

# Contextual Relevance based Significant Component Extraction from Contracts

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## Abstract

Automatic extraction of “significant” components of a legal contract, has the potential to simplify the end user’s comprehension. Significance of a component may be defined at an individual contract level and at a contract-type level. A component, sentence or paragraph, may be considered significant at a contract level if it contains contract specific information (CSI), like names, dates or currency terms. At a contract-type level, components which deviate significantly from the norm for the type may be considered significant (type specific information(TSI)). In this paper, we present approaches to extract “significant” components from a contract at both these levels. We attempt to do this by identifying patterns in a pool of documents of the same kind. Here, the idea of “significance” is to include unique or novel details concerning the contract by looking at structural and semantic similarities among a pool of contracts belonging to a specific type. To the best of our knowledge, no such work is prior attempted. In our approach, the solution is formulated in two parts: *identifying CSI* using a BERT based contract-specific information extractor and *identifying TSI* by scoring sentences in a contract for their likelihood in the contract type.

## 1 Introduction

Contracts are agreements between two or more parties, that govern what each party can or cannot do and are usually dense in information. Extracting contract elements and locating novel clauses and assignments from a legal contract is a desired feature by many as it will greatly simplify and accelerate user comprehension. Traditionally, it requires a domain expert as there are parts of a contract that can only be noticed by a reader experienced in reviewing contracts. For an untrained eye, it is often difficult and time consuming to identify rare and unique sentences. Therefore, to lessen the human

## Templatized Sentences

This Agreement shall be effective as of *November 5, 2014 (the Effective Date)*.",  
CHOICE OF LAW. This Agreement shall be construed and interpreted in accordance with the internal laws of the *State of California*.

Table 1: Sentences with a Template Structure

effort, in this paper we introduce approaches for automatic identification and extraction of significant components of the contract.

In contracts, for the sake of ensuring legal unambiguity, the language used is very crisp and most of the contracts are created in a templated format. On carefully examining the semantics and structure of diverse legal contracts (*employment, software license, purchase, severance*), we observe that

i) *in contracts of same category*, although the wording and sentence structure differ, the information conveyed remains the same,

ii) *in an individual contract*, each contract has components, sentences or paragraphs that are remarkably distinct in their nature.

Components in an individual contract can be broadly classified as:

**Templatized sentences:** sentences that follow a template, where a phrase or only a part of the sentence may vary and the rest of the content is semantically same across similar contracts. Examples include contract elements (Chalkidis et al., 2017) like title of the contract, parties involved in the contract, dates, governing law. These sentences are of significance to the end-user as they are specific to a contract. As observed in Table 1, the sentences can be generated from a template by filling in relevant information in the slots where the effective date or the state governing the law will be different for different contracts. In templated sentences the information changes rapidly in each document as the values are unique to each contract.

**Boilerplate sentences**<sup>1</sup>: sentences that are standard formulations, and are uniformly found in all contracts of a type. As we can see in Table 2,

#### Boilerplate Sentences

While employed by the Company hereunder, Executive shall be eligible to participate in the Company's employee benefit plans as in effect from time to time pursuant to the terms of those employee benefit plans.

No waiver of any breach or condition of this Award Agreement shall be deemed to be a waiver of any other or subsequent breach or condition whether of like or different nature.

Table 2: Sentences with Standardized Clauses

these clauses are standard across contracts of a specific type. Business and technical documents often use boilerplate sentences to improve efficiency and standardize language and structure. The information divergence between contracts of a type is almost constant for boilerplate sentences.

**Rare sentences**: rare sentences in a contract include content not commonly found in contracts of that type and hence are conspicuous by their presence in the current contract. In Table 3, first

#### Rare Sentences

To achieve balance, your current tax withholdings may cease and a hypothetical rate of tax may be calculated and withheld from your wages.

No additional Stock Units granted as part of the Award may be earned following the Change in Control.

Table 3: Sentences with Rare Clauses

example refers to hypothetical tax which applies to employees who work at an onsite location. Similarly in the second example, change in control may or may not warrant changes in the stocks policy of the organization. Both these clauses are situational and may not appear in all contracts of that category. Intuitively, these sentences will be of interest to anyone examining the contract because they bring in novelty. Rare sentences in a contract

<sup>1</sup>The term boilerplate refers to standardized text, copy, documents, methods, or procedures that may be used over again without making major changes to the original.

are identified on the basis of contract type to which a contract belongs.

In summary, a contract has -

i) template sentences, which contain contract specific information (CSI) and are generic across contract types.

ii) rare sentences which deviate from other contracts of the same type, they convey type specific information (TSI) and can be recognised only if one has an in depth understanding of the content usually present in the contract type.

iii) common and well understood clauses that constitute boilerplate sentences. In terms of volume, they account for majority of the sentences in a contract.

This approach of extracting significant components does not really qualify as a standard summarization task because there is no merit in summarizing boilerplate sentences which are well understood. Abstractive summarization (Zhang et al., 2020a) techniques would inadvertently change the semantics of the contract. Even when compared to an extractive setting (Nallapati et al., 2017), in this study our main focus is to accentuate rare and contract elements based sentences as significant components in comparison to boilerplate sentences.

The output can be presented in either one of the formats a) *highlighted input document* - where sections of interest are highlighted within the overall contract, b) *a cover-page* - containing consolidated information of practical value. The effectiveness of the automated significant components identification model was further evaluated by conducting an experimental study that compares the performance between human and machine for the task.

## 2 Related Work

Since language is the core of law and legal contracts, there has been an increased interest in applying natural language processing techniques to a wide range of problems ranging from information extraction to sentence prediction in law (Zhong et al., 2020; Hendrycks et al., 2021; Kalamkar et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2021). Considerable amount of work has been done in contract analysis and information extraction from contracts (Yang et al., 2013; Silva et al., 2020; Mittal et al., 2015).

The most obvious approach to automatic contract element extraction is to model it as sequence labeling task. Statistical methods like Conditional Random Fields (Finkel et al., 2005; Xu and

Sarikaya, 2013) were popular for sequence labeling prior to neural networks. (Chalkidis et al., 2017) involved hand written rules along with hand crafted features to uniquely identify and extract the contract elements. Recently, neural networks (Huang and Xu, 2015; Ma and Hovy, 2016; Chalkidis and Androustopoulos, 2017) and BERT (Devlin et al., 2019) based approaches (Zhang et al., 2020b; Chen et al., 2019) were developed for sequence labeling and slot with joint intent classification. Our work for CSI extraction closely resembles (Zhang et al., 2020b) where the contract elements are extracted from regulatory filings and property lease agreements using the standard BOI tagging scheme for the contract elements of interest. We include more categories of contracts (employment, incentive, purchase, severance, software-license) and the contract elements are majorly kept consistent.

Scope identification is another popular area of research in legal domain as it is tedious to read legal documents. Contracts or legal documents contain many key sentences, and it sometimes becomes necessary to have domain knowledge regarding that document to avoid missing any. Summarization (Andhale and Bewoor, 2016) is a reliable approach and summarizing legal contracts was attempted (Kubeka and Ade-Ibijola; Kore et al., 2020) by taking the document features and ordering the sentences according to their importance. These techniques do not differentiate between boilerplate sentences which forms the bulk of the contract and the remainder of the contract. Instead of summarizing well understood and accepted clauses, our study we intends to focus on contract specific information (CSI) and contract type specific information (TSI). Classification and hand crafted rules (Le et al., 2020) was another recent approach to precisely identify the scope and was applied to construction contracts to identify requirements automatically.

Regression (Ren et al., 2016; Zopf et al., 2018) is another technique where the sentences are scored on their importance and the model learns to include sentences in a summary based on the scores it predicts. Since our study aims at recognizing TSI, and based on our observations that legal contracts of same category have repetitive information, we devised an approach to we calculate sentence likelihood with respect to the contract type and use these scores to identify TSI. The likelihood scores were calculated using LaBSE(Feng et al., 2020)

and BERT (Devlin et al., 2019) was adapted to learn and predict these likelihood scores.

### 3 Approach

Significant component extraction is accomplished in two stages:

(1) Identifying CSI - ~~it is responsible for~~ processing each sentence of the document and identifying sentences with contract elements (Chalkidis et al., 2017)

(2) Identifying TSI - it looks at each sentence in the contract and assigns a likelihood score to the sentence.

These ~~models~~ contribute in effectively identifying the scope of significant components, by automating contract processing and extracting text relating to CSI and TSI from the contracts. Both models use LEGAL-BERT-BASE (Chalkidis et al., 2020) which is fine-tuned on BERT (Devlin et al., 2019) for legal domain and has shown substantial improvement in challenging downstream tasks like multi-label-classification. Within the wide categories of legal contracts available, we ran our experiments on the contract types mentioned in Table 7.

The overall architecture is shown in Figure 1. The input to the model is a document  $D$  containing a set of sentences  $S$ . The output is a set of sentences  $P$ , that effectively highlight information unique and specific to the document  $D$ , such that  $P \in S$ .

#### 3.1 Identifying CSI

##### 3.1.1 Dataset

This section describes the process employed in creating corpus for identifying CSI through sequence labeling. We sampled 100 legal documents of each category mentioned above. These documents are then pre-processed into paragraphs, as a paragraph as a unit might be of a higher value than an isolated sentence. The documents are split into train, test and validation bins in the ratio 7:2:1. Commonly applicable contract elements are identified and selected as contract elements of interest. Most of the contract elements are phrases rather than a single token, therefore we followed the BIO tagging scheme. We manually annotated the contracts to mark the selected contract elements. <TBD the contract elements are kept consistent across the contract types to reduce the training and annotation effort and to increase robustness and generality in

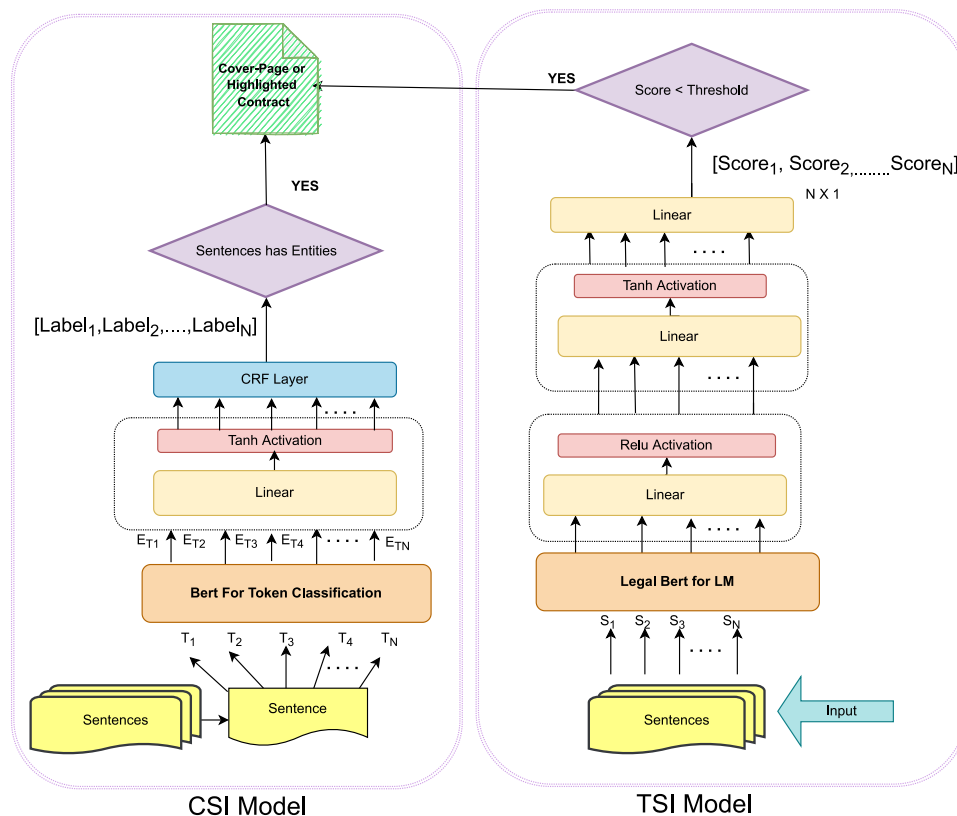


Figure 1: Architecture  
<TBD Better decription>

the model.> The contract elements we annotated are listed in Table 4.

### 3.1.2 Model

In the CSI model, we trained Bert for token classification ~~model~~ for sequence labeling. It is common for contracts to follow a fixed structure with a certain number of prescribed elements (*contract title, contract parties, effective start date, termination\maturity date, governing law etc.*). <TBD ~~Though there is a specific structure in contract,~~ we model the task as a sequence labeling task as the sentences that contain them have template like structure >.

All the contracts are divided into paragraphs for both training and prediction. The input sequences are tokenized using BERT tokenizer and special tokens [CLS] and [SEP] are added at the beginning and end of the input sequence respectively. All the input sequences are padded to a maximum length of 256 tokens. After passing through BERT, we apply a linear layer and crf layer on top of the hidden states output of the last layer. The model is trained for 25 epochs with learning rate of 1e-05.

## 3.2 Identifying TSI

### 3.2.1 Dataset

In contracts that belong to a category, there are lot of similarities in structure as well as semantic content. To confirm this further we sampled 100 documents of each contract type. The average number of sentences for each category is 10,000. For each sentence in a contract we calculated its similarity with all the sentences of all the contracts belonging to that category. The similarity metrics used for analysis were: cosine similarity, dot product, BLEU (Papineni et al., 2002), ROUGE (Lin and Och, 2004) and LaBSE (Feng et al., 2020). Softmax is applied to all the similarity scores obtained and the sentences with maximum similarity scores across documents are grouped. Manual evaluation was performed on the sentences grouped to determine the metric that best captures the similarity among the sentences. After ~~comparing~~ comparing all the grouped sentences, we concluded that the similarity of sentences captured by LaBSE and ROUGE is closer to how a human would group them.

By calculating the similarity scores for a given

In order to identify phrases of interest



sentence with respect to all the sentences of all the documents of that category, we can safely assume that we are calculating the likelihood of occurrence of the sentence given a contract category. Calculating likelihood of all the sentences in a document given a contract type, will help us determine if the sentence is novel or familiar. We mean pooled similarity scores obtained by LaBSE for a sentence and assigned it as likelihood score for the corresponding sentence. Similarly, we compute likelihood scores for all the sentences in all the samples considered.

### 3.2.2 Model

In the TSI model we extend BERT (LEGAL-BERT-BASE) for regression. The pre-processing remains same, documents are segmented into paragraphs and tokenized using BERT tokenizer, adding special tokens [CLS] and [SEP] at the beginning and end of the input sequence respectively. The input sequences are padded to a maximum length of 128 tokens. The final hidden states output is passed through linear layers with an activation layer in between for non-linearity. From the last linear layer, a single output is retrieved which serves as the score for the sentence likelihood. The model is trained for 15 epochs with learning rate of 1e-05. The loss criteria is MSE (Means Squared Error) and the objective is to minimise the loss between the predicted scores and the training scores. Pearson Co-relation scores are calculated between the test scores generated by LaBSE and the trained BERT regression model.

## 4 Analysis and Evaluation

Commonly used named entity recognizers (NER systems) (Nadeau and Sekine, 2007) are different from CSI models described in the study. NER systems typically identifies persons, organizations, dates, locations, currency terms etc., but they cannot be directly applicable to contract elements extraction. For example, a NER system can identify dates and persons but will not be able to differentiate if the date is an effective start date or termination date. Similarly not all instances of persons, organization or location would be contract parties or governing law elements. The sentences that contain these CSI are almost in a template like schema, therefore training a sequence labeling model to understand and extract the specific sentences which contain contract elements yields better results.

	F1	P	R
ContractParties	0.92	0.89	0.95
ContractTitle	0.81	0.72	0.94
EffectiveDate	0.84	0.80	0.89
GoverningLaw	0.55	0.40	0.86
EmploymentRole	0.42	0.42	0.42
SalaryCompensation	0.49	0.43	0.57
TerminationDate	0.40	0.60	0.30

Table 4: Evaluation of Contract Elements

Contract Element	Frequency in Train Data	Frequency in Test Data
ContractParties	218	62
EmploymentRole	179	52
EffectiveDate	131	32
GoverningLaw	83	22
ContractTitle	80	15
TerminationDate	38	3
SalaryCompensation	12	2

Table 5: Frequency of Contract Elements in Train and Test data

Table 4 shows micro-averaged metrics  $F_1$ , precision and recall across the selected contract elements. By examining these results, we can infer that common elements like ContractTitle, ContractParties, EffectiveDate which occur in all documents are well generalised by the BERT model and so have higher precision and recall values. The precision and recall scores are very low for contract elements like TerminationDate, SalaryCompensation which have not commonly occurred in the test contracts sampled. The primary reason contributing to these low values is that the legal contracts dataset contains contracts as well as amendments made to the contracts. Though we are filtering amendments by considering the document length (considering contracts that have more than 100 sentences), few amendment contracts are still sampled and these may not have all the contract elements that a new contract would mention. The positives from this result is BERT is able to generalise commonly occurring contract elements with samples as low as 100 contracts. For rare contract elements, it requires more data. Table 5 shows the frequencies of the contract elements in both train and test bins after de-duplication. The low representation of TerminationDate and SalaryCompensation samples in the train and test data could also contribute to low precision and accuracy values.

more to approach

explains

## 4.1 TSI model

TSI model is used for assigning likelihood scores to the sentences and identifying rare sentences that marks novelty in the contract. We computed likelihood score of a sentence occurring in contracts of a particular contract type. Fig 2 shows the plot for sorted likelihood scores of sentences given a contract type for a sample of 10000 sentences. We observed that the plot remained same across contract types for the contract mentioned in Table 7 under contract types. From the plot we notice two bends in the data and the data can be classified into three classes:

i) likelihood score  $< 0.5$ : these sentences map to rare sentences, not normally present in all the contracts of that category.

ii) likelihood score in between 0.5 - 0.7: these sentences map to boiler-plate sentences which uniformly occur in all the contracts with a minor change in wordings or expression.

iii) likelihood score  $> 0.7$ : these sentences would map to core sentences in the contracts which contain named entity mentions. Likelihood of templatised sentences was computed using TSI model in two ways-

i) comparing the original unmasked sentences across contracts.

ii) masking all the named entities to their entity type (people's names to PERSON, organization names to ORG) using ner model of spaCy (Honnibal and Montani, 2017). Masking also helps in normalizing the data.

The likelihood score for sentences increased for masked sentences, which proves that semantically the sentence structures are common, but the entity values make them less probable and therefore specific to the contract. Table 6 where 'lscore' refers to the likelihood score, identifies few examples where masking entities has shown impact on the sentence likelihood scores.

<TBD Should the graph have title>

Since masking the sentences normalizes the data, all the named entities in the contracts were masked.

We also observed that contract elements are different from named entities, therefore we can divide the data into two classes instead of three- i) Rare sentences which have likelihood score less than 0.5 ii) familiar sentences which have likelihood score above 0.5. On unseen data the TSI model will score the sentences given the contract type, and sentences having having score below the threshold

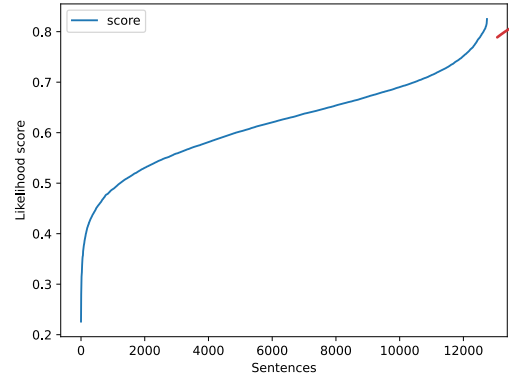


Figure 2: Sorted Likelihood Scores of Sentences

are highlighted in the contract.

### 4.1.1 Evaluation

On the 100 contracts sampled for each contract type, we preformed K-fold validation, with  $k=3$ . The contracts were split into train, test and validation bins in the ratio 7:2:1. The TSI model was trained to predict the likelihood score of the sentences in the test bin.

$$C = \frac{(N \sum_{i=1}^N T_i P_i - (\sum_{i=1}^N T_i)(\sum_{i=1}^N P_i))}{\sqrt{N \sum_{i=1}^N T_i^2 - (\sum_{i=1}^N T_i)^2} \sqrt{N \sum_{i=1}^N P_i^2 - (\sum_{i=1}^N P_i)^2}} \quad (1)$$

To measure the performance of our proposed model in predicting the likelihood score, we compute the Pearson product-moment correlation ( $C$ ) (Benesty et al., 2009) between likelihood scores computed by maean pooling LaBSE similarity scores ( $T$ ) and likelihood scores generated by the TSI model ( $P$ ), for a sample of 10000 sentences ( $N$ ) using (Equation 1). Pearson correlation estimates the degree of statistical relationship between two independent variables.

A high positive correlation between the actual and predicted values implies that the model can be trusted to work reasonably well on new unseen contracts of that category. Table 7 has the Pearson correlation scores averaged for K-fold data sets on contract types considered. The high Pearson correlation values instills confidence that the model can identify rare sentences with a reasonable accuracy.

To further access the effectiveness of the TSI model we conducted an experimental study that compares the performance of the machine and hu-

Original Sentence	Iscore	Entities Masked Sentence	Iscore
EX-10.8 4 a17-1046_1 EX-10.8 EXHIBIT 10.8 EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT This EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT (the Agreement) is entered into and effective as of this 3rd day of March	0.75	EX-10.8 4 a17-1046_1 EX-10.8 EXHIBIT10.8 EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT This EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT ( the Agreement ) is entered into and effective as of this DATE DATE DATE ( the Effective Date )	0.86
Term of this Agreement. The Term of this Agreement shall mean the period commencing on the Effective Date and ending on March 31	0.64	Term of this Agreement . The Term of this Agreement shall mean the period commencing on the Effective Date and ending on DATE DATE.	0.88

Table 6: Sentence Likelihood Scores (Iscore) with and without Masking Entities

Contract Type	Pearson Correlation on Kfold
Employment	0.996
Incentive	0.998
Severance	0.990
Software License	0.997
Purchase	0.987

Table 7: Averaged K-Fold Validation for Pearson Correlation of test and predicted likelihood scores

Contract Type	Annotator 1			Annotator 2		
	P	R	F1	P	R	F1
Employment	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.88	0.93	0.91
Incentive	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.
Severance	0.90	0.99	0.95	0.84	0.99	0.90
Software License	0.89	0.99	0.93	0.83	0.92	0.87
Purchase	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.	0.

Table 8: Human Evaluation Statistics

man. Assigning likelihood score will be difficult for a human, therefore labels were assigned to the sentences in the test set based on their likelihood scores. If the sentence score is below the threshold set for rare sentences, then the sentences are labeled rare (0) . If the sentence score is above the threshold (set for rare sentences), then it is labeled familiar (1) . We had two annotators, the first annotator was provided with 15 contracts of each contract type and the respective test sentences set. The second annotator was provided with 5 contracts of each contract type and the test sentences set. Both the annotators were asked to read the contract set provided to them and then label the test sentences as rare or familiar based on their inference. Table 8 details the precision, recall and f1 scores of both the annotators on selected contract types. <TBD Inference from the table>

## 5 Conclusion and Future Work

Our study aims at capturing significant components of a legal contract with an emphasis on identifying information that is specific and unique to a contract. While the approach successfully highlights and identifies significant components, there were a

few limitations. The dataset contains new contracts as well as amendments. We screen amendments with fewer sentences, but filtering out amendments completely did not feel right as they are additions or alterations made to an existing legal agreement and can add value to the agreements. These amendments contribute to low coverage of contract elements. Increasing the data for each contract type might yield in better coverage and results. We show that our models can achieve reasonable accuracy with relatively low training data. <TBD add future work>

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## A Example Appendix

This is an appendix.