A Report on the 2020 Sarcasm Detection Shared Task

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Abstract

Detecting sarcasm and verbal irony is critical for understanding people’s actual sentiments and beliefs. Thus, the field of sarcasm analysis has become a popular research problem in nat ural language processing. As the community working on computational approaches for sar casm detection is growing, it is imperative to conduct benchmarking studies to analyze the current state-of-the-art, facilitating progress in this area. We report on the shared task on sar casm detection we conducted as a part of the 2nd Workshop on Figurative Language Pro cessing (FigLang 2020) at ACL 2020.

1 Introduction

Sarcasm and verbal irony are a type of figurative language where the speakers usually mean the op posite of what they say. Recognizing whether a speaker is ironic or sarcastic is essential to down stream applications for correctly understanding speakers’ intended sentiments and beliefs. Con sequently, in the last decade, the problem of irony and sarcasm detection has attracted a considerable interest from computational linguistics researchers. The task has been usually framed as a binary clas sification task (sarcastic vs. non-sarcastic) using either the utterance in isolation or adding contex tual information such as conversation context, au thor context, visual context, or cognitive features (Davidov et al., 2010; Tsur et al., 2010; Gonzalez- ´ Iba´nez et al. ˜ , 2011; Riloff et al., 2013; Maynard and Greenwood, 2014; Wallace et al., 2014; Ghosh et al., 2015; Joshi et al., 2015; Muresan et al., 2016; Amir et al., 2016; Mishra et al., 2016; Ghosh and Veale, 2017; Felbo et al., 2017; Ghosh et al., 2017; Hazarika et al., 2018; Tay et al., 2018; Oprea and Magdy, 2019; Majumder et al., 2019; Castro et al., 2019; Ghosh et al., 2019).

In this paper, we report on the shared task on sarcasm detection that we conducted as part of the

1

Turns Message

*Context*1 The [govt] just confiscated a $180 million boat shipment of cocaine

from drug traffickers.

*Context*2 People think 5 tonnes is not a lot of cocaine.

*Response* Man, I’ve seen more than that on a Friday night!

Table 1: Sarcastic replies to conversation context in Reddit. *Response* turn is a reply to *Context*2 turn that is a reply to *Context*1 turn

2nd Workshop on Figurative Language Processing (FigLang 2020) at ACL 2020. The task aims to study the role of conversation context for sarcasm detection. Two types of social media content are used as training data for the two tracks - microblog ging platform such as Twitter and online discussion forum such as Reddit.

Table 1 and Table 2 show examples of three turn dialogues, where *Response* is the sarcastic reply. Without using the conversation context *Contexti*, it is difficult to identify the sarcastic intent ex pressed in *Response*. The shared task is designed to benchmark the usefulness of modeling the en tire conversation context (i.e., all the prior dialogue turns) for sarcasm detection.

Section 2 discusses the current state of research on sarcasm detection with a focus on the role of context. Section 3 provides a description of the shared task, datasets, and metrics. Section 4 con tains brief summaries of each of the participating systems whereas Section 5 reports a comparative evaluation of the systems and our observations about trends in designs and performance of the systems that participated in the shared task.

*Proceedings of the Second Workshop on Figurative Language Processing*, pages 1–11 July 9, 2020. c 2020 Association for Computational Linguistics

https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/P17

Turns Message

*Context*1 This is the greatest video in the his tory of college football.

*Context*2 Hes gonna have a short career if he keeps smoking . Not good for your

health

*Response* Awesome !!! Everybody does it. That’s the greatest reason to do

something.

Table 2: Sarcastic replies to conversation context in Twitter. *Response* turn is a reply to *Context*2 turn that is a reply to *Context*1 turn

2 Related Work

A considerable amount of work on sarcasm de tection has considered the utterance in isolation when predicting the sarcastic or non-sarcastic la bel. Initial approaches used feature-based machine learning models that rely on different types of fea tures from lexical (e.g., sarcasm markers, word embeddings) to pragmatic such as emoticons or learned patterns of contrast between positive senti ment and negative situations (Davidov et al., 2010; Veale and Hao, 2010; Gonzalez-Ib ´ a´nez et al. ˜ , 2011; Liebrecht et al., 2013; Riloff et al., 2013; Maynard and Greenwood, 2014; Joshi et al., 2015; Ghosh et al., 2015; Ghosh and Muresan, 2018). Recently, deep learning methods have been applied for this task (Ghosh and Veale, 2016; Tay et al., 2018). For excellent surveys on sarcasm and irony detection see (Wallace, 2015; Joshi et al., 2017).

However, when recognizing sarcastic intent even humans have difficulties sometimes when consider ing an utterance in isolation (Wallace et al., 2014). Recently an increasing number of researchers have started to explore the role of contextual informa tion for irony and sarcasm analysis. The term con text loosely refers to any *information* that is avail able beyond the utterance itself (Joshi et al., 2017). A few researchers have examined author context (Bamman and Smith, 2015; Khattri et al., 2015; Rajadesingan et al., 2015; Amir et al., 2016; Ghosh and Veale, 2017), multi-modal context (Schifanella et al., 2016; Cai et al., 2019; Castro et al., 2019), eye-tracking information (Mishra et al., 2016), or conversation context (Bamman and Smith, 2015; Wang et al., 2015; Joshi et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2016; Ghosh et al., 2017; Ghosh and Veale, 2017).

Related to shared tasks on figurative language analysis, recently, Van Hee et al. (2018) have con

ducted a SemEval task on irony detection in Twit ter focusing on utterances in isolation. Besides the binary classification task of identifying the ironic tweet the authors also conducted a multi-class irony classification to identify the specific *type* of irony: whether it contains verbal irony, situational irony, or other types of irony. In our case, the current shared task aims to study the role of conversation context for sarcasm detection. In particular, we focus on benchmark the effectiveness of modeling the conversation context (e.g., all the prior dialogue turns or a subset of the prior dialogue turns) for sar casm detection.

3 Task Description

The design of our shared task is guided by two specific issues. First, we plan to leverage a particu lar type of context — the entire prior conversation context — for sarcasm detection. Second, we plan to investigate the systems’ performance on conver sations from two types of social media platforms: Twitter and Reddit. Both of these platforms allow the writers to mark whether their messages are sar castic (e.g., #sarcasm hashtag in Twitter and “/s” marker in Reddit).

The competition is organized in two phases: training and evaluation. By making available com mon datasets and frameworks for evaluation, we hope to contribute to the consolidation and strength ening of the growing community of researchers working on computational approaches to sarcasm analysis.

3.1 Datasets

3.1.1 Reddit Training Dataset

Khodak et al. (2017) introduced the self-annotated Reddit Corpus which is a very large collection of sarcastic and non-sarcastic posts (over one million) curated from different subreddits such as politics, religion, sports, technology, etc. This corpus con tains self-labeled sarcastic posts where users label their posts as sarcastic by marking “/s” to the end of sarcastic posts. For any such sarcastic post, the cor pus also provides the full conversation context, i.e., all the prior turns that took place in the dialogue.

We select the training data for the Reddit track from Khodak et al. (2017). We considered a couple of criteria. First, we choose sarcastic responses with at least two prior turns. Note, for many re sponses in our training corpus the number of turns is much more. Second, we curated sarcastic re-

2

sponses from a variety of subreddits such that no

**100**

**90**

single subreddit (e.g., politics) dominates the train **80**

ing corpus. In addition, we avoid responses from

**70**

subreddits that we believe are too specific and nar

**60**

**50**

row (e.g., subreddit dedicated to a specific video **40**

game) that might not generalize well. The non

**30**

sarcastic partition of the training dataset is collected

**20**

from the same set of subreddits that are used to

**10**

**0**

collect sarcastic responses. We finally end up in selecting 4,400 posts (as well as their conversation

**length=2 length=3 length=4 length=5 length>5**

context) for the training dataset equally balanced between sarcastic and non-sarcastic posts.

3.1.2 Twitter Training Dataset

For the Twitter dataset, we have relied upon the annotations that users assign to their tweets using hashtags. The sarcastic tweets were collected us ing hashtags: *#sarcasm* and *#sarcastic*. As non sarcastic utterances, we consider sentiment tweets, i.e., we adopt the methodology proposed in related work (Muresan et al., 2016). Such sentiment tweets do not contain the sarcasm hashtags but include hashtags that contain positive or negative senti ment words. The positive tweets express direct positive sentiment and they are collected based on tweets with positive hashtags such as *#happy*, *#love*, *#lucky*. Likewise, the negative tweets express di rect negative sentiment and are collected based on tweets with negative hashtags such as *#sad*, *#hate*, *#angry*. Classifying sarcastic utterances against sentiment utterances is a considerably harder task than classifying against random objective tweets since many sarcastic utterances also contain senti ment terms. Here, we are relying on *self-labeled* tweets, thus, it is always possible that sarcastic tweets were mislabeled with sentiment hashtags or users did not use the #sarcasm hashtag at all. We manually evaluated around 200 sentiment tweets and found very few such cases in the training cor pus. Similar to the Reddit dataset we apply a cou ple of criteria while selecting the training dataset. First, we select sarcastic or non-sarcastic tweets only when they appear in a dialogue (i.e., begins with “@”-user symbol) and at least have two or more prior turns as conversation context. Second, for the non-sarcastic posts, we maintain a strict upper limit (i.e., not-greater than 10%) for any sen timent hashtag. Third, we apply heuristics such as avoiding short tweets, discarding tweets with only multiple URLs, etc. We end up selecting 5,000 tweets for training balanced between sarcastic and non-sarcastic tweets.

Figure 1: Plot of Reddit (blue) and Twitter (orange) training datasets on the basis of context length. X-axis represents context length (i.e., number of prior turns) and Y-axis represents the % of training utterances.

Figure 1 presents a plot of number of training utterances on the basis of context length, for Red dit and Twitter tracks respectively. We notice, al though the numbers are comparable for utterances with context length equal to two or three, for Twit ter corpus, utterances with a higher number of con text (i.e., prior turns) is much higher.

3.1.3 Evaluation Data

The Twitter data for evaluation is curated similarly to the training data. For Reddit, we do not use Khodak et al. (2017) rather collected new sarcastic and non-sarcastic responses from Reddit. First, for sarcastic responses we utilize the same set of sub reddits utilized in the training dataset, thus, keeping the same genre between the evaluation and train ing. For the non-sarcastic partition, we utilized the same set of subreddits and submission threads as the sarcastic partition. For both tracks the evalu ation dataset contains 1800 instances partitioned equally between the sarcastic and the non-sarcastic categories.

3.2 Training Phase

In the first phase, data is released for training and/or development of sarcasm detection models (both Reddit and Twitter). Participants can choose to partition the training data further to a validation set for preliminary evaluations and/or tuning of hyper-parameters. Likewise, they can also elect to perform cross-validation on the training data.

3.3 Evaluation Phase

In the second phase, instances for evaluation are released. Each participating system generated pre dictions for the evaluation instances, for up to *N*

3

models. 1 Predictions are submitted to the Co daLab site and evaluated automatically against the gold labels. CodaLab is an established platform to organize shared-tasks (Leong et al., 2018) because it is easy to use, provides easy communication with the participants (e.g., allows mass-emailing) as well as tracks all the submissions updating the leader board in real-time. The metrics used for evaluation is the average F1 score between the two categories - sarcastic and non-sarcastic. The leaderboards dis played the Precision, Recall, and F1 scores in the descending order of the F1 scores, separately for the two tracks - Twitter and Reddit.

4 Systems

The shared task started on January 19, 2020, when the training data was made available to all the regis tered participants. We released the evaluation data on February 25, 2020. Submissions were accepted until March 16, 2020. Overall, we received an overwhelming number of submissions: 655 for the Reddit track and 1070 for the Twitter track. The CodaLab leaderboard showcases results from 39 systems for the Reddit track and 38 systems for the Twitter track, respectively. Out of all submissions, 14 shared task system papers were submitted. In the following section we summarize each system paper. We also put forward a comparative analy sis based on their performance and the choice of features/models in Section 5. Interested readers can refer to the individual teams’ papers for more details. But first, we discuss the baseline classifica tion model that we used.

4.1 Baseline Classifier

We use prior published work as the baseline that used conversation context to detect sarcasm from social media platforms such as Twitter and Reddit (Ghosh et al., 2018). Ghosh et al. (2018) proposed a *dual LSTM architecture* with hierarchical attention where one LSTM models the conversation context and the other models sarcastic response. The hier archical attention (Yang et al., 2016) implements two levels of attention – one at the word level and another at the sentence level. We used their system based on only the immediate conversation context (i.e., the immediate prior turn). 2 This is denoted as *LSTMattn* in Table 3 and Table 4.

1*N* is set to 999.

2https://github.com/Alex-Fabbri/deep\_ learning\_nlp\_sarcasm

4.2 System Descriptions

We describe the participating systems in the follow ing section (in alphabetical order).

abaruah (Baruah et al., 2020): Fine-tuned a BERT model (Devlin et al., 2018) and reported results on varying maximum sequence length (cor responding to varying level of context inclusion from just response to entire context). They also reported results of BiLSTM with FastText embed dings (of response and entire context) and SVM based on char n-gram features (again on both re sponse and entire context). One interesting result was SVM with discrete features performed bet ter than BiLSTM. They achieved best results with BERT on response and most immediate context.

ad6398 (Kumar and Anand, 2020): Report re sults comparing multiple transformer architectures (BERT, SpanBERT (Joshi et al., 2020), RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019)) both in single sentence classi fication (with concatenated context and response string) and sentence pair classification (with con text and response being separate inputs to a Siamese type architecture). Their best result was with using RoBERTa + LSTM model.

aditya604 (Avvaru et al., 2020): Used BERT on simple concatenation of last-k context texts and response text. The authors included details of data cleaning (de-emojification, hashtag text extraction, apostrophe expansion) as well experiments on other architectures (LSTM, CNN, XLNet (Yang et al., 2019)) and varying size of context (5, 7, complete) in their report. The best results were obtained by BERT with 7 length context for Twitter dataset and BERT with 5 context for Reddit dataset.

amitjena40 (Jena et al., 2020): Used a time series analysis inspired approach for integrating context. Each text in conversational thread (con text and response) was individually scored using BERT and Simple Exponential Smoothing (SES) was utilized to get probability of final response be ing sarcastic. They used the final response label as a pseudo-label for scoring the context entries, which is not theoretically grounded. If final re sponse is sarcastic, the previous context dialogue cannot be assumed to be sarcastic (with respect to its preceding dialogue). However, the effect of this error is attenuated due to exponentially decreasing contribution of context to final label under SES scheme.

4

Rank Lb. Rank

Team P R F1 Approach

1 1 miroblog 0.834 0.838 0.834 BERT + BiLSTM + NeXtVLAD + Context En semble + Data Augmentation

2 2 andy3223 0.751 0.755 0.750 RoBERTa-Large (all the prior turns) 3 6 taha 0.738 0.739 0.737 BERT+ Local Context Focus 4 8 tanvidadu 0.716 0.718 0.716 RoBERTa-Large (last two prior turns) 5 9 nclabj 0.708 0.708 0.708 RoBERTa + Multi-Initialization Ensemble 6 12 ad6398 0.693 0.699 0.691 RoBERTa + LSTM

7 16 kalaivani.A 0.679 0.679 0.679 BERT (isolated response)

8 17 amitjena40 0.679 0.683 0.678 TorchMoji + ELMO + Simple Exp. Smoothing 9 21 burtenshaw 0.67 0.677 0.667 Ensemble of SVM, LSTM, CNN-LSTM, MLP 10 26 salokr 0.641 0.643 0.639 BERT + CNN + LSTM

11 31 adithya604 0.605 0.607 0.603 BERT (concatenation of prior turns and response) 12 - baseline 0.600 0.599 0.600 *LSTMattn*

13 32 abaruah 0.595 0.605 0.585 BERT-Large (concatenation of response and its immediate prior turn)

Table 3: Performance of the best system per team and baseline for the Reddit track. We include two ranks - ranks from the submitted systems as well as the Leaderboard ranks from the CodaLab site

AnandKumaR (Khatri and P, 2020): Experi mented with using traditional ML classifiers like SVM and Logisitic Regression over embeddings through BERT and GloVe (Pennington et al., 2014). Using BERT as a feature extraction method as op posed to fine-tuning it was not beneficial and Lo gisitic Regression over GloVe embeddings outper formed them in their experiment. Context was used in their best model but no details were available about the depth of context usage (full vs. imme diate). Additionally, they only experimented with Twitter data and no submission was made to the Reddit track. They provided details of data clean ing measures for their experiments which involved stopword removal, lowercasing, stemming, punctu ation removal and spelling normalization.

andy3223 (Dong et al., 2020): Used the transformer-based architecture for sarcasm detec tion, reporting the performance of three architec ture, BERT, RoBERTa, and ALBERT (Lan et al., 2019). They considered two models, the *target oriented* where only the target (i.e., sarcastic re sponse) is modeled and *context-aware*, where the context is also modeled with the target. The authors conducted extensive hyper-parameter search, and set the learning rate to 3e-5, the number of epochs to 30, and use different seed values, 21, 42, 63, for three runs. Additionally, they set the maximum sequence length 128 for the *target-oriented* models while it is set to 256 for the *context-aware* models.

burtenshaw (Lemmens et al., 2020): Em ployed an ensemble of four models - LSTM (on word, emoji and hashtag representations), CNN LSTM (on GloVe embeddings with discrete punc tuation and sentiment features), MLP (on sentence embeddings through Infersent (Conneau et al., 2017)) and SVM (on character and stylometric fea tures). The first three models (except SVM) used the last two immediate contexts along with the re sponse.

duke DS (Gregory et al., 2020): Here the au thors have conducted extensive set of experiments using discrete features, DNNs, as well as trans former models, however, reporting only the results on the Twitter track. Regarding discrete features, one of novelties in their approach is including a *predictor* to identify whether the tweet is political or not, since many sarcastic tweets are on political topics. Regarding the models, the best performing model is an ensemble of five transformers: BERT base-uncased, RoBERTa-base, XLNet-base-cased, RoBERTa-large, and ALBERT-base-v2.

kalaivani.A (kalaivani A and D, 2020): Compared traditional machine learning clas sifiers (e.g., Logistic Regression/Random Forest/XGBoost/Linear SVC/ Gaussian Naive Bayes) on discrete bag-of-word features/Doc2Vec features with LSTM models on Word2Vec embeddings (Mikolov et al., 2013) and BERT

5

models. For context usage they report results on using isolated response, isolated context and context-response combined (unclear as to how deep the context usage is). The best performance for their experiments was by BERT on isolated response.

miroblog (Lee et al., 2020): Implemented a clas sifier composed of BERT followed by BiLSTM and NeXtVLAD (Lin et al., 2018) (a differentiable pool ing mechanism which empirically performed better than Mean/Max pooling). 3 They employed an ensembling approach for including varying length context and reported that gains in F1 after context of length three are negligible. Just with these two contributions alone, their model outperformed all others. Additionally, they devised a novel approach of data augmentation (i.e., Contextual Response Augmentation) from unlabelled conversational con texts based on next sentence prediction confidence score of BERT. Leveraging large-scale unlabelled conversation data from web, their model outper formed the second best system by 14% and 8.4% for Twitter and Reddit respectively (absolute F1 score).

nclabj (Jaiswal, 2020): Used a majority-voting ensemble of RoBERTa models with different weight-initialization and different levels of context length. Their report shows that previous 3 turns of dialogues had the best performance in isolation. Additionally, the present results comparing other sentence embedding architectures like Universal Sentence Encoder (Cer et al., 2018), ELMo (Peters et al., 2018) and BERT.

salokr/vaibhav (Srivastava et al., 2020) : Em ployed a CNN-LSTM based architecture on BERT embeddings to utilize the full context thread and the response. The entire context after encoding through BERT is passed through CNN and LSTM layers to get a representation of the context. Con volution and dense layers over this summarized context representation and BERT encoding of re sponse make up the final classifier.

taha (ataei et al., 2020): Reported experiments comparing SVM on character n-gram features, LSTM-CNN models, Transformer models as well as a novel usage of aspect based sentiment clas sification approaches like Interactive Attention

3VLAD is an acronym of “Vector of Locally Aggregated Descriptors” (Lin et al., 2018).

Networks(IAN) (Ma et al., 2017), Local Context Focus(LCF)-BERT (Zeng et al., 2019) and BERT Attentional Encoder network (AEN) (Song et al., 2019). For aspect based approaches, they viewed the last dialogue of conversational context as aspect of the target response. LCF-BERT was their best model for the Twitter task but due to computational resource limitations they were not able to try it for Reddit task (where BERT on just the response text performed best).

tanvidadu (Dadu and Pant, 2020): Fine-tuned RoBERTa-large model (355 Million parameters with over a 50K vocabulary size) on response and its two immediate contexts. They reported results on three different types of inputs: response-only model, concatenation of immediate two context with response, and using an explicit separator token between the response and the final context. The best result is reported in the setting where they used the separation token.

5 Results and Discussions

Table 3 and Table 4 present the results for the Red dit track and the Twitter track, respectively. We show the rank of the submitted systems (best result from their submitted reports) both in terms of the system submissions (out of 14) as well as their rank on the Codalab leaderboard. Note, for a couple of entries we observe a discrepancy between their best reported system(s) and the leaderboard entries. For the sake of fairness, for such cases, we selected the leaderboard entries to present in Table 3 and Table 4.4

Also, out of the 14 system descriptions *duke DS* and *AnadKumR* report the performance on the Twitter dataset, only. For overall results on both tracks, we observe majority of the models out performed the *LSTMattn* baseline (Ghosh et al., 2018). Almost all the submitted systems have used the transformer-architecture that seems to perform better than RNN-architecture, even without any task-specific fine-tuning. Although most of the models are similar and perform comparably, we observe a particular system - miroblog - has out performed the other models in both the tracks by posting an improvement over the 2nd ranked sys tem by more than 7% F1-score in the Reddit track and by 14% F1-score in the Twitter track.

4Also, for such cases (e.g., abaruah, under the *Approach* column we reported the approach described in the system paper that is not necessarily reflect the scores of Table 3.

6

Rank Lb. Rank

Team P R F1 Approach

1 1 miroblog 0.932 0.936 0.931 BERT + BiLSTM + NeXtVLAD + Context En semble + Data Augmentation

2 2 nclabj 0.792 0.793 0.791 RoBERTa + Multi-Initialization Ensemble 3 3 andy3223 0.791 0.794 0.790 RoBERTa-Large (all the prior turns) 4 5 ad6398 0.773 0.774 0.772 RoBERTa + LSTM

5 6 tanvidadu 0.772 0.772 0.772 RoBERTa-Large (last two prior turns) 6 8 duke DS 0.758 0.767 0.756 Ensemble of Transformers 7 11 amitjena40 0.751 0.751 0.750 TorchMoji + ELMO + Simple Exp. Smoothing 8 13 salokr 0.742 0.746 0.741 BERT + CNN + LSTM

9 16 burtenshaw 0.741 0.746 0.740 Ensemble of SVM, LSTM, CNN-LSTM, MLP 10 21 abaruah 0.734 0.735 0.734 BERT-Large (concatenation of response and its immediate prior turn)

11 24 taha 0.731 0.732 0.731 BERT

12 27 kalaivani.A 0.722 0.722 0.722 BERT (isolated response)

13 28 adithya604 0.719 0.721 0.719 BERT (concatenation of prior turns and response) 14 35 AnadKumR 0.690 0.690 0.690 GloVe + Logistic Regression 15 - baseline 0.700 0.669 0.680 *LSTMattn*

Table 4: Performance of the best system per team and baseline for the Twitter track. We include two ranks - ranks from the submitted systems as well as the Leaderboard ranks from the CodaLab site

In the following paragraphs, we inspect the per formance of the different systems more closely. We discuss a couple of particular aspects.

Context Usage: One of the prime motivating fac tors for conducting this shared task was to investi gate the role of contextual information. We notice the most common approach for integrating context was simply concatenating it with the response text. Novel approaches include :

1. Taking immediate context as aspect for re sponse in Aspect-based Sentiment Classifica tion architectures (taha)

2. CNN-LSTM based summarization of entire context thread (salokr)

3. Time-series fusion with proxy labels for con text (amitjena40)

4. Ensemble of multiple models with different depth of context (miroblog)

5. Using explicit separator between context and response when concatenating (tanvidadu)

Depth of Context: Results suggest that beyond three context turns, gains from context information are negligible and may also reduce the performance due to sparsity of long context threads. The depth

of context required is dependent on the architecture and CNN-LSTM based summarization of context thread (salokr) was the only approach that effec tively used the whole dialogue.

Discrete vs. Embedding Features The leader board was dominated by Transformer based archi tectures and we saw submissions using BERT or RoBERTa and other variants. Other sentence em bedding architectures like Infersent, CNN/LSTM over word embeddings were also used but had middling performances. Discrete features were in volved in only two submissions (burtenshaw and duke DS) and were the focus of burtenshaw sys tem.

Leveraging other datasets The large difference between the best model (miroblog) and other sys tems can be attributed to their dataset augmenta tion strategies. Using just the context thread as a negative example when the context+response is a positive example, is a straight-forward approach for augmentation from labeled dialogues. Their novel contribution lies in leveraging large-scaled unlabelled dialogue threads, showing another use of BERT by using NSP confidence score for assign ing pseudo-labels.

Analysis of predictions: Finally, we conducted an error analysis based on the predictions of the

7

systems. We particularly focused on addressing two questions. First, we investigate whether any particular pattern exists in the evaluation instances that are wrongly classified by the majority of the systems. Second, we compare the predictions of the top-performing systems to identify instances correctly classified by the candidate system but missed by the remaining systems. Here, we attempt to recognize specific characteristics that are unique to a model, if any.

Instead of looking at the predictions of all the systems we decided to analyze only the *top-three* submissions in both tracks because of their high performances. We identify 80 instances (30 sar castic) from the Reddit evaluation dataset and 20 instances (10 sarcastic) from the Twitter evalua tion set, respectively, that are missed by all the top-performing systems. Our interpretation of this finding is that all these test instances more or less belong to a variety of topics including sarcastic re marks on baseball teams, internet bills, vaccination, etc., that probably do not generalize well during the training. For both Twitter and Reddit, we also found many sarcastic examples that contain com mon non-sarcastic markers such as laughs (e.g., “haha”), jokes, positive-sentiment emoticons (e.g., :)) in terms of Twitter track. We did not find any correlation to context length. Most of the instances contain varied context length, from two to six.

While analyzing the predictions of individual systems we noted that miroblog correctly identi fies the most number of predictions for both the tracks. In fact, miroblog has successfully predicted over two hundred examples (with almost equal dis tribution of sarcastic and non-sarcastic instances) in comparison to the second-ranked and third-ranked systems for both tracks. As stated earlier, this can be attributed to their data augmentation strategies that have assisted miroblog’s models to generalize best. However, we still notice that instances with subtle humor or positive sentiment are missed by the best-performing models even if they are pre trained on a very large-scale corpora. We foresee models that are able to detect subtle humor or witty wordplay will perform even better in a sarcasm detection task.

6 Conclusion

This paper summarizes the results of the shared task on sarcasm detection using conversation from two social media platforms (Reddit and Twitter),

organized as part of the 2nd Workshop on the Fig urative Language Processing at ACL 2020. This shared task aimed to investigate the role of con versation context for sarcasm detection. The goal was to understand how much conversation context is needed or helpful for sarcasm detection. For Reddit, the training data was sampled from the standard corpus from Khodak et al. (2017) whereas we curated a new evaluation dataset. For Twitter, both the training and the test datasets are new and collected using standard hashtags. We received 655 submissions (from 39 unique participants) and 1070 submissions (from 38 unique participants) for Reddit and Twitter tracks, respectively. We pro vided brief descriptions of each of the participating systems who submitted a shared task paper (14 systems).

We notice that almost every submitted system have used transformer-based architectures, such as BERT and RoBERTa and other variants, emphasiz ing the increasing popularity of using pre-trained language models for various classification tasks. The best systems, however, have employed a clever mix of ensemble techniques and/or data augmenta tion setups, which seem to be a promising direction for future work. We hope that some of the teams will make their implementations publicly available, which would facilitate further research on improv ing performance on the sarcasm detection task.

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8

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9

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10

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11