# Layered Based Classification Framework For Network Fault Management using Machine Learning

# Mohammed Kamel Madi, Khuzairi Mohd Zaini, Amran Ahmad, Suzi Iryanti

Abstract: The ever-increasing amount of networking data as well as the complexity of telecommunication networks is also increasing, consequently the task of network management and troubleshooting is getting more complicated and difficult. Network troubleshooting is an important process, which has a wide research field. The first step in troubleshooting procedures is to collect information in order to diagnose the problems. Syslog messages, which are sent by almost all network devices, contain a massive amount of data related to the network problems. Detecting network problems could be more efficient if the detected problems have been classified in terms of network layers. In this paper, we focus on the usage of classification technique in the field of network management, more specifically in fault management. This paper proposes a layered based classification framework to classify syslog messages that indicates the network problem in terms of network layers. The method used data mining tool to classify the syslog messages, while the description part of the syslog message was used for classification process. Related syslog messages were identified; features were then selected to train the classifiers.

Index Terms: About four key words or phrases in alphabetical order, separated by commas.

# I. INTRODUCTION

Most institutions and organizations, regardless of the business types, rely on networks to manage their business. Any failure or error which occurs in the network will negatively affect their achievements, productivity and services. The increase in telecommunication networks complexity means that managing networks have become more difficult, especially in detecting and classifying network problems which is crucial in making maintenance decision [1]. Therefore, it is necessary to diagnose and detect the reasons behind network failures and problems; in order to fix them and reduce similar occurrences in the future.

### Revised Manuscript Received on May 22, 2019.

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Network troubleshooting could be an efficient process if it relies on a systematic approach, which minimizes confusion and shortened troubleshooting time. Diagnosis and recovery of any system problem begins with a review of the system's log files [14]. These files record activity occurring on the system and indicate sources of problems. Logging is a way of tracking down historical events that can help administrators identify any failure, warning, error, success, or any type of problem occurring in the system. Syslog messages contain a massive amount of data related to network problems and this data is sent by almost all network equipment such as routers, switches, and firewalls [3]. Network troubleshooting is carried out using the Layered Model [1] as problems are normally described in terms of a specific model layer [2]. Network errors could be distributed into the network layers depending on TCP\IP model (network access layer, Internet layer, transport layer, application layer). Therefore, network problems can be classified according to their causing layers, depending on the layer elements problems. Through classification, the intended layer that causes network problems or failures, can be detected and therefore, treated immediately. Detecting the problems alone is insufficient to identify the source of the problem; it has to include the task of reading the detected syslog messages one by one for further understanding and diagnosing the responsible layer that causes network problems. The whole process (detecting and classifying network problems) involves cost, time and effort [11] in order to extract the data related to network problems, and classify it in terms of network layers. In fact, it is very difficult to classify syslog messages due to the following reasons: (1) the various types of logs which list messages with low or high severity [4] and the type of syslog data as it unstructured textual data, with a variety of formats and a big volume [5], (2) the increasing number of network elements means that there is a massive volume of complex log data, and it is therefore, necessary to extract information accurately and efficiently in order to make correct maintenance decisions, and (3) the log format, which depends on each vendor or service [6].

Thus, classifying syslog messages requires deep domain knowledge of each log format, components of each layer and their potential problems.



In this study we develop a method for analyzing syslog messages generated from network elements to find the root cause of failure and diagnosing the responsible layer that causes the network problems. The method is applicable to syslog messages in unstructured and vendor-dependent formats. Classifying network problems in terms of network layers could be more efficient for maintenance decision, and network troubleshooting. Applying machine learning techniques on syslog data could help to detect syslog messages that describe network problems, and classify them based on the related network layer. Classifying syslog data in terms of TCP/IP layers is the main contribution of this study, as it had succeeded in enhancing the processes of network troubleshooting, and impacted efficient maintenance decision. The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section II presents an overview of related work. Section III introduces the proposed classification framework. Section IV presents the results of experiments and validation of the proposed framework. Finally, Section VI concludes the paper by summarizing the findings and outlining future work

#### II. RELATED WORKS

There are many works that have studied network problems detection from log data using data mining techniques. Xu et al. [6], detected system runtime problems by mining console logs. They converted free-text console logs into numerical features, which they then analyzed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Qiu et al. [7], designed an automated tool syslog digest that transform massive volume of routers syslog messages into much smaller number of meaningful network events, then they identified the signature of syslog messages that captured network behavior over time, and grouped them based on their nature and severities. Fukuda [8], used syslog messages to detect unusual events in a network, by using a global weight, based on a global appearance of a message type in the all data set. Xu et al. [9], created features that capture various correlations among different types of log messages to detect anomaly in syslog behavior, using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) learning algorithm. Kimura et al. [4], analyzed two types of data, SNS data from tweeter and syslog messages, to detect and diagnose network failure. They used non-negative matrix factorization (NMF) machine learning algorithm to analyze syslog messages, and support vector machine to analyze tweeter messages.

The limitation with all the previous works is that they only tried to detect network problems but they didn't try to classify the problems for more efficient maintenance decisions and troubleshooting. This paper presents a method to analyze syslog data to detect network problems and diagnose their causes, and classify these problems in terms of network layers.

# III. LAYERED BASED CLASSIFICATION FRAMEWORK

This section presents the procedures and approaches that could be used to identify the syslog messages related to network problems, in order to classify it in terms of network layers. This paper proposes a method, which involved three phases, to detect and classify network problems in terms of network layers. The phases are: (1) identifying network problems and their causes for each network layer, (2) identifying syslog messages related to network problems for each layer, depending on phase one, and (3) applying classification technique on syslog data set to classify network problems in terms of network layers. Fig. 1, illustrates methodology phases

### **Phase One (Network Problems Identifications)**

The first part of the methodology is to identify the causes of problems for each network layer. There are four steps involved in the process, which are:

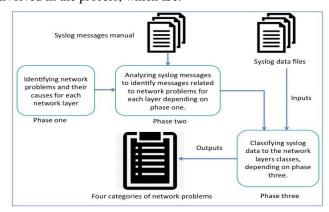


Fig. 1 Methodology phases

- 1) Identifying network layers depending on TCP/IP model. It consists of only four layers (network access layer, Internet layer, transport layer, application layer) [10].
- 2) Identifying components of each layer.
- 3) Identifying symptoms of the problems for each layer.
- 4) Identifying causes of the problems for each layer.

Table 1, presents examples of network layers and problems.

Table. 1 Summary of network problems, key words, and message example

Network layer	Problem	Key words	Message example
Layer1 Network	Loss of connectivity, cabling fault, high collision counts.	Disconnected cable, damaged cable, improper cable, cable fault.	101002: (Primary) Bad failover cable.
access layer	Network bottlenecks or congestion, hardware fault.	Fault interface, interface fail, transmission error.	105043: (Primary) Failover interface failed.

Published By: Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering & Sciences Publication

432

	High CPU utilization rates, attenuation.	Exceed design limit.	201009: TCP connection limit of number for host IP_address on interface_name exceeded.	
	Address mapping error.	Fail address mapping.	737030: Unable to send IP-address to standby: address in use.	
Layer2 Internet layer	Network failure, network performance below the baseline.	Network failure.	105032: LAN Failover interface is down.	
	Address translation problems.	Address translation, translation fail.	202001: Out of address translation slots!	
	Domain name server (DNS) problems.	DNS fail.	331001: Dynamic DNS Update for 'fqdn_name' <=> ip_address failed.	
Layer3 Transport	DHCP difficulty operating.	DHCP configured fail.	737004: DHCP configured, request failed for tunnel-group 'tunnel-group.	
layer	SNMP contact problems.	SNMP unable to open.	212001: Unable to open SNMP channel (UDP port port) on interface interface number, error code = code	
	Access control list (ACL) problems.	ACL error, ACL configuration.	109020: Downloaded ACL has configuration error; ACE	
Layer4 Application layer	Slow application performance.	Application fail, application stopped.	505012: Module in slot slot, application stopped application, version version.	
	No network service available.	FTP fail, HTTP fail.	201005: FTP data connection failed for IP_address IP_address	

# Phase Two (Syslog Messages Identification)

Phase two explains the procedures of how to identify syslog messages, which indicate to network problems for each network layer. Cisco syslog messages manual was used to identify related syslog messages. And the result could be applied to other syslog data from different vendors, as all vendors describe network problems using almost same terms and vocabularies. In this phase, the related messages have been identified depending on the symptoms and causes of network problems (phase one). The task of identifying related messages from syslog manual requires reading and searching the manual in order to extract them. This paper used the symptoms and the causes of each problem as key words to identify related messages. For example; Loss of connectivity, performance lower than baseline, high collision counts, attenuation, bad cable, disconnected cables, damaged cables, improper cable types and cable fails are the symptoms and causes of cable problems that indicate to problems in network access layer. These symptoms have been used as key words for searching in syslog manual. The following are the extracted messages that describe cable problems from Cisco manual:

- %PIX|ASA-1-101001: (Primary) Failover cable OK.
- %PIX|ASA-1-101002: (Primary) Bad failover cable.
- %PIX|ASA-1-101003: (Primary) Failover cable not connected (this unit).
- %PIX|ASA-1-101005: (Primary) Error reading failover cable status.

The extracted messages have been used in the next phase for classification purposes. Table 1, illustrates problems of each network layer, the key words used for searching in syslog manual and message examples

#### **Phase Three(Problems Classification)**

In this phase, syslog messages identified in phase two were processed to be used as training dataset, to learn classification algorithm. We used Weka [15, 16] software as a tool to perform classification and analysis of result. Weka (Waikato Environment for Knowledge Analysis) is a popular suite of machine learning software written in Java. Support Vector Machines (SVM) algorithm were used in this study for classification as it is considered as one of the most popular machine learning algorithm used for text classification [17]. Text classification process consists of five stages: (1)data collection, (2)data preprocessing, (3)data representation, (4)feature selection, and (5) implementing classification algorithm [11]. Fig. 2, illustrates stages of classification process.

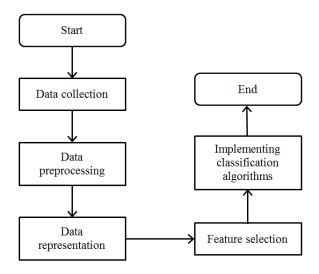


Fig. 2 Flowchart of syslog data classification

- 1) Syslog Data Collection: The used data in this paper is the syslog messages that have been extracted from syslog manual, and indicate to network problems. This data used as training data set, to learn classification algorithm.
- 2) Syslog Data Preprocessing: The first step in text classification is to transform documents, which typically are string of characters, into a representation suitable for learning algorithm and the classification task [12]. Syslog data processing comprises four steps.

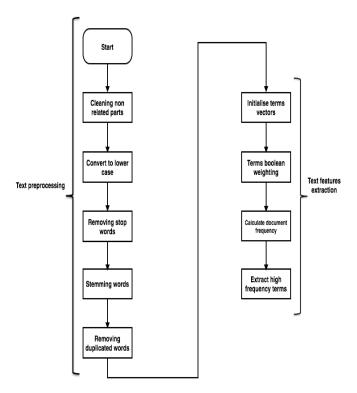


Fig. 3 The flowchart of text pre-processing and feature extraction

```
Start
     Execute text pre-processing
              Initialize document
              Clean noise parts
               Transform all case to lowercase
               Remove stop words using stop word removal
               Perform stemming words
              Remove duplicated words from each document
     End text pre-processing
     Start feature extraction
              Initialize term vector
              Perform term Boolean weighting
              For each term
                       Calculate document frequency
              Extract high frequency terms
      End feature extraction
End
```

Fig. 4 The pseudo code of text pre-processing and term extraction

- a. cleaning non-related parts: In general, syslog message consists of the many information; facility number, severity number, hostname, timestamp, and text message. Text message includes the related information to be classified. Therefore, the other information are non-related parts, and they were removed, before tha, each message is given a unique number as a reference. Then, tags, punctuate marks, etc. are removed from the text messages.
- b. Removing stop words: A list of stop-words was created and used to be removed from syslog messages, this improves information retrieval and search by ignoring words that usually appear in every document and thus, are not helpful in classification process.
- c. Stemming: It is used to group semantically related words to reduce the size of the dictionary (feature reduction) [13]. Porter Stemmer algorithm in java was used for removing suffix to generate word stem
- d. Removing Duplicated Words: As the document frequency is the responsible factor for determining the features, there is no need for the duplicated words in the documents. Removing duplicated words from text documents decrease the word space of syslog files.
- 3) Syslog Data Representation: The most commonly used document representation is vector space model[11]. Vector space modelwas used to represent syslog documents, where documents are represented by vectors of words. Usually, there is a collection of documents which is represented by a word-by-document matrix A, where each entry represents the occurrences of a word in a document, i.e.  $A = (a_{td})$ , where a is the weight of word t in document d [12]. Boolean weighting has been used to determine the weight of words.

Firstly, words dictionary, which contains all the words of relevant messages from the training sample, were extracted from documents (messages).



Vector space model (VSM) has been built to represent documents (d). A document d was represented by the weight of each dictionary term:  $V\sim(d)=(w(t1, d), w(t2, d), \ldots, w(tn, d))$ 

Fig. 5 An Example of Syslog Data BooleanRepresentation

4) Feature Selection: In this stage, features were selected to represent syslog files. Features are the terms (words) that describe the problems in syslog messages. In this study we used Document Frequency Thresholding (DF) method to extract the important features from documents, which are the high frequency terms (words). Document frequency for a word is the number of documents in which the word occurs. Once the document frequency has been computed for each word, the words that document frequency less than the predetermined threshold are removed, as they are non-informative for category [12]. Java programming code was used to identify the best features that have high frequency among all documents, and generate ARFF files to be used in Weka data mining tool.

The factor of features number was changed many times for each file in order to apply classification algorithm, and compare the results to specify the best number of selected features. A java code was used to generate ARFF files with high frequency features, represented by Boolean weighting. ARFF is an attribute-relation file format, which is an ASCII text file that describes a list of instances sharing a set of attributes. The used data of ARFF files consists of two attributes: the document (syslog message) with string type and the class (layer1, layer2, layer3, layer4). Fig. 6, illustrates the pseudo code of generating ARFF file process.

```
Initiate term dictionary
               Initialize syslog data
               Tokenize syslog instances
                      Each term consists of one word
                Remove duplicated words
                Build vector space model for term dictionary
                    Each term in one vector
      End term dictionary initiating
      Start Boolean weighting
               Initialize syslog data
               For each instance
                    For each term vector
                        If the term exist in the instance
                           Term\ weight = 1
                        Else term weight = 0
                        End if
                    End for
               End for
      End Boolean weighting
      Start feature extraction
               Initialize vector space model with Boolean weighting
               For each term
                   Calculate document frequency
               End for
               Identify the N highest frequency terms
               N is a variable represent the identified number of features
      End feature extraction
      Start ARFF generating
               Generate new ARFF file
               Copy the identified features
               Paste the features to the ARFF file
               Copy vector space model of the identified features
               Paste vector space model to the ARFF file
      End ARFF generating
End
```

Fig. 6 The pseudo code of generating ARFF fileprocess

Implementing Classification Algorithm: This stage used ARFF files to learn classification algorithm. As we mentioned earlier, Support Vector Machine (SVM) algorithm is used in classification process. ARRF files were represented with different numbers of features, to train SVM classification algorithm. The classification process consists of two stages: training stage and prediction stage as shown in Fig.7.

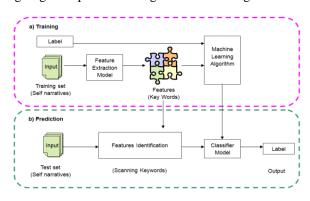


Fig. 7 Classification Phase [8]

Training Stage: For the training stage, files of training dataset with different number of features were prepared. The training dataset came from the syslog messages extracted from Cisco syslog manual in phase two and processed (cleaned, removed stop words, stemmed, removed duplicated words).



Training dataset was in ARFF extension, to be used in Weka data mining tool. classification algorithm was applied many times using same dataset, but with different number of features. Results were compared to identify the best features, and the best classification model. Firstly, the algorithm was applied to four training data files with different number of features. The first training file represents the data using all features (terms of vector space). The second training file represents the data using 1000 features that had the highest frequency. The Third training file represents the data using 500 features that had the highest frequency. The fourth training file represents the data using 200 features that had the highest frequency.

The accuracy rate was calculated, and the results were compared to identify the best number of features to be used for representing syslog data files. Accuracy rate indicates the ratio of correctly classified instances; the performance of classifier model would be better by scoring high accuracy rate. Accuracy rate was calculated using the following equation. accuracy rate = n / N(1)

Where n is the number of correctly classified instances, and N is the number of all classified instances.

Prediction Stage: Testing dataset, was processed and represented with 500 features in ARFF files; this 500 of features is the best number to be used as shown in the results of training stage.

#### IV. RESULTS

# **Results of Training Stage**

Training data set files with all features, 1000 features, 500 features and 200 features, were generated, firstly to be used for training stage to evaluate the performance of text classification algorithm. The results were obtained then compared to identify the best number of features and the best models. Training dataset which contains 263 instances (syslog message) was used in training stage. SVM algorithms was applied to the above training dataset files and performance rate—which is the accuracy rate—was expressed by the ratio of correctly classified instances for the classifier. The results of SVM algorithm performance, using above training datasets shown in Table 2. The performance values recorded from training file show that 500 features had the highest values, as the number of correctly classified instances were higher than the values of other files.

This means that this file contains the best number of features to be used for prediction stage.

Table. 2 Accuracy Rate of SVM Classifier Using Training Files Represented by Different Numbers of Features

Training File	SVM(Lib)
All Features	73.80%
1000 Features	74.10%
500 Features	74.50%
200 Features	65.4%

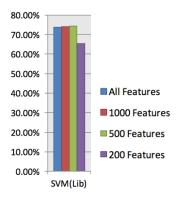


Fig. 8 Acuracy rate of SVM algorithm

Two training dataset files were generated, one with 450 features and the other with 550 features. They were used to make sure that the file of 500 features contained the best features to be used in prediction stage. SVM algorithm was applied to the new two training dataset, and the performance was recorded by calculating the accuracy rate. The results were compared with the results of previous training dataset with 500 features. The result is shown in Table 3. The accuracy rate of the algorithm show less values when using training dataset files of 550 features and 450 features. This means that training dataset file with 500 features contained the best features to be used for prediction, as shown in Figure 9. Experiments results of training stage showed that the features of number 500, had the best performance

Table. 3 Accuracy Rate of SVM Classifiers Using Training Files Represented by Different Numbers of Features

Training File	SVM(Lib)
550 Features	71.10%
500 Features	74.50%
	71.10%

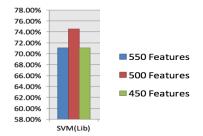
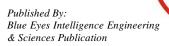


Fig. 9 The comparison between dataset files in terms of accuracy rate

# **Results of Prediction Stage**

A testing dataset was obtained from network devices; it consists of 2610 instances (syslog message) from firewalls and switches devices involving a short period of time (less than one minute).



Testing dataset was preprocessed similar to training dataset (cleaned, removed stop words, stemmed, removed duplicated words). Testing data set file was generated with 500 features in ARFF format to be classified using Weka data mining tool. Table 4 shows the number of instances, classified into each layer with the percentage of all testing dataset sample, as the algorithm classified all instances into three classes (layer1, layer2, and layer3)

**Table. 4 Prediction Stage Results** 

Algorithm	layer1	layer2	layer3	layer4
LibSVM	172	2383(91.30%)	55	0
	(6.59%)		(2.11%)	(0%)

Syslog data contains information of all network events with various types and severity levels and almost all syslog messages are either informational or problem messages. Since classification algorithms classify all instances of testing dataset into specific classes, the results need to be analyzed deeply in terms of the probability rate of each classified instance, as a wayto identify informational instances and problems ones. Probability rate indicates to the proportion of accuracy that the classified instance relays to the specific class. Table 5 shows the range of probability rate of classified instances for results.

**Table. 5 Probability Range of Classified Instances** 

Algorithm	layer1	layer2	layer3	layer4
LibSVM	(72.20 -	(67.00 –	(89.90 -	0.00%
	32.80)%	33.00)%	36.20)%	

The result is divided into two parts: one for the lower probability to be validated as informational messages, and the other for the higher probability to be validated as problems messages. Each part is compared to the training dataset to validate the result.

The Table 6 shows the numbers of instances and their percentage with probability rate >= 50% and < 50% for each class.

Table. 6 Probability rate for classified instances

probability	layer1	layer2	layer3	layer4
>= 50%	49	2218	8	0.00%
	(1.88%)	(84.98%)	(0.31%)	
<50%	123	165	47	0.00%
	(4.71%)	(6.32%)	(1.80%)	

As shown in Table 6, layer1, and layer3 got small numbers of instances with probability rate <= 50%, but layer2 had large numbers of instances with probability rate >=50%; this is because of repeated messages for the same problem with one different word.

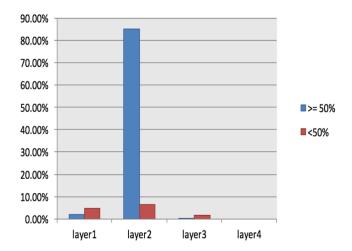


Fig. 10 Classified Instances in Terms of Probability Rates

#### **Results of Validation Phase**

In the validation phase, results of prediction stage were analyzed to make sure that each instance belongs to its class, and it refers to a problem in one layer. Validation process was performed by comparing instances of each class to the corresponding training dataset. LibSVM classifier classified all instances of testing dataset into three layers- (layer1, layer2, layer3) - and as mentioned before, the classified instances for each layer were divided into two parts in terms of prediction probability. Instances with probability >= 50% were validated by comparing them to the corresponding training dataset. Instances with probability < 50% were validated as informational messages.

#### **Layer1 Validation**

The classifier had classified 49 instances with probability >= 50%, to layer1. These instances were compared to the instances belonging to class one in training dataset. Only three instances indicated network problem and the probability of them was > 70%.

These three messages described the problem of " TCP connection to firewall server had been lost, restricted tunnels are now allowed full network access". Repeated three times. By referring to syslog manual, this problem indicated that the TCP connection to the security appliance server was lost and this requires checking the server and network connections. This problem belongs to the first layer, which is network access layer, as mentioned in chapter two.

## Layer 2 Validation

The classifier had classified 2218 instances with probability  $\geq$  50%, to layer2. These instances were compared to the instances belonging to class two in training dataset.



# Layered Based Classification Framework For Network Fault Management using Machine Learning

From all classified instances, no instances had indicated any network problem. The probability of them was < 70%

#### **Layer 3 Validation**

The classifier had classified eight instances with probability >= 50%, to layer3. These instances were compared to the instances belonging to class three in training dataset. From all classified instances, one instance had indicated network problem. The probability of it was > 70%, this message described the problem of "No translation group found for protocol src". By referring to the syslog manual, this problem was due to network address translation (NAT) not configured for the specified source and destination systems. This problem pointed to NAT issues that belong to the third layer, which is transport layer.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Network troubleshooting is one of the main aspects of network management, and the first step in the process is to detect the problems. This paper proposed a method to detect and classify network problems, in terms of network layers, by analyzing syslog data. In this paper, data mining tools, and text classification techniques were used to classify network problems. This paper used syslog data to learn SVM classification algorithm, and the results showed high accuracy rate, future works will focus on applying these results to a real syslog data using different classification algorithms.

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