MuRIL: Multilingual Representations for Indian Languages

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1 Why MuRIL?

India is a multilingual society with 1369 rationalized languages and dialects being spoken across the country (INDIA, 2011). Of these, the 22 scheduled languages have a staggering total of 1.17 billion speakers and 121 languages have more than 10,000 speakers (INDIA, 2011). India also has the second largest (and an ever growing) digital footprint (Statista, 2020). Despite this, today's state-ofthe-art multilingual systems perform sub-optimally on Indian (IN) languages (as shown in Figure 1). This can be explained by the fact that multilingual language models (LMs) are often trained on 100+ languages together, leading to a small representation of IN languages in their vocabulary and training data. Multilingual LMs are substantially less effective in resource-lean scenarios (Wu and Dredze, 2020; Lauscher et al., 2020), as limited data doesn't help capture the various nuances of a language. One also commonly observes IN language text transliterated to Latin or code-mixed with English, especially in informal settings (for example, on social media platforms) (Rijhwani et al., 2017). This phenomenon is not adequately handled by current state-of-the-art multilingual LMs. Few works like Conneau et al. (2020) use transliterated data in training, but limit to including naturally present web crawl data.

To address the aforementioned gaps, we propose MuRIL, a multilingual LM specifically built for IN languages. MuRIL is trained on significantly large amounts of IN text corpora *only*. We explicitly augment monolingual text corpora with *both*

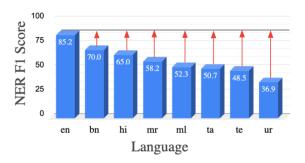


Figure 1: mBERT's (zero-shot) performance on Named Entity Recognition (NER). We observe significant differences between the performance on the English test set and other IN languages. This pattern is representative of current state-of-the-art multilingual models for Indian (IN) languages.

translated and transliterated document pairs, that serve as supervised cross-lingual signals in training. MuRIL significantly outperforms multilingual BERT (mBERT) on all tasks in the challenging cross-lingual XTREME benchmark (Hu et al., 2020). We also present results on transliterated (native \rightarrow Latin) test sets of the chosen datasets, and demonstrate the efficacy of MuRIL in handling transliterated data.

2 Model and Data

MuRIL currently supports 17 languages for which monolingual data is publicly available. These are further grouped into 16 IN languages and English (en). The IN languages include: Assamese (as), Bengali (bn), Gujarati (gu), Hindi (hi), Kannada (kn), Kashmiri (ks), Malayalam (ml), Marathi (mr), Nepali (ne), Oriya (or), Punjabi (pa), Sanskrit (sa), Sindhi (sd), Tamil (ta), Telugu (te) and Urdu (ur).

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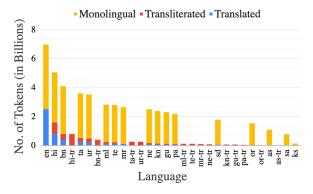


Figure 2: *Upsampled Token Distribution*. We upsample monolingual Wikipedia corpora as described in Section 2, to enhance low resource language representation in the pre-training data.

We train our model with two language modeling objectives. The first is the conventional *Masked Language Modeling* (MLM) objective (Taylor, 1953) that leverages monolingual text data only (unsupervised). The second is the *Translation Language Modeling* (TLM) objective (Lample and Conneau, 2019) that leverages parallel data (supervised). We use monolingual documents to train the model with MLM, and *both* translated and transliterated document pairs to train the model with TLM.

Monolingual Data: We collect monolingual data for the 17 languages mentioned above from the Common Crawl OSCAR corpus¹ and Wikipedia².

Translated Data: We have two sources of translated data. First, we use the PMINDIA (Haddow and Kirefu, 2020) parallel corpus containing sentence pairs for 8 IN languages (*bn, gu, hi, kn, ml, mr, ta, te*). Each pair comprises of a sentence in a native language and its English translation. Second, we translate the aforementioned monolingual corpora (both Common Crawl and Wikipedia) to English, using an in-house translation system. The source and translated documents are used as parallel instances to train the model. Note that we translate corpora of all IN languages excluding *as, ks* and *sa*, for which the current translation system lacks support.

Transliterated Data: We have two sources of

Figure 3: IN language words tokenized using mBERT (blue) and MuRIL (Red).

transliterated data as well. First, we use the Dakshina Dataset (Roark et al., 2020) that contains 10,000 sentence pairs for 12 IN languages (*bn*, *gu*, *hi*, *kn*, *ml*, *mr*, *pa*, *ta*, *te*, *ur*). Each pair is a native script sentence and its manually romanized transliteration. Second, we use the *indic-trans* library (Bhat et al., 2015) to transliterate Wikipedia corpora of all IN languages to Latin (except *ks*, *sa* and *sd*, for which the library doesn't have support). The source document and its Latin transliteration are used as parallel instances to train the model.

Upsampling: In the corpora collected above, the percentage of tokens per language is highly uneven in its distribution. Hence, data smoothing is essential so that all languages have their representation reflect their usage in the real world. To achieve this, we upsample monolingual Wikipedia corpora of each language according to its multiplier value given by:

$$m_i = \left(\frac{\max_{j \in L} n_j}{n_i}\right)^{(1-\alpha)} \tag{1}$$

In the above equation, m_i represents the multiplier value for language $i,\,n_i$ is its original token count, L represents the set of all 17 languages and α is a hyperparameter whose value is set to 0.3, following Conneau et al. (2020). Hence, the upsampled token count for language i is $m_i \ast n_i.$ The final data distribution after upsampling is shown in Figure 2. The upsampled token counts for each language and corpus are reported in Appendix A.

Vocabulary: We learn a cased WordPiece (Schuster and Nakajima, 2012; Wu et al., 2016) vocabulary from the upsampled pre-training data using the wordpiece vocabulary generation

https://oscar-corpus.com
https://www.tensorflow.org/datasets/
catalog/wikipedia

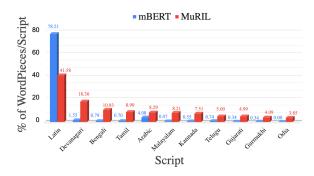


Figure 4: *Percentage of WordPieces/Script* in mBERT and MuRIL vocabularies. A WordPiece belongs to the category if all of its characters fall into the category or are digits.

library from Tensorflow Text³. Since our data is upsampled, we set the language smoothing exponent from the vocabulary generation tool to 1, and the rest of the parameters are set to their default value. The final vocabulary size is 197,285. Figure 3 shows a few common IN language words tokenized using mBERT and MuRIL vocabularies. We also plot the fertility ratio (average number of sub-words/word) of mBERT and MuRIL tokenizers on a random sample of text from our training data in Figure 5. Here, a higher fertility ratio equates to a larger number of sub-words per word, eventually leading to a loss in preservation of semantic meaning. We observe a higher fertility ratio for mBERT as compared to MuRIL because of two reasons. First, there is very little representation of IN languages in the mBERT vocabulary⁴ (refer to Figure 4 for a comparison) and second, the vocabulary does not take transliterated words into account. Since vocabulary plays a key role in the performance of transformer based LMs (Chung et al., 2020; Artetxe et al., 2020), MuRIL's vocabulary (specifically focused on IN languages) is a significant contributor to the model's improved performance over mBERT.

Pre-training Details: We pre-train a BERT base encoder model making use of the MLM and TLM objectives. We keep a maximum sequence length of 512, a global batch size of 4096, and train for 1M steps (with 50k warm-up steps and a linear decay

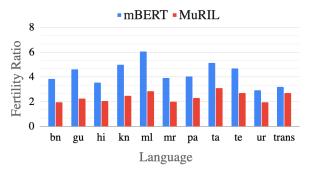


Figure 5: Fertility Ratio for IN languages using mBERT and MuRIL tokenizers. Here, trans subsumes all IN languages transliterated from their native script to Latin.

after). We make use of the AdamW optimizer with a learning rate of 5e-4. Our final model has 236M parameters, is trained on \sim 16B unique tokens, and has a vocabulary of 197,285. Please note that we preserve the case to prevent stripping off accents, often present in IN languages.

3 Evaluation

In all our experiments, the goal has been to improve the model's performance for cross-lingual understanding. For this reason, the results are computed in a zero-shot setting, i.e., by fine-tuning models on the labeled training set of one language and evaluating on test sets for all languages. Here, our labeled training sets are in English for all tasks. We choose the XTREME benchmark (Hu et al., 2020) as a test-bed. XTREME covers 40 typologically diverse languages spanning 12 language families and includes 9 tasks that require reasoning about different levels of syntax or semantics (Hu et al., 2020).

We present our results in Table 1. Since MuRIL currently supports IN languages only, we compute average performances across IN language test sets for all tasks. We also transliterate IN language test sets (native \rightarrow Latin) using the *indic-trans* library (Bhat et al., 2015), and report results on the same in Table 2. Detailed results for each language and task can be found in Appendix B. On average, MuRIL significantly beats mBERT across *all* tasks. This difference is more so for the transliterated test sets, which is expected because mBERT does not include transliterated data in training. We analyse predictions of mBERT and MuRIL on a random sample of test examples in Appendix C.

Fine-tuning Details: For each task, we report re-

³https://github.com/tensorflow/text/ blob/master/tensorflow_text/tools/ wordpiece_vocab/generate_vocab.py

⁴http://juditacs.github.io/2019/02/19/
bert-tokenization-stats.html

Model	PANX	UDPOS	XNLI	Tatoeba	XQuAD	MLQA	TyDiQA-GoldP F1/EM	Ava	
Model	F1	F1	Acc.	Acc.	F1/EM	F1/EM	F1/EM	Avg.	
mBERT	58.0	71.2	66.8	18.4	71.2/58.2	65.3/51.2	63.1/51.7	59.1	
MuRIL	77.6	75.0	74.1	25.2	79.1/65.6	73.8/58.8	75.4/59.3	68.6	

Table 1: Results for MuRIL and mBERT on XTREME (IN). We observe that MuRIL significantly outperforms mBERT on all the datasets in XTREME. Note that here we present the average performance on test sets for IN languages only that MuRIL currently supports. Please refer to Section 3 for more details.

Model	PANX	UDPOS	XNLI	Tatoeba	Avg.
Model	F 1	F1	Acc.	Acc.	Avg.
mBERT	14.2	28.2	39.2	2.7	21.1
MuRIL	57.7	62.1	64.7	11.0	48.9

Table 2: Results for MuRIL and mBERT on XTREME (IN-tr). We transliterate IN language test sets (native \rightarrow Latin) and present the average performance across all transliterated test sets. Please refer to Section 3 for more details.

Task	Dataset	Batch Size	Learning Rate	No. of Epochs	Warmup Ratio	Maximum Sequence Length
Structured Prediction	PANX	32	2e-5	10	0.1	128
	UDPOS	32	2e-5	10	0.1	128
Classification	XNLI	32	2e-5	5	0.1	128
	XQuAD	32	3e-5	2	0.1	384
Question Answering	MLQA	32	3e-5	2	0.1	384
	TyDiQA-GoldP	32	3e-5	2	0.1	384

Table 3: *Fine-tuning hyperparameter details for each dataset in XTREME*. We use the same hyperparameters for fine-tuning both mBERT and MuRIL. Please refer to Section 3 for more details.

sults of the best performing checkpoint on the evaluation set. We present the hyperparameter details for each task in Table 3. Note that we use the same hyperparameters for evaluating both mBERT and MuRIL. We fine-tune the model on the English training set for each task, and evaluate on the test sets of all IN languages. For TyDiQA-GoldP, we augment the training set with SQuAD English training set, similar to Fang et al. (2020), and then fine-tune the model. For Tatoeba, we do not fine-tune the model, and use the *pooled_output* of the last layer as the sentence embedding.

4 How to use MuRIL?

We have released the MuRIL encoder on TFHub⁵ with detailed usage instructions. We have also released a pre-processor module with the same, that processes raw text into the expected input format for the encoder. Additionally, we have released the MuRIL pre-trained model, i.e., with the MLM layer intact (to enable masked word predictions) on HuggingFace⁶. We sincerely hope MuRIL aids

in building better technologies and applications for Indian languages.

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⁵https://tfhub.dev/google/MuRIL/1

⁶https://huggingface.co/google/
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Example	Translation	mBERT	MuRIL	Label	
अटलांटा फाल्कन्स	Atlanta Falcons	B-LOC I-LOC	B-ORG I-ORG	B-ORG I-ORG	
शिरडी के सांई बाबा	Shirdi's Sai Baba	B-LOC I-LOC	B-PER I-PER I-PER I-PER	B-PER I-PER I-PER I-PER	
बाजीराव मस्तानी (फ़िल्म)	Bajirao Mastani (Film)	B-PER I-PER	B-ORG I-ORG	B-ORG I-ORG	
1988 vimbledon tennis pratiyogita	1988 wimbledon tennis championship	B-LOC I-LOC	B-ORG I-ORG I-ORG I-ORG	B-ORG I-ORG I-ORG I-ORG	

Figure 6: NER Predictions

A Pre-training Data Statistics

The upsampled token counts for each language and corpus are reported in Table 4.

B Detailed Results

We report per language results for each *XTREME* (*IN*) dataset in Tables 5 (PANX), 6 (UDPOS), 7 (XNLI), 8 (Tatoeba), 9 (XQuAD, MLQA) and 10 (TyDiQA-GoldP). The detailed results for transliterated test sets are shown in Tables 11 (PANX), 12 (UDPOS), 13 (XNLI), 14 (Tatoeba).

C Analysis

In this section, we analyse the predictions of mBERT and MuRIL on a random sample of test examples.

Named Entity Recognition (NER): NER is the task of locating and classifying entities in unstructured text into pre-defined categories such as person, location, organization etc. In Figure 6, we present entity predictions of mBERT and MuRIL on a random sample of test examples.

In the first example, we observe that *Atlanta Falcons*, a football team, is predicted as *ORG* (Organisation) by MuRIL but *LOC* (Location) by mBERT, probably looking at the word *Atlanta* without context.

In the second example, MuRIL correctly takes the context into account and predicts *Shirdi's Sai Baba* as *PER* (Person), whereas mBERT resorts to predicting *LOC* taking a cue from the word *Shirdi*. A similar pattern is observed in other examples like *Nepal's Prime Minister*, the *President of America* etc.

In the third example, the *Bajirao Mastani* movie is being spoken about, specified with the word (film) in parentheses, which MuRIL correctly captures

In the last example, we observe that MuRIL can correctly classify misspelled words (*vimbledon*)

Example	Translation	mBERT	MuRIL	Label
अच्छा हुआ अकाउंट बंद नहीं हुआ	It's good that the account hasn't closed	negative	positive	positive
raamu ne kahani kii raftaar kahin thamane nahin di.	Ramu didn't let the film's pace slow down	negative	positive	positive

Figure 7: Sentiment Predictions

ID	Context	Question	Answer	mBERT	MuRIL				
1)	रिया को अंग्रेज़ी में "Rhea" लिखा जाता है। प्राचीन यूनानी धर्म में रिया देवताओं की माता थीं।	Titan Rhea का ग्रीक भाषा में क्या मतलब है?	देवताओं की माता	रिया को अंग्रेज़ी में "Rhea"	देवताओं की माता				
2)	बैंक की परिभाषा हर देश के अनुरूप अलग–अलग है।	प्रत्येक देश में क्या अलग है?	बैंक की परिभाषा	बैंक	बैंक की परिभाषा				
	TRANSLATION								
1)	RHEIA is spelled "Rhea" in English. RHEIA was the mother of gods in ancient Greek religion.	What does Titan Rhea mean in Greek?	Mother of gods	RHEIA in English "Rhea"	Mother of gods				
2)	The definition of a bank varies from country to country.	What is different in each country?	Definit ion of a bank	Bank	Definit ion of a bank				

Figure 8: Question Answering

utilising the context.

Sentiment Analysis: Sentiment analysis is a sentence classification task wherein each sentence is labeled to be expressing a positive, negative or neutral sentiment. We present the sentiment predictions on a sample set of sentences in Figure 7.

In the first example, "It's good that the account hasn't closed", we observe that the original Hindi sentence borrows an English word (account) and also contains a negation (not) word, but MuRIL correctly predicts it as expressing a positive statement. A similar observation can be made in the second example where MuRIL correctly predicts the sentiment of the transliterated sentence, "Ramu didn't let the film's pace slow down".

Question Answering (QA): QA is the task of answering a question based on the given context or world knowledge. We show two context-question pairs, with their answers and predicted answers in Figure 8.

In the first example, despite the fact that the word *Greek* is referred to by its Hindi translation in the context and its transliteration in the question (as highlighted), MuRIL correctly infers the answer from the context.

In the second example, MuRIL understands that "bank ki paribhasha" (the definition of a bank), as a whole entity, is what differs across countries and not banks.

т	Mo	nolingual		Translated		Transli	terated
Language	Wikipedia	Common Crawl	Wikipedia	Common Crawl	PMINDIA	Wikipedia	Dakshina
as	2.5e+6	4.4e+6	-	-	-	2.5e+6	_
as-tr	-	-	-	-	-	2.5e+6	-
bn	2.7e+7	3.7e+8	2.7e+7	3.7e+8	4.4e + 5	2.7e+7	1.2e + 5
bn-tr	-	-	-	-	-	2.7e+7	1.2e+5
en	2.8e+9	1.7e+9	2.3e+8	2.3e+9	5.8e+6	-	-
gu	6.7e+6	5.1e+7	6.7e+6	5.1e+7	8.5e+5	6.7e+6	1.5e+5
gu-tr	-	-	-	-	-	6.7e+6	1.5e+5
hi	3.8e+7	7.5e+8	3.8e+7	7.5e+8	1.2e+6	3.8e+7	1.8e+5
hi-tr	-	-	-	-	-	3.8e+7	1.8e+5
kn	1.5e+7	5.0e+7	1.5e+7	5.0e+7	4.7e+5	1.5e+7	1.1e+5
kn-tr	-	-	-	-	-	1.5e+7	1.1e+5
ks	1.1e+4	-	-	-	-	-	-
ml	1.4e+7	9.8e+7	1.4e+7	9.8e+7	3.6e + 5	1.4e+7	8.6e+4
ml-tr	-	-	-	-	-	1.4e+7	8.6e+4
mr	8.3e+6	8.3e+7	8.3e+6	8.3e+7	5.2e+5	8.3e+6	9.8e + 4
mr-tr	-	-	-	-	-	8.3e+6	9.8e + 4
ne	5.0e+6	7.2e+7	5.0e+6	7.2e+7	-	5.0e+6	-
ne-tr	-	-	-	-	-	5.0e+6	-
or	3.4e+6	1.1e+7	3.4e+6	1.1e+7	-	3.4e+6	-
or-tr	-	-	-	-	-	3.4e+6	-
pa	9.1e+6	3.8e+7	9.1e+6	3.8e+7	-	9.1e+6	1.8e+5
pa-tr	-	-	-	-	-	9.1e+6	1.8e+5
sa	2.6e+6	1.7e+6	-	-	-	-	-
sd	3.4e+6	3.3e+7	3.4e+6	3.3e+7	-	-	-
ta	2.6e+7	2.3e+8	2.6e+7	2.3e+8	5.2e+5	2.6e+7	9.5e+4
ta-tr	-	-	-	-	-	2.6e+7	9.5e+4
te	3.0e+7	8.0e+7	3.0e+7	8.0e+7	5.7e+5	3.0e+7	9.4e+4
te-tr	-	-	-	-	-	3.0e+7	9.4e+4
ur	2.3e+7	2.2e+8	2.1e+7	2.2e+8	-	2.3e+7	1.7e+5
ur-tr	-	-	-	-	-	2.3e+7	1.7e+5

Table 4: Number of tokens/corpus for each language. Note, X-tr stands for the transliterated counterpart of language X.

Model									_
mBERT	68.6	84.4	65.1	54.8	58.4	51.2	50.2	31.4	58.0
MuRIL	86.0	84.4	78.1	75.8	74.6	71.9	65.0	85.1	77.6

Table 5: PANX (F1) Results for each language.

Model							
mBERT	95.4	66.1	71.3	59.6	77.0	57.9	71.2
mBERT MuRIL	95.6	64.5	83.0	62.6	85.6	58.9	75.0

Table 6: UDPOS (F1) Results for each language.

Model	en	hi	ur	avg.
mBERT				
MuRIL	83.9	70.7	67.7	74.1

Table 7: XNLI (Accuracy) Results for each language.

Model	bn	hi	ml	mr	ta	te	ur	avg.
mBERT								
MuRIL	20.2	31.5	26.4	26.6	36.8	17.5	17.1	25.2

Table 8: Tatoeba (Accuracy) Results for each language.

Model		XQuAD		MLQA		
Model	en	hi	avg	en	hi	avg.
mBERT	83.9/72.9	58.5/43.5	71.2/58.2	80.4/67.3	50.3/35.2	65.3/51.2
MuRIL	84.3/72.9	73.9/58.3	79.1/65.6	80.3/67.4	67.3/50.2	73.8/58.8

Table 9: XQuAD and MLQA (F1/EM) Results for each language.

Model	bn	en	te	avg.
mBERT	60.6/45.1	75.2/65.0	53.6/44.5	63.1/51.7
MuRIL	78.0/66.4	74.1/64.6	74.0/46.9	75.4/59.3

Table 10: TyDiQA (F1/EM) Results for each language.

Model	bn-tr	hi-tr	ml-tr	mr-tr	ta-tr	te-tr	ur-tr	avg.
mBERT	41.8	25.5	7.5	8.3	1.0	8.2	7.3	14.2
MuRIL	72.9	69.8	63.4	68.8	7.0	53.6	68.4	57.7

Table 11: PANX (F1) Results for each language.

Model	hi-tr	mr-tr	ta-tr	te-tr	ur-tr	avg.
mBERT	25.0	33.7	24.0	36.2	22.1	28.2
MuRIL	63.1	67.2	58.4	65.3	56.5	62.1

Table 12: UDPOS (F1) Results for each language.

Model	hi-tr	ur-tr	avg.
mBERT	39.6	38.9	39.2
MuRIL	68.2	61.2	64.7

Table 13: XNLI (Accuracy) Results for each language.

Model	bn-tr	hi-tr	ml-tr	mr-tr	ta-tr	te-tr	ur-tr	avg.
mBERT								
MuRIL	8.1	14.9	10.3	7.2	11.1	11.5	13.7	11.0

Table 14: Tatoeba (Accuracy) Results for each language.