Multilingual E5 Text Embeddings: A Technical Report

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Abstract

This technical report presents the training methodology and evaluation results of the opensource multilingual E5 text embedding models, released in mid-2023. Three embedding models of different sizes (small / base / large) are provided, offering a balance between the inference efficiency and embedding quality. The training procedure adheres to the English E5 model recipe, involving contrastive pre-training on 1 billion multilingual text pairs, followed by fine-tuning on a combination of labeled datasets. Additionally, we introduce a new instruction-tuned embedding model, whose performance is on par with state-of-the-art, English-only models of similar sizes. Information regarding the model release can be found at https://github.com/microsoft/unilm/ tree/master/e5.

1 Introduction

Text embeddings serve as fundamental components in information retrieval systems and retrieval-augmented language models. Despite their significance, most existing embedding models are trained exclusively on English text (Reimers and Gurevych, 2019; Ni et al., 2022b,a), thereby limiting their applicability in multilingual contexts.

In this technical report, we present the multilingual E5 text embedding models (*mE5-{small / base / large}*), which extend the English E5 models (Wang et al., 2022). The training procedure adheres to the original two-stage methodology: weakly-supervised contrastive pre-training on billions of text pairs, followed by supervised finetuning on small quantity of high-quality labeled data. We also release an instruction-tuned embedding model ¹ *mE5-large-instruct* by utilizing the synthetic data from Wang et al. (2023). Instructions can better inform embedding models about the task at hand, thereby enhancing the quality of the embeddings.

For model evaluation, we first demonstrate that our multilingual embeddings exhibit competitive performance on the English portion of the MTEB benchmark (Muennighoff et al., 2023), and the instruction-tuned variant even surpasses strong English-only models of comparable sizes. To showcase the multilingual capability of our models, we also assess their performance on the MIRACL multilingual retrieval benchmark (Zhang et al., 2023) across 16 languages and on Bitext mining (Zweigenbaum et al., 2018; Artetxe and Schwenk, 2019) in over 100 languages.

2 Training Methodology

Sampled
150M
160M
160M
160M
160M
50M
50M
80M
10M
~1B

Table 1: Data mixture for contrastive pre-training.

Weakly-supervised Contrastive Pre-training In

the first stage, we continually pre-train our model on a diverse mixture of multilingual text pairs obtained from various sources as listed in Table 1. The models are trained with a large batch size 32k for a total of 30k steps, which approximately goes over ~ 1 billion text pairs. We employ the standard InfoNCE contrastive loss with only in-batch negatives, while other hyperparameters remain consistent with the English E5 models (Wang et al., 2022).

¹Here instructions refer to the natural language descriptions of the embedding tasks.

	# Sampled
MS-MARCO Passage	500k
MS-MARCO Document	70k
NQ, TriviaQA, SQuAD	220k
NLI	275k
ELI5	100k
NLLB	100k
DuReader Retrieval	86k
Fever	70k
HotpotQA	70k
Quora Duplicate Questions	15k
Mr. TyDi	50k
MIRACL	40k
Total	~1.6M

Table 2: Data mixture for supervised fine-tuning.

Supervised Fine-tuning In the second stage, we fine-tune the models from the previous stage on a combination of high-quality labeled datasets. In addition to in-batch negatives, we also incorporate mined hard negatives and knowledge distillation from a cross-encoder model to further enhance the embedding quality. For the *mE5-{small / base / large}* models released in mid-2023, we employ the data mixture shown in Table 2.

For the mE5-large-instruct model, we adopt the data mixture from Wang et al. (2023), which includes additional 500k synthetic data generated by GPT-3.5/4 (OpenAI, 2023). This new mixture encompasses 150k unique instructions and covers 93 languages. We re-use the instruction templates from Wang et al. (2023) for both the training and evaluation of this instruction-tuned model.

3 Experimental Results

English Text Embedding Benchmark Multilingual embedding models should be able to perform well on English tasks as well. In Table 3, we compare our models with other multilingual and English-only models on the MTEB benchmark (Muennighoff et al., 2023). Our best mE5 model surpasses the previous state-of-the-art multilingual model Cohere_{multilingual-v3}, by 0.4 points and outperforms a strong English-only model, BGE_{large-en-v1.5}, by 0.2 points. While smaller models demonstrate inferior performance, their faster inference and reduced storage costs render them advantageous for numerous applications.

Multilingual Retrieval We evaluate the multilingual retrieval capability of our models using

	MTEB (56 datasets)
LaBSE	45.2
Cohere _{multilingual-v3}	64.0
BGE _{large-en-v1.5}	64.2
mE5 _{small}	57.9
mE5 _{base}	59.5
$mE5_{large}$	61.5
mE5 _{large-instruct}	64.4

Table 3: Results on the English portion of the MTEB benchmark. LaBSE (Feng et al., 2022) is exclusively trained on translation pairs. Limited information is available regarding the training data and model size are available for Cohere_{multilingual-v3}(https://txt.cohere.com/introducing-embed-v3/). BGE_{large-en-v1.5} (Xiao et al., 2023) is an English-only model. Full results are in Appendix Table 7.

	nDCG@10	R@100
BM25	39.3	78.7
mDPR	41.5	78.8
mE5 _{small}	60.8	92.4
$mE5_{base}$	62.3	93.1
$mE5_{large}$	66.5	94.3
$mE5_{large-instruct}$	65.7	94.6

Table 4: Multilingual retrieval on the development set of the MIRACL benchmark. Numbers are averaged over 16 languages.

the MIRACL benchmark (Zhang et al., 2023). As shown in Table 4, mE5 models significantly outperform mDPR, which has been fine-tuned on the MIRACL training set, in both nDCG@10 and recall metrics. Detailed results on individual languages are provided in Appendix Table 6.

	BUCC 2018	Tatoeba
	4 langs	112 langs
mContriever _{msmarco}	93.7	37.7
LaBSE	98.8	81.1
mE5 _{small}	93.2	64.2
$mE5_{base}$	98.1	68.1
mE5 _{large}	98.6	75.7
mE5 _{large-instruct}	99.0	83.8

Table 5: Bitext mining results. mContriever (Izacard et al., 2021) numbers are run by ourselves based on the released checkpoint.

Bitext Mining is a cross-lingual similarity search task that requires the matching of two sentences with little lexical overlap. As demonstrated in Table 5, mE5 models exhibit competitive performance across a broad range of languages, both

high-resource and low-resource. Notably, the mE5_{large-instruct} model surpasses the performance of LaBSE, a model specifically designed for bitext mining, due to the expanded language coverage afforded by the synthetic data (Wang et al., 2023).

4 Conclusion

In this brief technical report, we introduce multilingual E5 text embedding models that are trained with a multi-stage pipeline. By making the model weights publicly available, practitioners can leverage these models for information retrieval, semantic similarity, and clustering tasks across a diverse range of languages.

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A Implementation Details

Contrastive Pre-training Text Pairs In Table 1, to construct text pairs, we utilize (section title, section passage) for Wikipedia, (title, page content) for mC4 (Xue et al., 2021), (title, news content) for multilingual CCNews ², translation pairs for NLLB (Costa-jussà et al., 2022), (comment, response) for Reddit ³, (title, abstract) and citation pairs for S2ORC (Lo et al., 2020), (question, answer) for Stackexchange 4, (input prompt, response) for xP3 (Muennighoff et al., 2022). For the miscellaneous SBERT data ⁵, we include the following datasets: SimpleWiki, WikiAnswers, AGNews, AltLex, AmazonQA, AmazonReview, CNN/DailyMail, CodeSearchNet, Flickr30k, GooAQ, NPR, SearchQA, SentenceCompression, Specter, WikiHow, XSum, and YahooAnswers.

Data Mixture for Supervised Fine-tuning It includes ELI5 (Fan et al., 2019)(sample at 20%), HotpotQA (Yang et al., 2018), FEVER (Thorne et al., 2018), MIRACL (Zhang et al., 2023), MSMARCO passage ranking and document ranking (sample at 20%) (Campos et al., 2016), NQ (Karpukhin et al., 2020), NLLB (sample at 100*k*) (Costa-jussà et al., 2022), NLI (Gao et al., 2021), SQuAD (Karpukhin et al., 2020), TriviaQA (Karpukhin et al., 2020), Quora Duplicate Questions (DataCanary et al.,

²https://commoncrawl.org/blog/
news-dataset-available

³https://www.reddit.com/

⁴https://stackexchange.com/

⁵https://huggingface.co/datasets/
sentence-transformers/embedding-training-data

	nDCG@10 R@100							
	mE5 _{small}	mE5 _{base}	mE5 _{large}	E5 _{large-instruct}	mE5 _{small}	mE5 _{base}	mE5 _{large}	E5 _{large-instruct}
ar	71.4	71.6	76.0	76.8	96.2	95.9	97.3	97.5
bn	68.2	70.2	75.9	73.9	97.4	96.6	98.2	98.2
en	48.0	51.2	52.9	51.5	85.3	86.4	87.6	88.2
es	51.2	51.5	52.9	53.7	87.6	88.6	89.1	89.3
fa	53.3	57.4	59.0	59.4	90.4	91.2	92.9	92.9
fi	73.3	74.4	77.8	77.3	96.3	96.9	98.1	97.9
fr	47.6	49.7	54.5	53.7	89.5	90.0	90.6	91.7
hi	55.2	58.4	62.0	60.3	91.0	92.6	93.9	94.1
id	50.7	51.1	52.9	52.1	86.2	87.4	87.9	88.4
ja	63.6	64.7	70.6	69.0	95.2	96.0	97.1	96.9
ko	61.2	62.2	66.5	65.3	92.0	91.6	93.4	93.0
ru	59.1	61.5	67.4	67.9	92.2	92.7	95.5	95.4
sw	68.4	71.1	74.9	72.5	94.7	95.6	96.7	97.2
te	81.3	75.2	84.6	83.4	97.6	98.0	99.2	99.0
th	75.0	75.2	80.2	78.6	98.2	98.0	98.9	98.7
zh	45.9	51.5	56.0	56.2	87.9	92.1	93.3	94.9
Avg	60.8	62.3	66.5	65.7	92.4	93.1	94.3	94.6

Table 6: nDCG@10 and R@100 on the development set of the MIRACL dataset.

2017)(sample at 10%), MrTyDi (Zhang et al., 2021), and DuReader (Qiu et al., 2022) datasets.

For the *mE5-large-instruct* model, we employ the new data mixture from Wang et al. (2023). The main difference is the inclusion of synthetic data from GPT-4.

Training Hyperparameters The mE5_{small}, mE5_{base} and mE5_{large} are initialized from the multilingual MiniLM (Wang et al., 2021), *xlm-roberta-base* (Conneau et al., 2020), and *xlm-roberta-large* respectively. For contrastive pre-training, the learning rate is set to $\{3,2,1\}\times 10^{-4}$ for the {small, base, large} models. For fine-tuning, we use batch size 512 and learning rate $\{3,2,1\}\times 10^{-5}$ for the {small, base, large} models. All models are fine-tuned for 2 epochs. The *mE5-large-instruct* model adopts the same hyperparameters as the mE5_{large} large, but is fine-tuned on the new data mixture by Wang et al. (2023).

Dataset	mE5 _{small}	mE5 _{base}	mE5 _{large}	mE5 _{large-instruc}
BIOSSES	82.3	85.1	82.5	87.0
SICK-R	77.5	78.5	80.2	81.7
STS12	76.6	76.7	80.0	82.6
STS13	77.0	78.0	81.5	87.2
STS14	75.5	76.6	77.7	85.0
STS15	87.1	88.2	89.3	91.0
STS16	83.6	84.3	85.8	87.3
STS17	86.4	87.8	88.1	90.0
STS22	60.9	61.8	63.1	67.6
STSBenchmark	84.0	85.6	87.3	88.4
SummEval	30.0	30.1	29.7	30.4
SprintDuplicateQuestions	92.2	93.0	93.1	91.2
TwitterSemEval2015	70.8	72.2	75.3	80.3
TwitterURLCorpus	84.8	85.5	85.8	87.1
AmazonCounterfactualClassification	73.8	79.0	79.1	76.2
AmazonPolarityClassification	88.7	90.6	93.5	96.3
Amazon Reviews Classification	44.7	44.5	47.6	56.7
Banking77Classification	79.4	82.7	84.7	85.7
EmotionClassification	42.5	45.2	46.5	51.5
ImdbClassification	80.8	45.2 85.5	90.2	94.6
MassiveIntentClassification	70.3	63.3 72.1		
			73.8	77.1
MassiveScenarioClassification	74.5	77.1	77.5	80.5
MTOPDomainClassification	91.1	93.1	93.7	93.9
MTOPIntentClassification	71.1	75.3	77.9	82.5
ToxicConversationsClassification	69.4	69.8	71.3	71.1
TweetSentimentExtractionClassification	62.6	61.3	62.0	64.6
AskUbuntuDupQuestions	57.9	58.2	60.3	63.9
MindSmallReranking	30.3	31.0	31.4	33.1
SciDocsRR	78.1	80.7	82.0	85.9
StackOverflowDupQuestions	49.2	49.4	49.7	51.5
ArxivClusteringP2P	39.2	40.3	44.3	46.4
ArxivClusteringS2S	30.8	35.4	38.4	40.5
BiorxivClusteringP2P	35.8	35.0	35.3	40.9
BiorxivClusteringS2S	27.1	29.5	33.5	36.3
MedrxivClusteringP2P	30.9	28.9	31.5	36.9
MedrxivClusteringS2S	27.3	28.4	29.7	35.5
RedditClustering	39.1	42.4	46.5	56.6
RedditClusteringP2P	59.0	55.2	63.2	64.3
StackExchangeClustering	53.5	55.3	57.5	66.8
StackExchangeClusteringP2P	32.1	30.5	32.7	42.5
TwentyNewsgroupsClustering	33.2	36.0	38.9	51.3
ArguAna	39.1	44.2	54.4	58.4
ClimateFEVER	22.6	23.9	25.7	29.9
CQADupstackAndroidRetrieval	36.1	38.5	39.7	42.7
DBPedia	37.8	40.4		38.4
	75.3		41.3	
FEVER		79.4	82.8	78.0
FiQA2018	33.3	38.2	43.8	47.7
HotpotQA	65.1	68.6	71.2	69.3
MSMARCO	41.0	42.3	43.7	40.4
NFCorpus	31.0	32.5	34.0	35.5
NQ	56.3	60.0	64.1	57.8
QuoraRetrieval	86.9	87.7	88.2	89.2
SCIDOCS	13.9	17.2	17.5	18.7
SciFact	67.7	69.3	70.4	71.8
Touche2020	21.2	21.4	23.4	27.2
TRECCOVID	72.6	69.8	71.3	82.0
Average	57.9	59.4	61.5	64.4

Table 7: Results for each dataset in the MTEB benchmark. The evaluation metrics are available in the original paper (Muennighoff et al., 2023).