeLighT transformation uses feature shuffling, which is analogous to channel shuffling in convolutional networks (Zhang et al., 2018), to share information between different groups. Such wide and deep representations facilitate replacing the multi-head attention and feed-forward layers in transformers with single headed attention and light-weight feed-forward layers, reducing total network parameters and operations. Importantly, unlike transformers, the DeLighT transformation decouples the depth and width from the input size, allowing us to allocate parameters more efficiently across blocks by using shallower and narrower DeLighT blocks near the input and deeper and wider DeLighT blocks near the output.

We demonstrate that DeLighT models achieve similar or better performance than transformer models with significantly fewer parameters and operations, on two common sequence modeling tasks, (i) machine translation and (ii) language modeling. On the low resource WMT'16 En-Ro machine translation dataset, DeLighT attains transformer performance using $2.8\times$ fewer parameters. On the high resource WMT'14 En-Fr dataset, DeLighT delivers better performance (+0.4 BLEU score) with $1.8\times$ fewer parameters than baseline transformers. Similarly, on language modeling, DeLighT matches the performance of Transformer-XL (Dai et al., 2019), with $1.5\times$ fewer parameters and $1.3\times$ smaller context length on the WikiText-103 dataset.

2 RELATED WORK

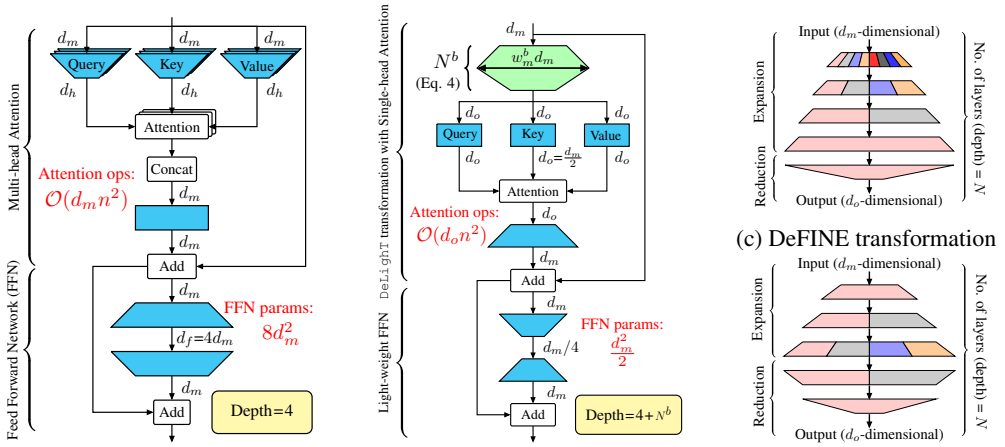
Improving transformers: Several methods have been introduced to improve the transformer architecture. The first line of research addresses the challenge of computing self attention on long input sequences (Child et al., 2019; Kitaev et al., 2020; Beltagy et al., 2020). These methods can be combined with our architecture. The second line of research focuses on explaining multi-head attention (Raganato and Tiedemann, 2018; Brunner et al., 2020). They show that increasing the number of transformer heads can lead to redundant representations (Voita et al., 2019a; Michel et al., 2019) and using fixed attention heads with predefined patterns (Raganato et al., 2020) or synthetic attention matrices (Tay et al., 2020) improves performance. The third line of research focuses on improving transformers by learning better representations (Wu et al., 2019; 2020; So et al., 2019). These works aim to improve the expressiveness of transformers using different transformations – for example, using convolutions (Wu et al., 2019; Gehring et al., 2017), gated linear units (Dauphin et al., 2017), or multi-branch feature extractors (So et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2020). Our work falls into this category. Unlike previous work, we show that it is possible to efficiently allocate parameters both at the block-level using the `DeLighT` transformation and across blocks using block-wise scaling.

Model scaling: Model scaling is a standard method to improve the performance of sequence models (Vaswani et al., 2017; Raffel et al., 2019; Lan et al., 2020; Devlin et al., 2019; Shoeybi et al., 2019; Tan and Le, 2019; Brown et al., 2020). Model dimensions are increased in width-wise scaling (Vaswani et al., 2017; Devlin et al., 2019) while more blocks (e.g., Transformer blocks) are stacked in depth-wise scaling (Shoeybi et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). In both cases (and their combination), parameters inside each block of the network are the same, which may lead to a sub-optimal solution. To further improve the performance of sequence models, this paper introduces *block-wise scaling* that allows for variably-sized blocks and efficient allocation of parameters in the network. Our results show that (1) shallower and narrower `DeLighT` blocks near the input and deeper and wider `DeLighT` blocks near the output deliver the best performance, and (2) models with block-wise scaling coupled with model scaling achieve better performance compared to model scaling alone. We note that convolutional neural networks (CNNs) also learn shallower and narrower representations near the input and deeper and wider representations near the output. Unlike CNNs (e.g., ResNet of He et al. 2016) that perform a fixed number of operations at each convolutional layer, the proposed block-wise scaling uses a variable number of operations in each layer and block.

Improving sequence models: There is also significant recent work on other related methods for improving sequence models, including (1) improving accuracy using better token-level representations – for example, using BPE (Sennrich et al., 2016), adaptive inputs (Baevski and Auli, 2019) and outputs (Grave et al., 2017a), and DeFINE (Mehta et al., 2020), and (2) improving efficiency – for example, using compression (Chen et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2020), pruning (Han et al., 2016; Voita et al., 2019b), and distillation (Hinton et al., 2015; Sanh et al., 2019). The closest to our work is the DeFINE transformation, which also learns representations using an expand-reduce strategy. The key difference between the DeFINE transformation (Figure 1c) and the `DeLighT` transformation (Figure 1d) is that the `DeLighT` transformation more efficiently allocates parameters within expansion and reduction layers. Unlike DeFINE, which uses fewer groups in group linear transformations to learn wider representations, `DeLighT` transformation uses more groups to learn wider representations with fewer parameters. The `DeLighT` transformation achieves comparable performance to the DeFINE transformation but with significantly fewer parameters.

3 DELIGHT: DEEP AND LIGHT-WEIGHT TRANSFORMER

A standard transformer block (Figure 1a) comprises of multi-head attention that uses a query-key-value decomposition to model relationships between sequence tokens, and a feed forward network (FFN) to learn wider representations. Multi-head attention obtains query $\mathbf{Q}$, key $\mathbf{K}$, and value $\mathbf{V}$ by applying three projections to the input, each consisting of h linear layers (or heads) that map the d_m-dimensional input into a d_h-dimensional space, where $d_h = d_m/h$ is the head dimension. The FFN consists of two linear layers, where the first expands the dimensions from d_m to d_f and the second reduces the dimensions from d_f to d_m. The depth of a transformer block is 4, consisting of (1) three parallel branches for queries, keys, and values, (2) a fusion layer that combines the output of multiple heads, and (3) two sequential linear layers in the FFN. In general, transformer-based networks sequentially stacks transformer blocks to increase network capacity and depth.



(a) Transformer block (b) DeLighT block (c) DeFINE transformation (d) DeLighT transformation

Figure 1: **(a, b)** Block-wise comparison between the standard transformer block of Vaswani et al. (2017) and the DeLighT block. In the DeLighT transformation, the number of operations in computing attention are reduced by half while the number of parameters (and operations) in the FFN are reduced by 16×. Transformations with learnable parameters (Linear and DeLighT) are shown in color. The shape of linear transformations indicate their operation (expansion, reduction, etc.). **(c, d)** compares the DeFINE transformation (Mehta et al., 2020) with the DeLighT transformation. Compared to the DeFINE transformation, the DeLighT transformation uses group linear transformations (GLTs) with more groups to learn wider representations with fewer parameters. Different colors are used to show groups in GLTs. For simplicity, feature shuffling is not shown in (d).

This paper extends the transformer architecture and introduces a deep and light-weight transformer, DeLighT. Our model uses a deep and light-weight expand-reduce transformation, DeLighT transformation (Section 3.1), that enables learning wider representations efficiently. It also enables replacing multi-head attention and feed forward network (FFN) layers with single-head attention and a light-weight FFN (Section 3.2). DeLighT transformation decouples attention dimensions from the depth and width, allowing us to learn representations efficiently using block-wise scaling instead of uniform stacking of transformer blocks (Section 3.3).

3.1 DeLighT Transformation

DeLighT transformation maps a d_m dimensional input vector into a high dimensional space (expansion) and then reduces it down to a d_o dimensional output vector (reduction) using N layers of the group transformations of Mehta et al. (2018), as shown in Figure 1d. During these expansion and reduction phases, DeLighT transformation uses group linear transformations (GLTs) because they learn local representations by deriving the output from a specific part of the input and are more efficient than linear transformations. To learn global representations, the DeLighT transformation shares information between different groups in the group linear transformation using feature shuffling, analogous to channel shuffling in convolutional networks (Zhang et al., 2018).

A standard approach to increase the expressivity and capacity of transformers is to increase the input dimensions, d_m. However, increasing d_m linearly also increases the number of operations in multi-head attention ($\mathcal{O}(n^2 d_m)$, where n is the sequence length) in a standard transformer block (Figure 1a). In contrast, to increase the expressivity and capacity of the DeLighT block, we increase the depth and width of its intermediate DeLighT transformations using expansion and reduction phases. This enables us to use smaller dimensions for computing attention, requiring fewer operations.

Formally, the DeLighT transformation is controlled by five configuration parameters: (1) number of GLT layers N, (2) width multiplier w_m, (3) input dimension d_m, (4) output dimension d_o, and (5) maximum groups g_{max} in a GLT. In the expansion phase, the DeLighT transformation projects the d_m-dimensional input to a high-dimensional space, $d_{max} = w_m d_m$, linearly using $\lceil \frac{N}{2} \rceil$ layers. In the reduction phase, the DeLighT transformation projects the d_{max}-dimensional vector to a d_o-dimensional space using the remaining $N - \lceil \frac{N}{2} \rceil$ GLT layers. Mathematically, we define the

output $\mathbf{Y}$ at each GLT layer l as:

$$\mathbf{Y}^l = \begin{cases} \mathcal{F}\left(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{W}^l, \mathbf{b}^l, g^l\right), & l = 1 \\ \mathcal{F}\left(\mathcal{H}\left(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{Y}^{l-1}\right), \mathbf{W}^l, \mathbf{b}^l, g^l\right), & \text{Otherwise} \end{cases} \tag{1}$$

where $\mathbf{W}^l = \left\{\mathbf{W}^l_1, \cdots, \mathbf{W}^l_{g^l}\right\}$ and $\mathbf{b}^l = \left\{\mathbf{b}^l_1, \cdots, \mathbf{b}^l_{g^l}\right\}$ are the learnable weights and biases of group linear transformation $\mathcal{F}$ with g^l groups at the l-th layer. Briefly, the $\mathcal{F}$ function takes the input $\mathbf{X}$ $\left(\text{or } \mathcal{H}\left(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{Y}^{l-1}\right)\right)$ and splits into g^l non-overlapping groups such that $\mathbf{X} = \left\{\mathbf{X}_1, \cdots, \mathbf{X}_{g^l}\right\}$. The function $\mathcal{F}$ then linearly transforms each $\mathbf{X}_i$ with weights $\mathbf{W}^l_i$ and bias $\mathbf{b}^l_i$ to produce output $\mathbf{Y}^l_i = \mathbf{X}_i\mathbf{W}^l_i + \mathbf{b}^l_i$. The outputs of each group $\mathbf{Y}^l_i$ are then concatenated to produce the output $\mathbf{Y}^l$. The function $\mathcal{H}$ first shuffles the output of each group in $\mathbf{Y}^{l-1}$ and then combines it with the input $\mathbf{X}$ using the input mixer connection of Mehta et al. (2020) to avoid vanishing gradient problems. Appendix B visualizes the group linear transformation with feature shuffling and input-mixer connection.

The number of groups at the l-th GLT in `DeLighT` transformation are computed as:

$$g^l = \begin{cases} \min(2^{l-1}, g_{max}), & 1 \leq l \leq \lceil N/2 \rceil \\ g^{N-l}, & \text{Otherwise} \end{cases} \tag{2}$$

In our experiments, we use $g_{max} = \lceil \frac{d_m}{32} \rceil$ so that each group has at least 32 input elements.

3.2 DeLighT block

Figure 1b shows how we integrate `DeLighT` transformation into the transformer block to improve its efficiency. The d_m-dimensional inputs are first fed to the `DeLighT` transformation to produce d_o-dimensional outputs, where $d_o < d_m$. These d_o-dimensional outputs are then fed into a single head attention, followed by a light-weight FFN to model their relationships.

`DeLighT` layer and single head attention: Let us assume we have a sequence of n input tokens, each of dimensionality d_m. These n, d_m-dimensional inputs are first fed to the `DeLighT` transformation to produce n, d_o-dimensional outputs, where $d_o < d_m$. These n, d_o-dimensional outputs are then projected simultaneously using three linear layers to produce d_o-dimensional queries $\mathbf{Q}$, keys $\mathbf{K}$, and values $\mathbf{V}$. We then model contextual relationships between these n tokens using scaled dot-product attention (Eq. 3). To enable the use of residual connections (He et al., 2016), the d_o-dimensional outputs of this attention operation are linearly projected into a d_m-dimensional space.

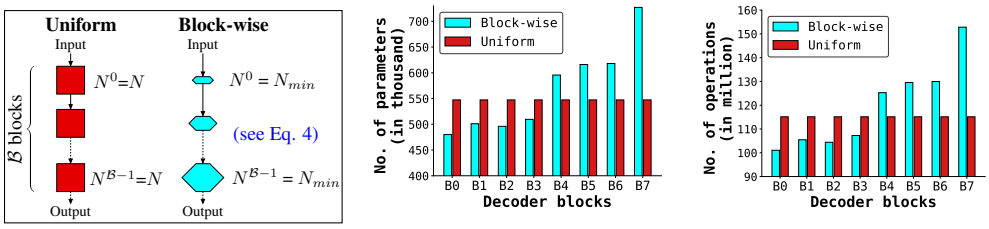
$$\text{Attention}(\mathbf{K}, \mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{V}) = \text{softmax}\left(\frac{\mathbf{Q}\mathbf{K}^T}{\sqrt{d_o}}\right)\mathbf{V} \tag{3}$$

Since the `DeLighT` block learns wider representations of the input using the `DeLighT` transformation, it enables us to replace multi-head attention with single-head attention. The computational costs for computing attention in the standard transformer and the `DeLighT` block are $\mathcal{O}(d_m n^2)$ and $\mathcal{O}(d_o n^2)$ respectively, where $d_o < d_m$. Therefore, the `DeLighT` block reduces the cost for computing attention by a factor of d_m/d_o. In our experiments, we used $d_o = d_m/2$, thus requiring $2\times$ fewer multiplication-addition operations as compared to the transformer architecture.

Light-weight FFN: Similar to FFNs in transformers, this block also consists of two linear layers. Since the `DeLighT` block has already incorporated wider representations using the `DeLighT` transformation, it allows us to invert the functionality of FFN layers in the transformer. The first layer reduces the dimensionality of the input from d_m to d_m/r while the second layer expands the dimensionality from d_m/r to d_m, where r is the reduction factor (see Figure 1b). Our light-weight FFN reduces the number of parameters and operations in the FFN by a factor of rd_f/d_m. In the standard transformer, the FFN dimensions are expanded by a factor of 4.[1] In our experiments, we used $r = 4$. Thus, the light-weight FFN reduces the number of parameters in the FFN by $16\times$.

Block depth: The `DeLighT` block stacks (1) a `DeLighT` transformation with N GLTs, (2) three parallel linear layers for key, query, and value, (3) a projection layer, and (4) two linear layers of a light-weight FFN. Thus, the depth of `DeLighT` block is $N + 4$. Compared to the standard transformer block (depth is 4), `DeLighT` block is deeper.

[1] Transformer-base uses d_m=512 and d_f=2048 while Transformer-large uses d_m=1024 and d_f=4096.



(a) Uniform vs. block-wise

(b) Distribution of parameters and operations within each block

Figure 2: **Block-wise scaling** efficiently allocates parameters and operations across blocks, leading to shallower and narrower DeLighT blocks near the input and deeper and wider DeLighT blocks near the output. In (b), DeLighT networks with both uniform (N=N_{min}=N_{max}=8) and block-wise (N_{min}=4, N_{max}=8) scaling have about 16.7 M parameters and perform 3.5 B operations (computed for a sequence length of $n = 30$), however, the DeLighT network with block-wise scaling delivered 2 points better perplexity.

3.3 BLOCK-WISE SCALING

Standard methods for improving the performance of sequence models include increasing the model dimensions (width scaling), stacking more blocks (depth scaling), or both. However, such scaling is not very effective on small datasets. For example, when a Transformer-Base ($d_m = 512$) network is replaced with Transformer-Large ($d_m = 1024$) on the WMT'16 En-Ro corpus, the number of parameters increases by $\sim$4$\times$ while the performance does not change appreciably (BLEU: 34.28 vs. 34.35). This is likely because scaling model width and depth allocates parameters uniformly across blocks, which may lead to learning redundant parameters. To create deep and wide networks, we extend model scaling to the block level. Figure 2 compares uniform scaling with block-wise scaling.

Scaling the DeLighT block: The DeLighT block learns deep and wide representations using the DeLighT transformation, whose depth and width are controlled by two configuration parameters: the number of GLT layers N and the width multiplier w_m, respectively (Figure 2a). These configuration parameters allow us to increase the number of learnable parameters inside the DeLighT block independently of the input d_m and output d_o dimensions. Such calibration is not possible with the standard transformer block because their expressiveness and capacity are a function of the input (input dimension = number of heads $\times$ head dimension). Here, we introduce block-wise scaling that creates a network with variably-sized DeLighT blocks, allocating shallower and narrower DeLighT blocks near the input and deeper and wider DeLighT blocks near the output.

To do so, we introduce two network-wide configuration parameters: minimum N_{min} and maximum N_{max} number of GLTs in a DeLighT transformation. For the b-th DeLighT block, we compute the number of GLTs N^b and the width multiplier w_m^b in a DeLighT transformation using linear scaling (Eq. 4). With this scaling, each DeLighT block has a different depth and width (Figure 2a).

$$N^b = N_{min} + \frac{(N_{max} - N_{min})\, b}{\mathcal{B} - 1}, \quad w_m^b = w_m + \frac{(N_{max} - N_{min})\, b}{N_{min}(\mathcal{B} - 1)}, \quad 0 \leq b \leq \mathcal{B} - 1 \tag{4}$$

Here, $\mathcal{B}$ denotes the number of DeLighT blocks in the network. We add superscript b to number of GLT layers N and width multiplier w_m to indicate that these parameters are for the b-th block.

Network depth: The depth of transformer block is fixed, i.e., 4. Therefore, previous works (Raffel et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019) have associated the depth of transformer-based networks with the number of transformer blocks. In DeLighT, we present a different perspective to learn deeper representations, wherein each block is variably-sized. To compute the network depth, we use the standard definition across different domains, including computer vision (e.g., ResNet of He et al. 2016) and theoretical machine learning (Telgarsky, 2016). These works measures network depth as the number of sequential learnable layers (e.g., convolution, linear, or group linear). Similarly, the depth of DeLighT and transformer networks with $\mathcal{B}$ blocks is $\sum_{b=0}^{\mathcal{B}-1}(N^b + 4)$ and $4\mathcal{B}$, respectively.

4 EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

We evaluate the performance of DeLighT on two standard sequence modeling tasks: (1) machine translation (Section 4.1) and (2) language modeling (Section 4.2).

4.1 MACHINE TRANSLATION

Datasets and evaluation: We benchmark DeLighT models on four datasets: (1) IWSLT'14 German-English (De-En), (2) WMT'16 English-Romanian (En-Ro), (3) WMT'14 English-German (WMT'14 En-De), and (4) WMT'14 English-French (WMT'14 En-Fr). For the IWSLT'14 De-En dataset, we replicate the setup of Wu et al. (2019) and Edunov et al. (2018), which uses 160K/7K/7K sentence pairs for training, validation, and testing with a joint BPE vocabulary of about 10K tokens, respectively. For the WMT'14 English-German (En-De) dataset, we follow the setup of Vaswani et al. (2017). The dataset has 3.9M/39K/3K sentence pairs for training, validation, and testing respectively with a joint BPE vocabulary size of 44K.[2] For the WMT'14 English-French (En-Fr) dataset, we replicate the setup of Gehring et al. (2017), which uses 36M/27K/3K sentence pairs for training, validation, and testing respectively with a joint BPE vocabulary size of 44K. The performance is evaluated in terms of *BLEU* (Papineni et al., 2002) (higher is better) on the test set. We follow Wu et al. (2019) for beam search related hyper-parameters.

Architecture: We follow the symmetric encoder-decoder architecture of Vaswani et al. (2017) with sinusoidal positional encodings. Both the encoder and the decoder have $\mathcal{B}$ DeLighT blocks. Decoder blocks are identical to the encoder blocks (Figure 1b), except that they have an additional source-target single-head attention unit before the light-weight FFN. In the source-target single-head attention unit, keys and values are projections over the encoder output (full details in Appendix A). In our experiments, we use $w_m = 2$, $N_{min} = 4$, and $N_{max} = 8$ for WMT'16 En-Ro, WMT'14 En-De, and WMT'14 En-Fr; resulting in 222 layer deep DeLighT networks. For IWSLT'14 De-En, we used $w_m = 1$, $N_{min} = 3$, and $N_{max} = 9$ for IWSLT'14 De-En; resulting in 289 layer deep network. For simplicity, we set $\mathcal{B} = N_{max}$. We use a learnable look-up table that maps every token in the vocabulary to a 128-dimensional vector. We implement our models using Fairseq (Ott et al., 2019) and use their provided scripts for data pre-processing, training, and evaluation.

Training: For IWSLT'14 De-En models, we follow the setup of Wu et al. (2019) and train all our models for 50K iterations with a batch size of 4K tokens on a single NVIDIA GTX 1080 GPU. For WMT'16 En-Ro, we follow the training setup of Ghazvininejad et al. (2019) and train models for 100K iterations on 16 NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPUs with an effective batch size of 64K tokens. For WMT'14 En-De and WMT'14 En-Fr, we follow the training set-up of Wu et al. (2019) and train our models on 16 V100 GPUs for 30K and 50K iterations, respectively. We use Adam (Kingma and Ba, 2015) to minimize cross entropy loss with a label smoothing value of 0.1 during training. For a fair comparison, we trained baseline transformer models using the same training set-up.

4.1.1 RESULTS

Comparison with baseline transformers: Table 1 compares the performance of DeLighT with the baseline transformers of Vaswani et al. (2017) on different corpora. DeLighT delivers better performance with fewer parameters than transformers, across different corpora. Specifically, on low-resource (WMT'16 En-Ro) and high resource (WMT'14 En-De & WMT'14 En-Fr) corpora, DeLighT delivers similar or better performance with $2.8\times$ and $1.8\times$ fewer parameters, respectively. When the number of parameters are increased, DeLighT outperforms transformers. For example, on WMT'14 En-Fr dataset, DeLighT is $3.7\times$ deeper than transformers and improves its BLEU score by 1.3 points yet with 13 million fewer parameters and 3 billion fewer operations (see Table 2).

Particularly interesting are the performance comparisons of DeLighT with the baseline transformers of Vaswani et al. (2017) and its neural search variant, i.e., Evolved Transformer of So et al. (2019), at two different parametric settings on WMT'14 En-De corpora in Figure 3. For small models (< 10 M parameters), DeLighT models delivers better performance and for attaining the same performance as these models, DeLighT models requires fewer parameters.

Comparison with state-of-the-art methods: Most state-of-the-art methods have evaluated the performance on WMT'14 En-De while some have also evaluated on IWSLT'14 De-En. Table 3 compares the performance of DeLighT with state-of-the-art methods on these two corpora. DeLighT delivers similar or better performance than existing methods. It is important to note that existing methods have improved baseline transformers with different design choices – for example,

[2] We use training and validation data that is compatible with the Tensor2Tensor library (Vaswani et al., 2018) in order to have fair comparisons with recent works (e.g., Evolved Transformer).

Model	IWSLT'14 De-En				WMT'16 En-Ro			
	# Params	Ratio	BLEU	Δ BLEU	# Params	Ratio	BLEU	Δ BLEU
Transformer (Vaswani et al., 2017)	–	–	34.4†	–	62 M	–	34.3‡	–
Transformer (Our impl.)	42 M	1.0×	34.3	–	62 M	1.0×	34.3	–
DeLighT	14 M	0.3×	33.8	-0.5	22 M	0.35×	34.3	0.0
DeLighT	30 M	0.7×	**35.3**	**+1.0**	53 M	0.85×	**34.7**	**+0.4**

(a) Results on small corpora

Model	WMT'14 En-De				WMT'14 En-Fr			
	# Params	Ratio	BLEU	Δ BLEU	# Params	Ratio	BLEU	Δ BLEU
Transformer (Vaswani et al., 2017)	62 M	–	27.3	–	–	62 M	38.1	–
Transformer (Our impl.)	67 M	1.0×	27.7	–	67 M	1.0×	39.2	–
DeLighT	37 M	0.55×	27.6	-0.1	37 M	0.55×	39.6	+0.4
DeLighT	54 M	0.80×	**28.0**	**+0.3**	54 M	0.80×	**40.5**	**+1.3**

(b) Results on large corpora

Table 1: **Comparison with baseline transformers on machine translation corpora**. DeLighT models require significantly fewer parameters to achieve similar performance. Here, † and ‡ indicate the best reported transformer baselines from Wu et al. (2019) and Ghazvininejad et al. (2019), respectively.

	Depth	# Params	# MACs	BLEU
Transformer	60	67 M	11.1 B	39.2
DeLighT	222	37 M	5.6 B	39.6
DeLighT	222	54 M	8.1 B	40.5

Table 2: **DeLighT networks are deep, light-weight and efficient** as compared to transformers. BLEU score is reported on the WMT'14 En-Fr dataset. To compute network depth, we count the number of sequential layers in the network (Section 3.3). We used 20 source and 20 target tokens for computing multiplication-addition operations (MACs). See Appendex C for details.

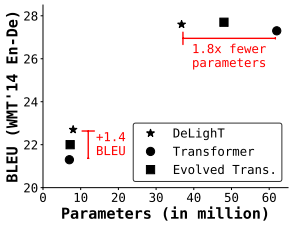


Figure 3: Comparison of DeLighT with Transformers and Evolved Transformers at two different settings, on the WMT'14 En-De corpus: (1) the number of parameters is the same and (2) the performance is the same.

Model	# Params	BLEU
Transformers (Vaswani et al., 2017)	42 M	34.3
Variational Attention (Deng et al., 2018)	–	33.1
Dynamic convolutions (Vaswani et al., 2017)	43 M	**35.2**
Lite Transformer‡ (Wu et al., 2020)	–	33.6
DeLighT (Ours)	**30 M**	**35.3**

(a) IWSLT'14 De-En

Model	# Params	BLEU
Transformer (Vaswani et al., 2017)	62 M	27.3
DLCL (Wang et al., 2019)	62 M	27.3
Evolved Transformer † (So et al., 2019)	46 M	**27.7**
Lite Transformer‡ (Wu et al., 2020)	–	26.5
DeLighT (Ours)	**37 M**	**27.6**

(b) WMT'14 En-De

Table 3: **Comparison with state-of-the-art methods on machine translation corpora**. DeLighT delivers similar or better performance than state-of-the-art models with fewer parameters. Here, † indicates that the network uses neural architecture search (NAS) and ‡ indicates that full network parameters are not reported.

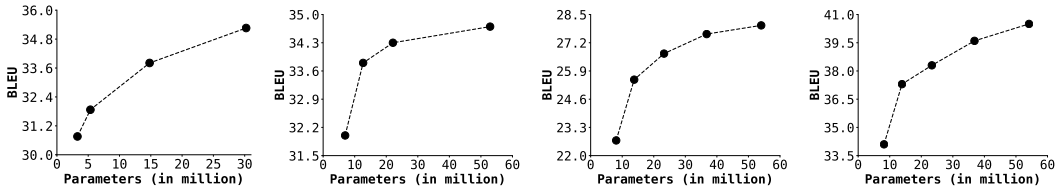
the asymmetric encoder-decoder structure (Wang et al., 2019), and neural architecture search (So et al., 2019). We believe that DeLighT, in the future, would also benefit from such design choices.

Scaling up DeLighT models: Figure 4 shows the performance of DeLighT models improves with increase in network parameters; suggesting their ability to learn representations across different corpora, including low-resource.

4.2 Language Modeling

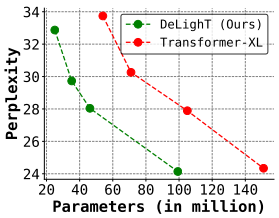
Datasets and evaluation: We evaluate on the WikiText-103 dataset (Merity et al., 2017) that has 103M/217K/245K tokens for training, validation, and testing. It has a word-level vocabulary of about 260K tokens. Following recent works (Baevski and Auli, 2019; Dai et al., 2019), we report performance in terms of *perplexity* (lower is better) on the test set.

Architecture: We use the transformer-based decoder architecture of Baevski and Auli (2019) with $\mathcal{B}$ DeLighT blocks. We use w_m=2, N_{min}=4, and N_{max}=12. We scale d_m using values



(a) IWSLT'14 De-En (b) WMT'16 En-Ro (c) WMT'14 En-De (d) WMT'14 En-Fr

Figure 4: **Scaling up DeLighT models.** The performance of DeLighT improves with an increase in the number of network parameters, across different corpora, including low-resource (WMT'16 En-Ro).



(a) DeLighT vs. Transformer-XL

Method	Network Depth	Context Length	# Params (in million)	Perplexity (Test)
LSTM (Grave et al., 2017b)	–	–	–	48.70
LSTM + Neural Cache (Grave et al., 2017b)	–	–	–	40.80
QRNN (Merity et al., 2018b)	–	–	151 M	33.00
Transformer-XL (Dai et al., 2019)	64	640	151 M	**24.03**
Transformer-XL (Our impl.)	64	640	151 M	24.34
DeLighT (Ours)	158	**480**	**99 M**	**24.14**

(b) Comparison with existing methods

Table 4: **Results on the WikiText-103 dataset**. Compared to Transformer-XL, DeLighT delivers similar or better performance (lower perplexity) with a smaller context length and fewer parameters.

$\{384, 512, 784, 1024\}$ for increasing network parameters. For simplicity, we set $\mathcal{B} = N_{max}$. Following standard practice, we use adaptive input (Baevski and Auli, 2019) as a look-up table and adaptive output (Grave et al., 2017a) as the classification layer with one head (head dimension is 128) and two tails (tail dimensions are 64 and 32). We also share weights between the input and the output layers.

Training: We follow the training setup of Baevski and Auli (2019), except that we train our models on 8 NVIDIA Tesla V100 GPUs for 100K iterations with a context length of 512 and an effective batch size of 64K tokens. We use Adam during training and use a context length of 480 during test.

Results: Table 4b compares the performance of DeLighT with previous methods, on WikiText-103. Table 4a plots the variation of perplexity with number of parameters for DeLighT and Transformer-XL (Dai et al., 2019) – which outperforms other transformer-based implementations (e.g., Baevski and Auli 2019). Both tables show that DeLighT delivers better performance than state-of-the-art methods (including Transformer-XL) and it does this using a *smaller context length* and significantly *fewer parameters*, suggesting DeLighT transformation helps learning strong contextual relationships.

Ablations: We also did an extensive set of ablation studies to better understand which parts of the architecture contribute the most to improve performance and we include these in the Appendix D. We varied the (1) minimum N_{min} and maximum N_{max} number of GLTs , (2) width multiplier w_m, and (3) model dimension d_m, while also comparing DeLighT block with uniform and block-wise scaling. Overall, the differing settings either hurt performance or increase the parameter count with no further performance gains.

5 Conclusion

This paper introduces a deep and light-weight transformer architecture, DeLighT, that efficiently allocates parameters both within the DeLighT block and across DeLighT blocks. Compared to state-of-the-art transformer models, DeLighT models are (1) deep and light-weight and (2) deliver similar or better performance. In the future, we plan to apply DeLighT to other tasks, including language model pre-training, question answering, and language generation. Also, existing deep learning frameworks (e.g., PyTorch) do not have efficient implementations of group linear transformations and single-head attention. Similar to dedicated CUDA kernels for the Transformer, we expect a dedicated CUDA kernel for DeLighT units to be much more efficient, both in terms of speed as well as memory during forward and backward passes.

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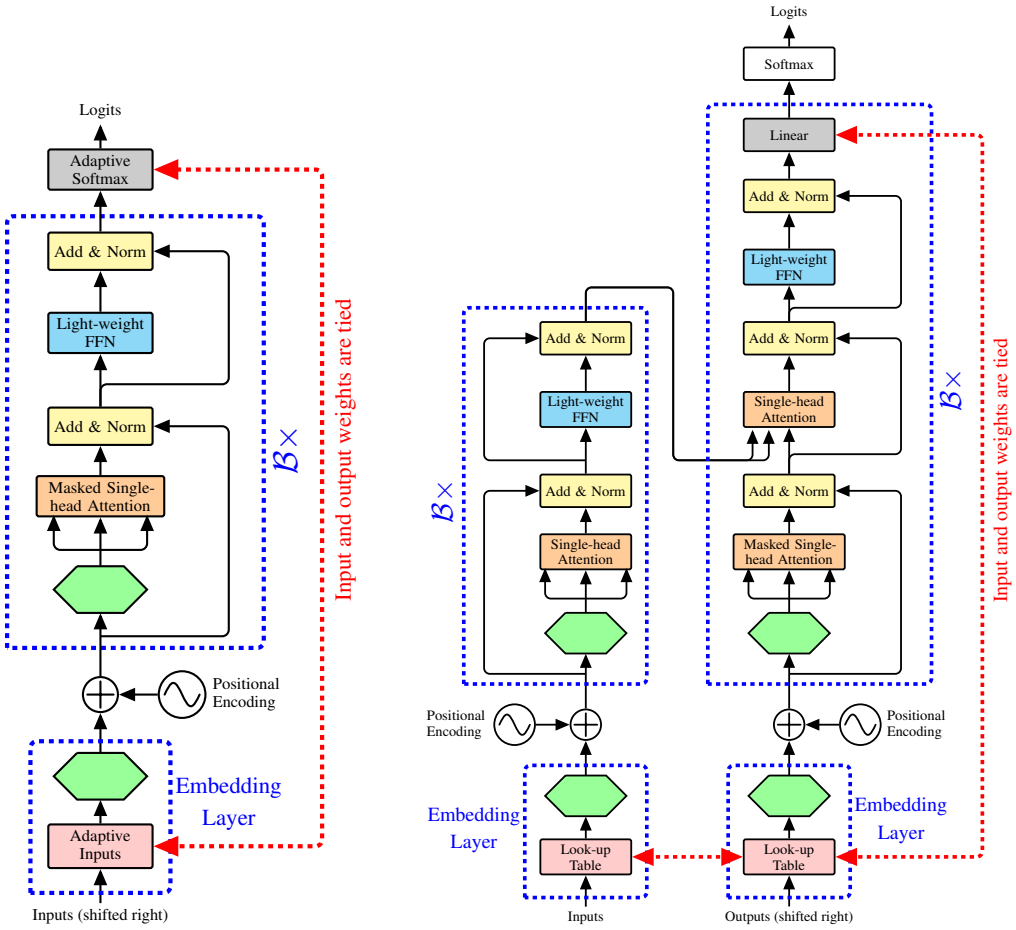
A DeLighT Architectures for Language Modeling and Machine Translation

DeLighT architectures for language modeling and machine translation are shown in Figure 5. For language modeling, we follow the architecture in Baevski and Auli (2019) while for machine translation, we follow the architecture in Vaswani et al. (2017).

Language modeling: Figure 5a shows the architecture for language modeling. The architecture stacks $\mathcal{B}$ DeLighT blocks, the configuration of each block is determined using block-wise scaling. Each block has three sub-layers. The first layer is a DeLighT transformation that learns representations in high-dimensional space. The second layer is a single-head attention that encodes contextual relationships. The third layer is a position-wise light-weight feed-forward network. Similar to Vaswani et al. (2017), we employ a residual connections (He et al., 2016). Similar to previous works (Baevski and Auli, 2019; Dai et al., 2019), we use tied adaptive input (Baevski and Auli, 2019) and adaptive softmax (Grave et al., 2017a) to map tokens to vectors and vectors to tokens, respectively (Inan et al., 2016; Press and Wolf, 2016).

Machine translation: Figure 5b shows the architecture for machine translation. The encoder stacks $\mathcal{B}$ DeLighT blocks, the configuration of each block is determined using block-wise scaling. Similar to language modeling, each encoder block has three sub-layers. The first layer is a DeLighT transformation that learns representations in high-dimensional space. The second layer is a single-head attention that encodes contextual relationships. The third layer is a position-wise light-weight feed-forward network. Similar to Vaswani et al. (2017), we employ a residual connections (He et al., 2016). We use learnable look-up table to map tokens



(a) Language Modeling

(b) Machine translation

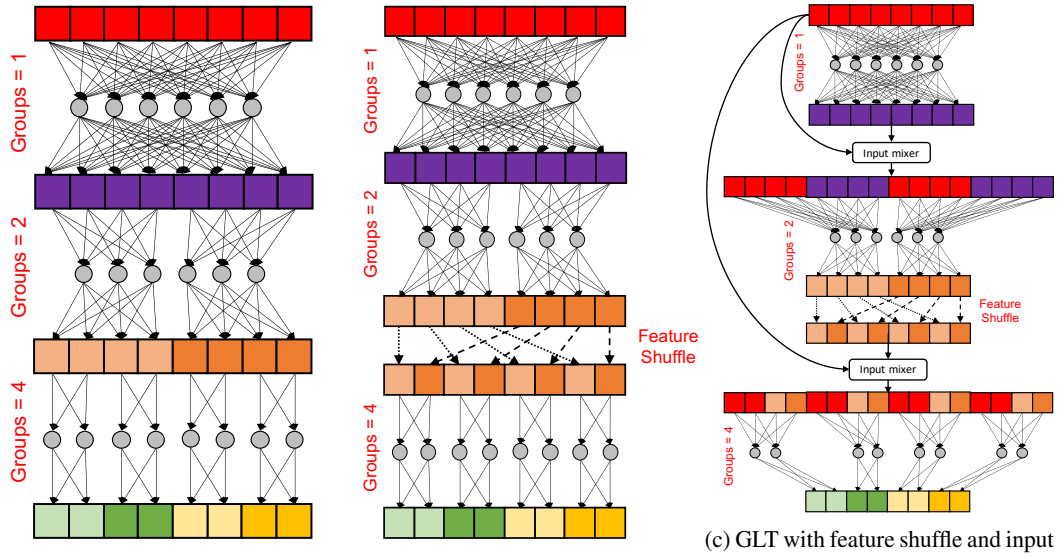
Figure 5: Sequence modeling with DeLighT. Here, green color hexagon represents the DeLighT transformation.

to vectors. Similar to the encoder, the decoder also stacks $\mathcal{B}$ blocks. Decoder blocks are identical to encoder blocks, except that they have an additional source-target single-head attention unit before the light-weight FFN. Keys and values in source-target single-head attention unit are projections over the encoder output. We use standard learnable look-up table to map tokens to vectors and linear classification layer to map vectors to tokens.

B GROUP LINEAR TRANSFORMATION WITH INPUT-MIXER CONNECTION

Group linear transformation (GLT) $\mathcal{F}$ splits a d_m-dimensional input $\mathbf{X}$ into g non-overlapping groups such that $\mathbf{X} = \text{Concat}(\mathbf{X}_1, \cdots, \mathbf{X}_g)$, where $\mathbf{X}_i$ is a $\frac{d_m}{g}$-dimensional vector. $\mathbf{X}_i$'s are then simultaneously transformed using g linear transforms $\mathbf{W}_i \in \mathbf{R}^{\frac{d_m}{g} \times \frac{d_o}{g}}$ to produce g outputs $\mathbf{Y}_i = \mathbf{X}_i \mathbf{W}_i$. $\mathbf{Y}_i$'s are then concatenated to produce the final d_o-dimensional output $\mathbf{Y} = \text{Concat}(\mathbf{Y}_1, \cdots, \mathbf{Y}_g)$.

Figure 6a shows an example of GLT in the expansion phase of `DeLighT` transformation. For illustrative purposes, we have used the same dimensions in this example. Recall that as we go deeper in the expansion phase, the number of groups increases. In this example, the first layer has one group, the second layer has two groups and the third layer has four groups. GLTs learns group-specific representations and are local. To allow GLT to learn global representations, we use feature shuffle. An example of GLT with feature shuffle is shown in Figure 6b. Furthermore, training deep neural networks by merely stacking linear or group linear (with or without feature shuffle) is challenging because of vanishing gradient problem. Residual connections introduced by He et al. (2016) mitigates this problem and helps train deep neural networks. However, such connections cannot be employed when input and output dimensions are not the same (e.g., during the expansion and reduction phases in `DeLighT` transformation). To stabilize the training and learn deeper representations, we use input-mixer connection of Mehta et al. (2020). Figure 6c shows an example of GLT with feature shuffle and input mixer connection.



(a) GLT (b) GLT with feature shuffle (c) GLT with feature shuffle and input mixture connection

Figure 6: This figure visualizes different variants of group linear transformations that are used in the `DeLighT` transformation.

C MULTIPLICATION-ADDITION OPERATIONS IN DELIGHT

The `DeLighT` block is built using linear transformations, GLTs, and scaled dot-product attention. Total number of multiplication-addition operations (MACs) in a network is an accumulation of these individual operations.

Let n denotes the number of source tokens, m denotes the number of target tokens, d_m denotes the input dimension, d_o denotes the output dimension, and g denotes the number of groups in GLT. The procedure for counting MACs for each of these operations is described below.

Group linear transformation (GLT): GLT $\mathcal{F}$ has g learnable matrices $\mathbf{W}_i \in \mathbf{R}^{\frac{d_m}{g} \times \frac{d_o}{g}}$. Therefore, GLT learns $\frac{d_m d_o}{g}$ parameters and performs $\frac{d_m d_o}{g}$ MACs to transform d_m-dimensional input to

d_o-dimensional output. Following a standard practice, e.g., ResNet of He et al. (2016), we count addition and multiplication as one operation instead of two because these operations can be fused in recent hardwares.

Importantly, when $g = 1$, the GLT is the same as linear transformation.

Self-attention in `DeLighT`: The scaled dot-product self-attention in `DeLighT` is defined as:

$$\text{Attention}(\mathbf{K}, \mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{V}) = \text{softmax}\left(\frac{\mathbf{Q}\mathbf{K}^T}{\sqrt{d_o}}\right)\mathbf{V} \tag{5}$$

where $\mathbf{Q} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d_o}$, $\mathbf{K} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d_o}$, $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d_o}$ denotes query, key, and value, respectively.

The attention operation involves two dot-products. The first dot product between $\mathbf{Q}$ and $\mathbf{K}$ while the second dot product is between the output of first dot product and $\mathbf{V}$. Both dot products require $d_o n^2$ MACs. Therefore, total number of MACs in computing scaled dot-product self-attention are $2d_o n^2$.

In case of a source-target attention (as in machine translation), $\mathbf{K}$'s and $\mathbf{V}$'s are from the source (encoder) and $\mathbf{Q}$'s are incrementally decoded (one token at a time). Therefore, the number of MACs required to decode m target tokens given n source tokens are $\sum_{k=1}^{m} 2knd_o$.

D Ablations on the WikiText-103 dataset

Table 5 studies the impact of `DeLighT` block parameters on the WikiText-103 dataset, namely (1) minimum number of GLTs N_{min}, (2) maximum number of GLTs N_{max}, (3) width multiplier w_m, and (4) model dimension d_m (see Figure 1b). Figure 7, Figure 8, and Figure 9 shows the impact of the `DeLighT` transformation, feature shuffling, and the light-weight FFN. Table 6 shows the effect of position of `DeLighT` transformation in the `DeLighT` block while Figure 11 shows the effect of scaling `DeLighT` networks. We choose the WikiText-103 dataset for ablations because it has very large vocabulary compared to other datasets (267K vs. 30-40K), allowing us to test the ability under large vocabulary sizes. The performance is reported in terms of perplexity (lower is better) on the validation set.

DeLighT block: Overall, Table 5 shows that scaling depth and width using `DeLighT` transformation and block-wise scaling improves performance. We make following observations:

a) Block-wise scaling (R4, R5) delivers better performance compared to uniform scaling (R1-R3). For instance, `DeLighT` with $N_{min} = 4$ and $N_{max} = 8$ (R4) is $1.25\times$ shallower than `DeLighT` with $N_{min} = 8$ and $N_{max} = 8$ (R2), but delivers better performance with a similar number of parameters and operations. Scaling w_m improves performance (R2 vs. R3), however, the improvement is significantly lower than for the model with block-wise scaling (R3 vs. R5). This suggests that non-uniform distribution of parameters across blocks allows the network to learn better representations.

b) Different ratios between N_{max} and N_{min} yields different results. We observe significant performance improvements when the ratio is greater than or equal to two. For example, when we scale $\frac{N_{max}}{N_{min}}$ from 2 to 3 (R6 vs. R8), the perplexity improves by $\sim$5 points with only a moderate increase in network parameters. On the other hand, when the $\frac{N_{max}}{N_{min}}$ is close to 1 (R6 vs. R7), performance does not change appreciably. This is likely because the allocation of parameters across blocks is close to uniform (Eq. 4). This is consistent with our previous observation.

c) Learning shallower and narrower representations near the input and deeper and wider representations near the output achieves better performance. For example, when we scaled N_{max} from 8 to 12 for $N_{min} = 4$ (R6, R8), `DeLighT` delivered better performance with a similar number of parameters compared to a model with $N_{min} = 6$ (R7, R9). This is likely because the ratio of N_{max} and N_{min} is higher when $N_{min} = 4$, which helps allocate parameters per block more effectively.

d) Deeper and wider representations near the input and shallower and narrower representations near the output hurts performance (R13 vs. R16).

e) Scaling width using w_m and d_m improves performance (R10-R15), however, their impact is different. For example, when we scale w_m and d_m by two, the rate of increase in number of parameters and operations is more rapid with d_m compared to w_m. `DeLighT`'s ability to learn wider representations in different ways may be useful in selecting application specific models.

Impact of `DeLighT` transformation: We replace `DeLighT` transformation in the `DeLighT` block (Figure 1b) with (1) the DeFINE transformation and (2) a stack of linear layers. Figure 7 shows that `DeLighT` transformation delivers similar performance with significantly fewer parameters compared to the DeFINE unit and linear layers. In these experiments, the settings are the same as R13-R15 (Table 5), except, $N_{max} = 8$, because models with a stack of linear layers learn too many parameters.

Row #	N_{min}	N_{max}	w_m	d_m	Depth	Parameters	MACs	Perplexity
Uniform vs. block-wise scaling								
R1	4	4	2	256	43	14.1 M	2.96 B	56.19
R2	8	8	2	256	115	16.6 M	3.49 B	48.58
R3	8	8	4	256	115	22.1 M	4.64 B	45.10
R4	4	8	2	256	92	16.7 M	3.51 B	46.30
R5	4	12	2	256	158	21.0 M	4.41 B	41.18
Varying depth (N_{min} and N_{max} (Eq. 4)								
R6	4	8	2	256	92	16.7 M	3.51 B	46.30
R7	6	8	2	256	102	16.5 M	3.46 B	46.68
R8	4	12	2	256	158	21.0 M	4.41 B	41.18
R9	6	12	2	256	172	20.0 M	4.20 B	42.26
Varying `DeLighT` transformation's width w_m (Eq. 4)								
R10	4	12	2	256	158	21.0 M	4.41 B	41.18
R11	4	12	3	256	158	23.8 M	4.99 B	39.92
R12	4	12	4	256	158	27.1 M	5.69 B	39.10
Varying model width d_m								
R13	4	12	2	256	158	21.0 M	4.41 B	41.18
R14	4	12	2	384	158	29.9 M	6.28 B	35.14
R15	4	12	2	512	158	43.8 M	9.20 B	30.81
Deeper and wider near the Input								
R16	12	4	2	256	158	21.0 M	4.41 B	43.10

Table 5: **Ablations on different aspects of the `DeLighT` block**, including uniform vs. block-wise scaling, depth scaling, and width scaling. Rows partially highlighted in color have the same configuration (repeated for illustrating results). Our experimental setup is similar to Section 4, except that we train our models for 50K iterations. Multiplication and addition operations (MACs) are computed for 20 time steps.

Feature shuffling: Figure 8 shows that feature shuffling improves the performance of `DeLighT` by 1-2 perplexity points. Here, we use the same settings as in R13-R15 (Table 5).

Light-weight FFN: Figure 9 shows the impact of varying the reduction factor r in the light-weight FFN. We use the same settings as in R13 (Table 5). We did not observe any significant drop in performance until $r = 4$. Beyond $r = 4$, we see a drop in performance (perplexity increases by $\sim$2 points). In such cases, the inner dimensions of the light-weight FFN are very small and hurt performance. Notably, the light-weight FFN with $r = 2^2$ delivered the same performance as $r = 2^{-2}$, but with $1.28\times$ fewer network parameters. At $r = 2^{-2}$, the light-weight FFN is the same as the FFN in Vaswani et al. (2017). This suggests that the ability of `DeLighT` transformation to learn representations in high-dimensional spaces efficiently allows us to reduce the computational burden on the FFN.

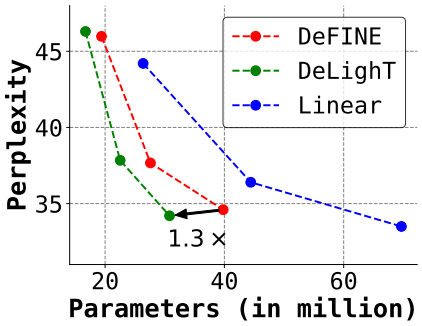


Figure 7: **Impact of different transformations.** `DeLighT` transformations are more parametric efficient than DeFINE and linear transformations. Lower perplexity value means better performance.

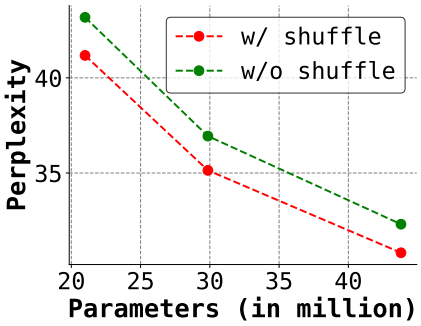


Figure 8: **Impact of feature shuffling.** Feature shuffling allows us to learn representations from global information and improves performance. Lower perplexity value means better performance.

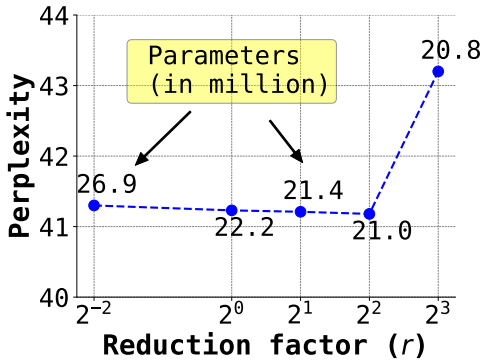
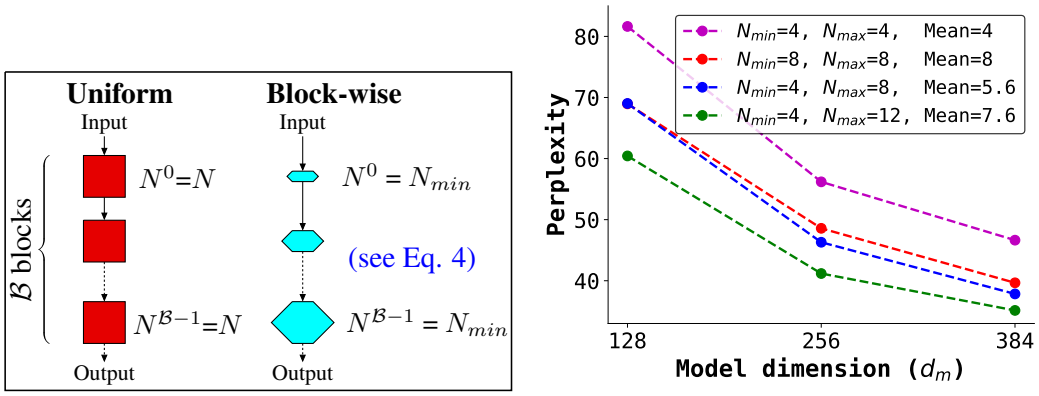


Figure 9: **Impact of reduction factor r in light-weight FFN.** The ability of DeLighT transformation to learn representations in high-dimensional spaces efficiently allows us to reduce the computational burden on the FFN. Lower perplexity value means better performance.



(a) (b)

Figure 10: **Uniform vs. block-wise scaling.** (a) contrasts the uniform and block-wise scaling methods. (b) compares the results of DeLighT with uniform and block-wise scaling methods on the WikiText-103 dataset. DeLighT networks with block-wise scaling delivers better performance across different settings. Lower perplexity value means better performance.

We also tested removing the light-weight FFN and while it reduced parameters by ∼0.5-1 M, performance dropped by about 2-3 perplexity points across different parametric settings.

Uniform vs. block-wise scaling: Figure 10 compares the performance of DeLighT with uniform and block-wise scaling. For a given model dimension d_m, DeLighT models with block-wise scaling delivers better performance.

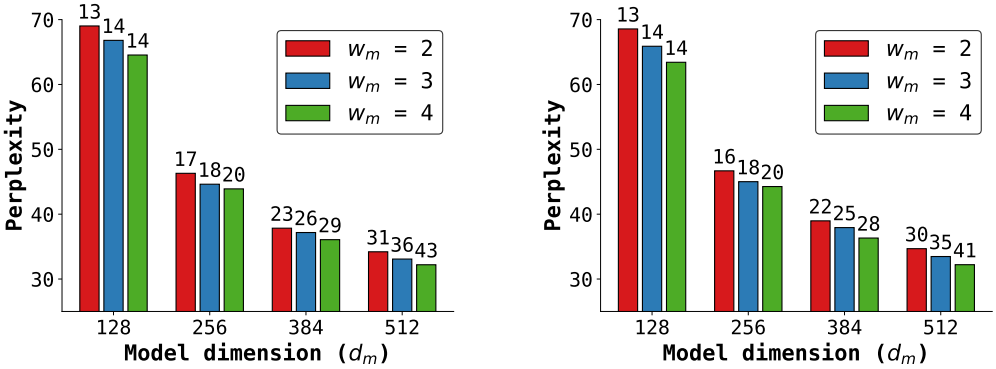
Position of DeLighT transformation: We studied three configurations for the DeLighT transformation on the WikiText-103 validation set (Table 6): (1) DeLighT transformation followed by single-headed attention and light-weight FFN, (2) single-headed attention followed by DeLighT transformation, and (3) single-headed attention followed by DeLighT transformation and light-weight FFN. For similar number of parameters, we found that (2) and (3) drops the performance of (1) significantly across different parametric settings. This suggests that deeper and wider representations helps learn better contextual representations; allowing us to replace multi-headed attention with single-headed attention.

Scaling up DeLighT: Figure 11 shows the results of DeLighT models obtained after varying configuration parameters of DeLighT transformations (N_{min}={4, 6}, N_{max}={8, 12}, w_m={2, 3, 4}, and d_m={256, 384, 512}). We can see that scaling one configuration parameter (e.g., d_m) while keeping other configuration parameters constant (e.g., N_{min}, N_{max}, and w_m) consistently improves performance.

This work investigates relationships between N_{min}, N_{max}, w_m, and d_m, manually. We believe that a more principled approach, such as compound scaling of Tan and Le (2019), that establishes relationships between these parameters would produce more efficient and accurate models.

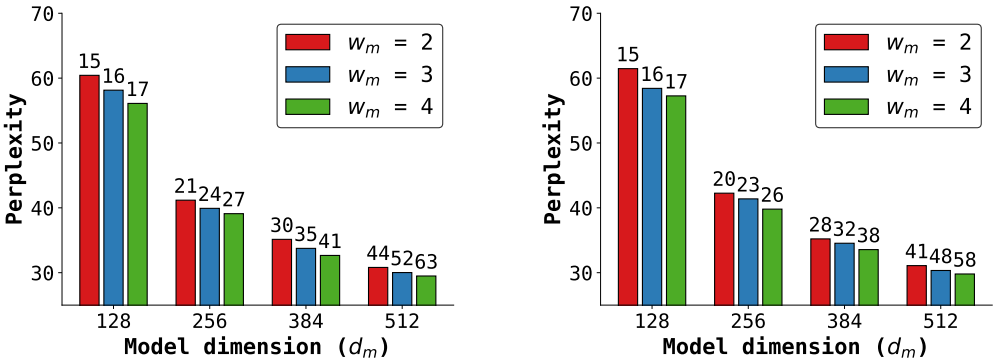
Configuration	Parameters	Perplexity
DeLighT transformation + Single-head attention + Light-weight FFN	31 M	**34.20**
Single-head attention + DeLighT transformation	30 M	39.02
Single-head attention + DeLighT transformation + Light-weight FFN	31 M	39.43
DeLighT transformation + Single-head attention + Light-weight FFN	99 M	**23.16**
Single-head attention + DeLighT transformation	96 M	28.33
Single-head attention + DeLighT transformation + Light-weight FFN	99 M	27.94

Table 6: **Effect of the position of DeLighT transformation**. Lower value of perplexity means better performance.



(a) N_{min}=4, N_{max}=8

(b) N_{min}=6, N_{max}=8



(c) N_{min}=4, N_{max}=12

(d) N_{min}=6, N_{max}=12

Figure 11: **Scaling up DeLighT**. Scaling one configuration parameter (e.g., d_m) while keeping other configuration parameters constant (e.g., N_{min}, N_{max}, and w_m) consistently improves performance. The numbers on top of each bar represents network parameters (in million). Lower value of perplexity means better performance.