

A Learning Approach for User Localization and Movement Prediction with Limited Information

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Abstract: In the 5G network system, users continuously travel among areas managed by different User Plane Functions (UPFs), leading to the need for efficient handover between UPFs. Conventional handover relies on signal measurements between user devices and neighboring base stations, so it is a "re-active" scheme. Therefore, this procedure results in long response time of the Packet Data Unit (PDU) session establishment, and affecting data service quality. Another approach is an "pro-active" scheme, in which the position of users are estimated, hence the decision of UPF handover can be made earlier. We propose a solution using machine learning techniques to model user movement behavior in the network and predict user positions in advance. The predicted UPF managing the next location will be announced accordingly to take preparatory steps for serving the incoming users, thereby reducing the new PDU session establishment latency, increasing processing speed, and improving the quality of experience. We propose the model combining the *K*-means clustering algorithm and the Gated Recurrent Unit deep learning network for time series data. The solution was tested with Viettel's 5G network data and demonstrated its feasibility in real-world dataset.


1 INTRODUCTION


Viettel Group is currently the largest telecommunications group in Vietnam with tens of million customers. With the development trend of network generations, Viettel's 5G network is being developed and perfected. In order to meet the low latency and high speed requirements according to 3GPP standards, we constantly pose problems. The 5G core network system is being built with a complex model including many services performing different functions, in which the User Plane Function (UPF) is responsible for packet routing and forwarding, packet inspection, QoS handling, and external PDU session for interconnecting data network (DN), in the 5G architecture.

Currently, UPF performs connection establishment operations with the User Equipment (UE) in a reactive manner. When the UE enters a cell managed with a certain UPF instance, this UPF instance will initiate several connection procedures, for example, establishing tunnels for data communication or transferring connections, to allow the UE seamlessly using the service when standing at a new location. This

causes process latency to increase, reducing the quality of service experience. As the coverage area of a base station (gNB) becomes smaller to accommodate different services, especially internet of things (IoT), ultra reliable and low latency communications (uRLLC) and streaming services, this requirement becomes more important. Therefore, we propose a problem to predict which UEs will be in the area under which UPFS' management. By statistically learning the user's movement behaviors, we can predict the following cell location that the UE would move in.

Our approach is to classify and learn subscribers' movement behavior or patterns and then learning the movement patterns within each cluster. The chosen clustering algorithm is *K*-means, where the "behavior" of users is measured by their deviation over the same time period, and then users are distributed into different clusters. Gated recurrent unit (GRU) is employed to learn user behavior within each cluster. Unlike traditional Recurrent Neural Network (RNN), which suffer from issues like vanishing gradients during long sequence learning, GRUs introduce gating mechanisms that regulate the flow of information and mitigate these problems. This makes GRUs highly effective in capturing temporal dependencies over longer periods.

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Our contributions can be summarized as follows:

- A preprocessing solution for log files by converting them into a dataset,
- A model that combines machine learning and deep learning to solve the position prediction problem.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Sec. 2 summarizes some related work. Sec. 3 introduces our proposed approach to the problem of user localization and movement prediction, while Sec. 4 presents the performance evaluation of our proposed solution. Finally, some conclusions and perspectives are drawn in Sec. 5.

2 RELATED WORK

The UPFs play a crucial role as a central user plane element, responsible for various essential functions in managing user data traffic, consist of packet routing, quality-of-service enforcement, and traffic monitoring. The PDU session establishment initiated by UEs' requests will include the participation of AMF (Access and Mobility NF), SMF (Session Management NF). In such procedure, the SMF selects the most appropriate User Plane Function (UPFs) for the session considering the layout of the network, the available resources of UPFs, and quality policies for UE. SMF might even ask the Policy Control Function (PCF) for additional session-related guidelines. Afterwards, the SMF sends detailed instructions and policies to the UPFs including quality parameters, session identifiers, and confirmation of the chosen UPFs. The UPFs then configure the data path based on these instructions.

To ensure the continuity of various PDU sessions while an UE is moving, the procedure of UEs' handover will include AMF, SMF and UPF as well. Session and Service Continuity (SSC) enables to address the different continuity requirements of different applications and services for UEs. Some applications like the IP Multimedia Subsystem (IMS) require an always-on Protocol Data Unit (PDU) session that the User Plane resource establishes for every transition from the 5GMM-IDLE mode to the 5GMM-CONNECTED mode. The UE requests the establishment of a PDU session as an always-on PDU session based on the request indication of the upper layers. It is the network that decides whether to establish a PDU session as an always-on PDU session. Therefore, an "proactive" scheme based on the UE position prediction allowing the planning of always-on PDU session and other resources (scaling up or down UPFs) could

be an efficient way to save the network resource while the service quality commitment.

Research on user localization and movement prediction has evolved significantly, with various approaches ranging from traditional probability-based models to advanced machine learning techniques. These approaches can be classified into three main categories: traditional probabilistic models, machine learning-based approaches, and hybrid methods.

In study (Ariffin et al., 2013), the Markov model parameter that influences the prediction is the transition probability matrix. Inaccuracy in the value of the transition probability matrix will lead to incorrect predictions and may cause failure. Furthermore, in this paper, the value of the transition probability matrix is assumed and has not yet been determined by human behavior. Author in (Yan et al., 2021) presents a weighted Markov prediction model that incorporates mobile user classification. It first extracts trajectory data from real mobile communication records, with entropy used to measure the complexity of users' movements. Users are then classified based on their behavior patterns using machine learning. The Markov model's step thresholds and weighting factors are adjusted for each user group to improve mobility prediction. However, while the performance improves, the benefits are less pronounced for users with high or irregular mobility. Zhang et al. (Zhang et al., 2009) proposed a Bayesian Network-based location prediction model using multiple factors like topology, road typology, and movement data to improve prediction accuracy. Predictive factors are encoded in the network nodes, and location prediction is calculated using cell topology information. A factor distribution mechanism addresses cases where nodes lack direct prediction data.

Although the results are promising, the study remains at the simulation. Similar to (Zhang et al., 2009), Liu et al. (Liu et al., 2010) proposed a novel approach based on Bayesian network to predict a moving object's future location under uncertainty. This paper proposed several algorithms to construct a Bayesian network from trajectory information and suggested a method to predict a moving object's future location under uncertainty using this network. The Bayesian network allows inference and calculates the probabilities of all possible states of an unobserved node based on current data. However, its drawback lies in modeling nonlinear relationships, as accurately capturing such dynamics or changes in trajectories may require additional assumptions, increasing the model's complexity.

In recent years, machine learning-based methods have grown increasingly powerful. Recurrent Neu-

ral Networks (RNNs), especially Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) and Gated Recurrent Units (GRUs), have been effective in predicting user mobility due to their ability to capture temporal dependencies. However, RNNs face the vanishing gradient problem when input data sequences become long (Hochreiter et al., 2001). Meanwhile, LSTM (Schmidhuber et al., 1997) and GRU (Cho et al., 2020) mitigate this limitation by introducing a cell state, with GRU offering greater computational efficiency compared to LSTM. Another study uses RNNs to build users' personalized preferences and model their historical behavior. It then incorporates an attention mechanism to dynamically weight historical user behaviors based on the user's current message transmission (Gou and Wu, 2022). Z. Xiong et al. (Xiong et al., 2019) proposed a Deep Reinforcement Learning (DRL) method to optimize paging strategies in real time by continuously adapting to changing user movement patterns. This dynamic approach improved performance in dense 5G environments with frequent mobility.

While standalone machine learning models such as RNNs, LSTM, and GRU have shown potential in user mobility prediction, they often encounter difficulties in managing large-scale data and maintaining real-time efficiency, particularly in dense 5G environments. To address these challenges, hybrid approaches that combine clustering techniques with machine learning models have emerged as a promising solution. These methods first cluster users based on similar mobility patterns, enabling the prediction models to focus on specific user groups. This approach can significantly reduce paging overhead by narrowing the search space for user localization, thus improving prediction accuracy and minimizing computational complexity. The authors in (Kim et al., 2022) proposed clustering to group UE based on mobility patterns, time, and day of the week, then apply the GRU model to predict UE locations. The results demonstrated that the GRU model achieved a paging accuracy of over 80%. However, this method heavily depends on the clustering process and appropriate parameter configuration. Choosing the suitable clustering method depends on the nature of user mobility data, with K -means being appropriate for uniformly distributed data.

To overcome these challenges, our work focus is on improving the clustering process and developing more efficient data handling techniques. By doing so, the system can better reflect the constantly changing user behaviors in dense 5G environments, thus improving prediction accuracy.

3 PROPOSED APPROACH

Due to occupation, gender, etc., each user's habits and movements are different. Training the model on a dataset of all users will result in the model not being able to converge. It is necessary to specialize the model for each user so that the model is suitable for each subscriber's movement behavior.

We propose a solution consisting of three processes: (i) preprocessing, (ii) UE clustering, and (iii) movement behavior learning. This clustering is based on subscriber movement, not on individual information for clustering, because this is all confidential information. Our proposed behavioral learning and decision-making model uses deep learning techniques to train on time series data. The overall architecture of our solution is illustrated in Fig. 1, where t is sequence length, $\{X_1, X_2, \dots, X_t\}$ is input of GRU network, n is number of gNB stations, $[P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n]$ is a probability vector representing the UE's ability to be at the stations in the $(t + 1)$ timestamp.

3.1 Pre-Processing of Log Files

In this section, we will present the process of handling the initial raw data (log files) for use in subsequent phases. Log files are recorded on a per-minute basis, facilitating ease of reading and normalization. However, they may miss certain values and include stations in areas with low user density. Therefore, an effective processing procedure is required to avoid noise and data imbalance. The log files contain 52 data columns, of which we utilized the following:

- **EVENT_TIME**: The time when the event occurred,
- **EVENT_ID**: The identity of the event,
- **EVENT_RESULT**: The outcome of the event procedure,
- **IMSI**: International Mobile Subscriber Identity. This information element contains data commonly used to identify the UE in the Core Network,
- **ECI**: E-UTRAN Cell Identity. This is used to identify cells within a Public Land Mobile Network (PLMN).

We employ the following processes:

Data Cleaning. **EVENT_RESULT** (The outcome of the event procedure) is used to filter out failed events. For example, when a "l.handover" event fails, the ECI is not updated to reflect the new cell, resulting in redundant information. In this context, we specifically focus on the **EVENT_ID** values of "l.tau",

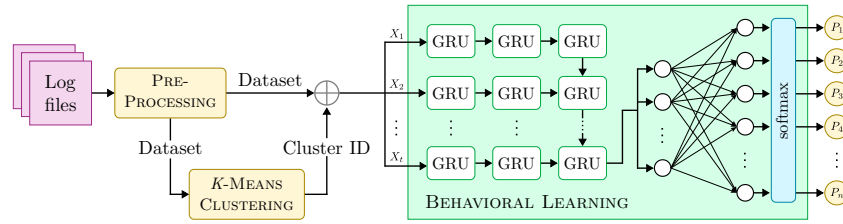


Figure 1: Overall architecture.

"l_service_request", and "l_handover", as these events are directly related to the UE updating its location during mobility. The cell information is converted to gNB station information using the following formula,

$$\text{gNB_ID} = \left\lfloor \frac{\text{ECI}}{256} \right\rfloor. \quad (1)$$

Data Filtering. Events related to UEs exhibiting abnormal behavior will also be filtered out to minimize noise. We establish the following exclusion criteria: UEs that exhibit a ping-pong phenomenon, characterized by continuously switching their location between multiple base stations; UEs that transition between more than three base stations within one minute (in which case, the three base stations may indicate that the UE is traversing a region where the coverage overlaps of three different stations); or UEs that move to fewer than three base stations within a 60-minute period (which provides insufficient information for the machine learning process). Additionally, gNB stations with a low number of users, particularly in mountainous regions, will also be excluded. Furthermore, UE that has a history of movement through these stations will be discarded as well.

Data Imputation. The generated dataset will have a time interval of 1 minute, and with log files covering a duration of 120 minutes, the dataset will contain 120 timestamps. Therefore, the following data filling rules are necessary: if, within a 1-minute period, a UE has movement data across a base station, priority will be given to retaining the information from the most recent base station. In cases where no events occur during a minute (resulting in the absence of base station information), this will be filled with data from the subsequent base station. For the final minutes of the dataset, which lack information, the value will be populated with the last updated base station value of the UE.

After processing, we obtained movement data for 6,472 UEs over a period of 120 minutes, traversing 57 gNB stations. An example of the dataset is illustrated in Table 1, wherein [45204.....20,45204.....34,...] represents the list of IMSIs, and [900083,900389,900326,909520,...] represents

the list of gNB stations.

3.2 Cluster Selection

In our problem, we focus on clustering user behavior to categorize movement trajectories into distinct clusters. Each cluster shares similar characteristics, enabling the deep learning model to converge more rapidly and mitigating the issue of underfitting. A key challenge, however, is the lack of additional user information beyond the IMSI identifier, which prevents us from applying rule-based grouping or actively labeling users. Consequently, we opted for a clustering algorithm to automatically group users based on emerging data patterns (Faizan et al., 2020; Yin et al., 2024).

We choose *K*-means model (MacQueen, 1967) for clustering process. *K*-means offers the advantages of simplicity, high speed, it is capable of supporting complex problem solving and multidimensional data (Rahamathunnisa et al., 2020; Kakbra, 2014; Subbiah and Christopher, 2012), which is why we expect it to perform well on our dataset. The primary goal of *K*-means is to partition a set of data points into *K* clusters, each defined by its centroid. The algorithm operates by optimizing the positions of the centroids and assigning data points to the nearest cluster. Euclidean Distance used to calculate the distance between a data point and a centroid:

$$d(x_i, c_j) = \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^n (x_{ik} - c_{jk})^2}, \quad (2)$$

where $d(x_i, c_j)$ is the distance between data point x_i and centroid c_j ; x_{ik} , c_{jk} is the value of the k -th feature of x_i and c_j .

After assigning data points to clusters, the centroid of each cluster is updated by calculating the average of all data points in that cluster:

$$c_j = \frac{1}{|C_j|} \sum_{x_i \in C_j} x_i, \quad (3)$$

where C_j is the set of data points belonging to cluster j and $|C_j|$ is number of points in cluster j . The objective function to be optimized is the total squared distance between the data points and their corresponding

Table 1: Dataset from log files.

Time \ IMSI	45204.....20	45204.....34	...
20240626.1400	900083	900389	...
20240626.1401	900326	909520	...
20240626.1402	900326	900387	...
...

centroids:

$$J = \sum_{j=1}^K \sum_{x_i \in C_j} d(x_i, c_j)^2. \quad (4)$$

With the data on the sequence of base stations along the UE's trajectory, we encode and concat them into input vectors for K -means. Example for the i -th UE over a period of T minutes is $x_i = x_{i1} \oplus x_{i2} \oplus \dots \oplus x_{iT}$. We propose two solutions for this encoding:

- One-hot encoding of gNB station codes, followed by concatenating them into a single vector for each UE. Example for the i -th UE in t -th minutes:

$$x_{it} = [0, 0, \dots, 1, \dots, 0], t \in [1, T]. \quad (5)$$

- Utilizing the geographical coordinates of the gNB stations and the geographic displacement between consecutive timestamps, then concatenating them into a single vector for each UE.

$$x_{i1} = [\text{LAT}_{i1}, \text{LON}_{i1}], \quad (6)$$

$$x_{it} = [\text{LAT}_{it}, \text{LON}_{it}, d(x_{it}, x_{i(t-1)})], \forall t \in [2, T], \quad (7)$$

where $d(x_{it}, x_{i(t-1)})$ is the distance from $x_{i(t-1)}$ to x_{it} and can be calculated using the Haversine formula (Robusto, 1957) or the Euclidean distance (since the distance between two stations is small compared to the Earth's radius).

The set of vectors as inputs to classify into 20 clusters (i.e., 20 UEs movement patterns). If a UE does not have sufficient data for clustering (e.g., a newly registered subscriber), it will be assigned to the cluster with the largest number of UEs.

3.3 Behavioral Learning

The mobility data of subscribers exhibits a strong temporal correlation and presents complexities in behavior modeling. Therefore, we opted for deep learning networks to address this challenge. GRU networks (Gated Recurrent Units) are a suitable choice for capturing the intricate mobility patterns of users as they move across different gNB stations.

A Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) network (Cho et al., 2014) is a specialized type of recurrent neural network (RNN) designed to efficiently model sequential data, making it particularly suitable for time

series forecasting and prediction tasks. GRUs are highly effective in capturing temporal dependencies over longer periods.

The GRU has two primary gates: the update gate and the reset gate. These gates control how much of the past information should be carried forward and how much new information should be incorporated at each time step.

1. **Update Gate.** The update gate z_t decides the extent to which the hidden state from the previous time step h_{t-1} will be carried forward. It is computed as:

$$z_t = \sigma(W_z \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t]), \quad (8)$$

where W_z is the weight matrix, x_t is the input at time t , and σ is the sigmoid activation function.

2. **Reset Gate.** The reset gate r_t determines how much of the previous hidden state should be forgotten, allowing the model to discard irrelevant information. It is given by:

$$r_t = \sigma(W_r \cdot [h_{t-1}, x_t]), \quad (9)$$

where W_r is the weight matrix.

3. **Candidate Hidden State.** Using the reset gate, the GRU computes the candidate hidden state \tilde{h}_t , which incorporates the new input and some portion of the previous hidden state. It is calculated as:

$$\tilde{h}_t = \tanh(W \cdot [r_t \odot h_{t-1}, x_t]), \quad (10)$$

where \odot represents element-wise multiplication, and $\tanh()$ is the hyperbolic tangent activation function.

4. **Final Hidden State.** Finally, the new hidden state is a combination of the previous hidden state and the candidate hidden state, weighted by the update gate:

$$h_t = (1 - z_t) \odot h_{t-1} + z_t \odot \tilde{h}_t \quad (11)$$

The GRU's ability to adaptively control the information flow makes it particularly suited for time series data, where the model must effectively balance between retaining past observations and learning new patterns. By reducing the number of gates compared to the Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) network, GRUs are computationally more efficient while maintaining robust performance on a wide range of time-dependent tasks.

In applying this approach to our problem, each subscriber (represented by an IMSI) is associated

with a trajectory sequence over a specific time period (i.e., the sequence of gNB stations that the subscriber moves through). We encoded this gNB sequence into one-hot vectors, combined with the encoding of cluster Id, to form a complete vector set as input to the behavior learning model:

$$X(Model_{input}) = X_1, X_2, \dots, X_t, \quad (12)$$

where $X_i = [encode\ of\ gNB \oplus encode\ of\ cluster\ ID]$, $i \in [1, t]$; t is sequence length. The output of the model is fitted with the one-hot encoding of the gNB station for the $t + 1$ timestamp ($Y = encode\ of\ gNB = [0, 0, \dots, 1, \dots, 0]$).

Outputs of the model are a probability vectors, indicating the likelihood of the subscriber being at a specific gNB station at the predicted time. Ideally, the probability of a subscriber moving to the correct station is 1, while the probabilities for all other stations are 0.

4 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The test data was collected on June 26, 2024, from 14:00 to 15:59 GMT+7. After filtering, we obtained data from 6,472 subscribers moving through 57 gNB stations.

Following the Clustering and Behavioral learning process, we set the parameter values as follows:

- Number of clusters: $k = 20$
- Number of GRU network layers: 3
- Learning rate: 0.001
- Number of training epoch: 13
- Training/testing ratio: 70/30
- Sequence length: 16

Our model is designed to suggest the most likely options for the next station's location, so it is difficult to use the top-1 or top- k parameter for evaluation. Instead, we use the average predicted probability across all samples as accuracy of model. The prediction accuracy for timestamp t of i -th UE is:

$$\mathbb{P}_{it} = \sum_{j=0}^{|\bar{Y}_{it}|-1} \bar{Y}_{it}[j], \quad \bar{Y}_{it} = Y_{it} \odot \bar{Y}_{it}$$

in this context, Y is one-hot encode of gNB and \bar{Y} is a probability vector representing the prediction. Then, the model's accuracy (score testing) for all predictions defined as follows:

$$\mathbb{P}([UEs]) = \sum_i \sum_{j=t+1}^T \frac{\mathbb{P}_{ij}}{30\% \times N \times (T-t)}, \quad (13)$$

where i represents 30% of UEs for testing phase, N is number of UEs, j is testing timestamp, t is sequence length and T is length of data collected (in minutes).

The loss values on the training set (green), testing set (blue), and testing score (red) ($\mathbb{P}([UEs])$) during training phase visualized as Figure 2 (K -means GRU), the loss values decrease over time, and the *score_test* parameter saturates at the 10-th epoch (87.11%).

We compare the performance of the GRU network with LSTM. In Table 2, the Accuracy value is calculated as formula (13), Execute time is the inference time of the model for each UE at each time point in the testing phase, calculated by dividing the total execution time by the sample that performed the inference. The K -means model combined with a 3-layer GRU network is more accurate and executes faster than the LSTM network (about 0.2 ms/sample). We changing the number of GRU network layers, and observing the change in accuracy: as the number of GRU network layers increased, accuracy also increased, and when this value reached 3, the accuracy stabilized, while the execution time remained acceptable.

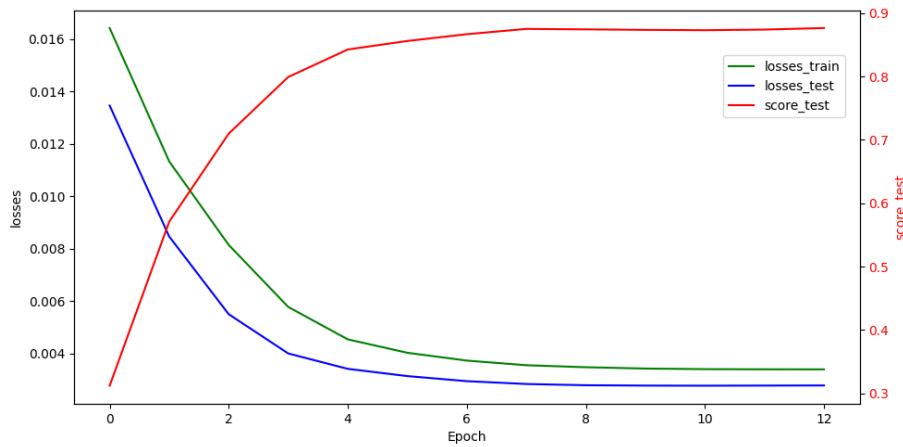


Figure 2: Performance results of K Means-GRU model.

Table 2: Accuracy of methods (* is our method), KM is *K*-means.

Method	KM-LSTM	KM-GRU			
		1 layers	2 layers	3 layers(*)	4 layers
Accuracy (%)	82.45	77.12	86.08	87.11	87.23
Execute time (ms/sample)	1.520			1.346	

5 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we present a novel approach for predicting user movement behavior to facilitate the seamless handover of User Plane Function (UPF) in network environments. Initial results validate the effectiveness of the proposed solution in addressing the key requirements of the problem. However, significant challenges persist, particularly regarding the deployment of the solution across the large-scale data generated by the network.

As the number of base stations increases, the data quality may degrade, especially in scenarios involving User Equipment (UE) with low mobility or base stations with a limited number of active subscribers. These factors contribute to increased variability and complexity in the data, potentially impacting the accuracy and efficiency of the solution. Therefore, further experimentation and refinements are essential to optimize the approach and ensure its robustness under diverse real-world conditions.

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