Illness as Metaphor
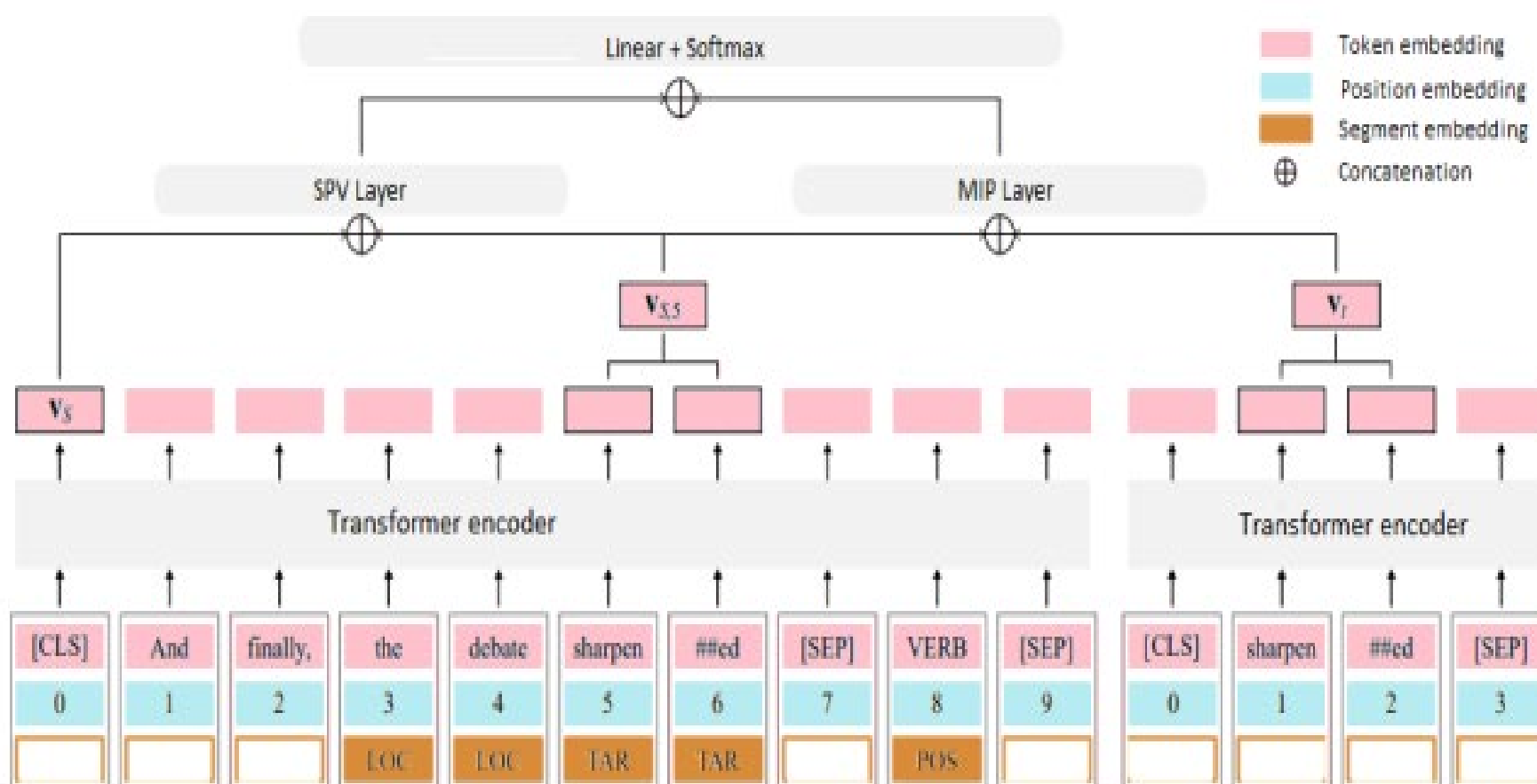
In News Articles: an Application of Metaphor Detection

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Sample	Sentence	Source Domain	Context
A	'As we pulled out of our driveway, car stuffed, I looked up to see dark clouds and bright sunshine, the dramatic, schizophrenic lighting that often illuminates Nairobi's equatorial skies'	Lighting	Description of Scenery
B	'The polls aren't really as schizophrenic as they appear'	Polls	Politics
C	'TEL AVIV — Saudi Arabian and other Gulf press lashed out at President Barack Obama prior to his visit to Riyadh, accusing a "schizophrenic" Congress of being in cahoots with Iran in its attempt to pass a bill that would hold the kingdom responsible for involvement in the terror attacks'	Congress	Politics

Project Objectives:

The aim of this project is to study metaphorical references to illness in the specific cases of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder by implementing a state-of-the-art neural metaphor detection model. While attempts have been made previously to manually categorize newspaper articles for metaphorical uses of 'schizophrenia' or 'schizophrenic', computational models have not been used for this exercise. Thus, this project illustrates one possible application of neural metaphor detection. Hence, the objective of this project is two-fold:

1. To analyse metaphorical references to the mental disorders of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder in American and Singaporean news articles, and

2. To examine the potential of a state-of-the-art metaphor detection model for such an application.

Metaphorical references to schizophrenia mostly encompass the realms of politics or culture. While these make up a small percentage of the total references (4-16%), this is a notable amount. There are few metaphorical references to bipolar disorder in the news articles surveyed. In general, Singaporean news articles did not contain as many metaphorical references to the disorders as American ones. Metaphorical usage of these terms cannot be fully eradicated from popular discourse, but awareness is the first crucial step. Reducing such references would go a long way towards reducing the stigma and prejudice faced by patients of these mental disorders.