Undervalued Burritos of Yelp

Project Statement

This is a two part project pursuing two ideas that are tangentially related using Yelp's reviews and star ratings. Part 1 will pursue using tokenized review text to predict the label of a review in terms of stars or binned categories (good review, bad review). This involves first cleaning the text for use in classification by removing irrelevant words, punctuation, etc. Then using a form of tokenization, be it word, ngram, or sentence level, transforming the text reviews into useable machine learning features. Finally, feature selection will most likely be needed to trim the number of features and achieve maximum classifier performance. Overall, part 1 will provide a roadmap to building a natural language classifier.

Part 2 will be to separate sentiment in text and star rating based on a quality of interest. Reviews often contain irrelevant information to the specific question a potential customer may have. Specifically, a customer may be interested in finding restaurants with the highest quality burritos. Selecting the Mexican restaurant on Yelp with the highest overall star rating and the largest number of reviews could be a good place to start. However, this necessarily ignores whether the majority of reviews praise the quesadillas, the service, or the atmosphere. Perhaps the restaurants serving the best burritos are nowhere near the top of the overall star rating because they don't have a parking lot or vegetarian options (as an example).

This could be an invaluable method if successful because it will be extremely easy to generalize. The scope of this project is to find the best burritos, but other applications can benefit from similarly specified queries. Interested in yoga studios with the most popular teachers, laundromats with the fastest machines, or bars with the cheapest happy hours? The possibilities are limitless and hold great potential for identification of underrated establishments in all realms of business.

Dataset and Cleaning

Yelp, the massive review platform, is kind enough to publicly offer reviews for a huge swath of businesses across the country and world. Split into several large JSON files, you can filter review information based on user, business, category, etc. The immediate problem is the sheer size of the data. There are nearly 7 million reviews contained from close to 200,000 businesses.

The first step in getting my hands on the information I'm interested in is downloading the files. They come in a nested JSON format, and are quite large. The file containing all the reviews is almost 6 gb. This is too large to hold in memory so I have to parse through line by line and pull out the reviews I need. Because I am interested in burritos specifically, I need only the reviews for establishments that sell some kind of mexican or tex-mex food.

Thankfully, the JSON file that contains the information on all the businesses can be loaded into local memory and pushed into a dataframe. Once this is done, I iterate over the dataframe and look for the 'restaurant', 'mexican' and 'tex-mex' tags in the 'business category' dictionary associated with each business. I then pull out the restaurant name and unique restaurant ID (to separate out all the chains) and use that information to parse the reviews file line by line looking for reviews associated with the restaurants I am interested in. This reduction of data results in just over 4,000 restaurants of interest with almost 390,000 reviews. Still large, but much more manageable. There are a few other intricacies I need to complete to get all the information I need in one place, namely transferring information on restaurant name, location, and region from the businesses file.

The last step I need to take in cleaning the dataset is pulling out all the reviews that mention 'burritos'. This set will be for the second part of this project where I will run sentiment analysis on specific sentences to find undervalued burritos. To pull out all the reviews that mention my word of interest, I can use pandas df.str.contains() method to return every review that has some variation of the word burrito in it. Saving this to a new dataframe and dropping the same rows from the large dataset (so I don't train on these reviews) leaves me with a burritos dataframe of about 50,000 reviews and a finalized reviews dataframe of nearly 330,000 reviews.

Now that I have the reviews I'm interested in with all the information I'll need to answer my question, I can proceed to part 1 of the project, building a classifier.

Part 1: Predicting Review Labels

My first goal is to make a model that can accurately predict what star rating is associated with a block of text. I'll have to begin by taking a look at some numbers that describe my category of interest. Below is a count of the number of reviews associated with each star rating. The number of 5 star reviews dwarfs every other star rating. This may lead to my model predicting everything as a 5 star review unless I balance the classes. Duly noted, but I'll move on for now.

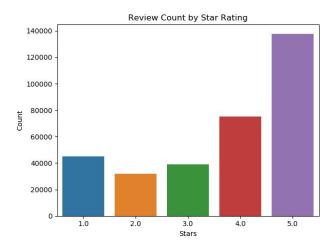


Figure 1: Number of reviews in my whole dataset, binned by stars

The next figure looks at the mean character count for all reviews by star rating. This plot looks a little more uniform, the concern being that if there were significantly more words for a certain type of review that a model might be much more successful at predicting that class. Interestingly enough, 5 star reviews have the lowest mean length. I would not have assumed this beforehand.

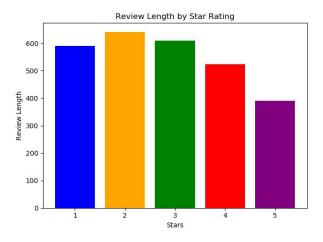


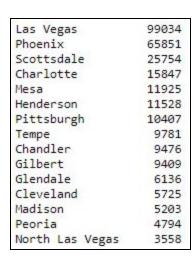
Figure 2: Mean length of reviews binned by stars

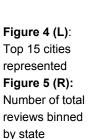
Now that I have a little intuition for how review length and count of star ratings are distributed, I want to next look at the restaurants that make up the 330,000 reviews. Below is a list of the top 15 restaurants garnering reviews (for my purposes here, individual chain's reviews are all added together). As I suspected, chain restaurants make up the majority of the top 15, but not nearly to the extent that it might become problematic. Of all 330,000 reviews in my dataset, only about 2% are for a Chipotle. This is of interest to me because I sincerely doubt that the most undervalued burritos come from somewhere like Chipotle or Taco Bell. If these places made up the majority of my reviews I might have to come up with a different plan.

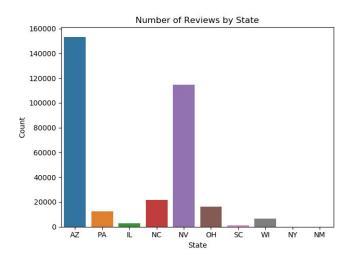
Chipotle Mexican Grill	6513
Tacos El Gordo	5283
Taco Bell	4504
Chili's	4062
Mesa Grill	3331
Nacho Daddy	3113
Cafe Rio	2913
Lindo Michoacan	2631
El Dorado Cantina	2529
Border Grill	2280
La Santisima	2074
Roberto's Taco Shop	2011
Joyride Taco House	1985
El Pollo Loco	1957
Barrio Queen	1954

Figure 3: Top 15 restaurants garnering reviews (here, all Chipotles and all Taco Bells)

The list above is also interesting because it seems to be biased towards restaurants in the American West. Specifically, I know 'Barrio Queen' is a well respected traditional mexican restaurant in Arizona, 'Tacos el Gordo' a highly regarded California mainstay, and 'Nacho Daddy' a Nevada nacho champion. I previously presumed the dataset from Yelp included a large swath of the nation but I better take a closer look at the distribution of states and regions to see what I'm working with.







As the two images above confirm, I actually have a fairly random distribution of states. By far, Arizona has the most reviews as it seems that all their large cities have been included. After that, Las Vegas and the surrounding areas make up a large chunk of the reviews set. Moving forward, it might be prudent to split my analysis into different areas or regions so my undervalued burrito list is not a purely Arizona or Nevada heavyweight clash. For now I'll leave it as it will not influence my model building.

Word Tokenizing, Vectorization and a Baseline Model

Now that I understand my data (and some potential pitfalls) a little bit better, I can proceed to the second part of cleaning that goes with this project. I plan to use a simple bag of words model to represent all the reviews in a vectorized form that a model can understand.

To begin, I will work with the standard NLTK library, utilizing its corpus and built in tokenization to clean the plain text reviews. First I write a function that will allow me to use pandas df.apply() method on my reviews dataframe. The function is exceedingly simple, it takes the whole plain text review, breaks it up into a list of tokens (words in this case), and then removes every stopword contained in NLTK's stopword corpus. Applying this function to the whole dataframe takes about 30 minutes, or 5 milliseconds per review. This is impressively fast and shows how optimized the NLTK library must be. When finished, the reviews dataframe has a new column for the 'tokenized and cleaned text'. Of course, I still keep the plain text review so I can later use it for sentiment analysis.

After tokenizing and cleaning every review, I can now turn these lists of words into a sparse matrix of feature vectors. Before vectorizing, however, I have to split my data into a train and test set. If I fit the vectorizer to my whole set of reviews, every single word will be accounted for. By splitting before fitting and constructing a vocabulary I ensure that when testing the model it will have to account for words it has not seen before (this happens in the transformation stage).

I will use Scikit-learn's CountVectorizer as a starting point because it is transparent and will offer a strong baseline. It works by building a vocabulary of all the words contained in the corpus and then counting the occurence of that word in each document. Instantiating a new CountVectorizer object and fitting the vectorizer to my list of training documents returns a vocabulary of every word that occurs in the training corpus. There are around 163,000 entries in this vocabulary.

Next, I can transform the list of documents into a list of feature vectors. The CountVectorizer does this in a straightforward manner with a transform method. This is an incredibly sparse matrix as you might imagine. There are techniques to reduce the size of the vocabulary, as much of those features will have little bearing on the actual model, but this is just to get a baseline so I'll leave it for now.

Once every document has been transformed into a feature vector of word counts, I can fit and run a model to see where the baseline stands. After testing several models, I will be using Multinomial Naive Bayes for performance and speed. The literature also suggests this model as being particularly useful for working with text. Again, the features here are the vectors of word counts and the target is star rating. Fitting the model to the transformed training vectors and

	precision	recall	f1-score
1.0	0.64	0.74	0.69
2.0	0.41	0.29	0.34
3.0	0.45	0.33	0.38
4.0	0.50	0.46	0.48
5.0	0.75	0.84	0.79

class labels, and then predicting labels from the transformed testing vectors returns the classification report printed to the left.

Unfortunately this baseline model does not perform as well as I had hoped. However, I believe the biggest problem is the one detailed above (see

figure 1), extremely imbalanced classes. It seems that because there are so many 5 star reviews relative to every other class (but particularly 2 and 3 star reviews), the model has learned to predict a 5 star review for any instance of language that isn't exceedingly negative. This gives fairly high recall for 5 star reviews, but lower precision. To adjust for the imbalance of number of reviews, I believe the classes can be combined without losing sight of the overarching goal of this project.

Making a new column in my reviews dataframe for a binary review classification is fairly straightforward. I construct a dictionary of star ratings (1-5) to 2 new classes, 'Good' for 5 and 4 star reviews and 'Bad/Neutral' for 1, 2 and 3 star reviews.

	precision	recall	f1-score
Good	0.90	0.93	0.91
Neutral/Bad	0.86	0.80	0.83

Performing the same steps as above, but changing my target variable to this new column yields the classification report to the left. As I expected, the classifier now performs significantly better when predicting our target

variable. Because of the significantly reduced complexity, the classifier now just has to decide if a review is mostly positive or mostly negative. 9/10 times the classifier predicts a review as being positive, it is!

This is a fairly solid baseline, but can definitely be improved upon. A relatively straightforward path towards improvement is incorporating more informative features into the model. This can be accomplished through changing my tokenization to an n-gram system. This will preserve some of the ordering that may be informative towards prediction.

Bigrams and Feature Selection

Converting my bag of words into a bag of bigrams is an easy process. NLTK has a function, ngrams, that takes a value for n (denoting bigrams,trigrams,quadgrams, etc) and the text. An array of bigrams is returned. Applying this function over the whole reviews dataframe returns a list of bigrams associated with each review, just like the word tokenization above. The same process for vectorizing applies here, first I will split into a training and testing set then I will fit the CountVectorizer to the training bigrams and construct a vocabulary. The added complexity of working with unique bigrams has increased the vocabulary to 3.4 million terms! I'll try running a model with this many terms but some feature selection will certainly be needed.

With the same process as above, and still working with the binary classes, switching the feature

	precision	recall	f1-score
Good	0.90	0.96	0.93
Neutral/Bad	0.92	0.79	0.85

vectors to a bigram representation improves the performance of my naive bayes classifier. Both f1 scores have gone up and the precision of picking the neutral and bad reviews has improved significantly. This is altogether not a very surprising result. More

information is contained in these bigrams about word ordering which should be fairly important in predicting what class a review goes into. As a simple example, we can think of the two similar bigrams (good, but) and (but, good). In the context of a review these mirror imaged bigrams are likely to be associated with different sentiments. In the simpler bag of words model, this order was never preserved.

However, as mentioned above, the size of the vocabulary is far too large. It is likely that classification performance can be increased by selecting the most informative features from this vocabulary and eliminating the noise contained in the uninformative features. There are many ways to do this, but using a Chi Squared Goodness of Fit test for association between variables is well defined in the literature and straightforward to implement.

The chi-squared statistic represents a difference in observed vs expected frequencies of a given categorical variable in relation to a target class. This works particularly well with word (or bigram) counts, as the frequency is already calculated and the test simply has to calculate observed vs expected. This test assumes that each feature, in this case a bigram, occurs independent of class. That is, the null hypothesis would say a given bigram (excellent, food) occurs at an observed frequency close to that of the expected frequency. A chi-squared statistic for any given bigram is given by this equation:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Figure 6: Calculation of Chi-Squared Statistic where O = Observed Frequency and E = Expected Frequency

So for calculating the statistic of any given bigram I'll follow these steps. First I'll get observed counts for each class and bigram in a contingency table (these numbers are made up).

	Bigram True	Bigram False	Total
Good Review	37	13	50
False Review	10	24	34
Total	47	37	84

Figure 7: Observed counts of a given bigram and its occurence in a particular class

Next I will calculate the expected frequency of each cell given these counts. The math for this is row total * column total / grand total. The table of expected frequencies is given below:

	Bigram True	Bigram False
Good Review	28	22
False Review	19	15

Figure 8: Expected counts of a given bigram calculate from figure 7. Rounded for simplicity.

Finally, we can calculate an overall test statistic using the formula above. For the top left cell, good review, bigram true the calculation looks like this.

$$(37-28)^2/28 = 2.9$$

Summing all of the test statistics from each cell gives an overall statistic for the singular bigram. In association with the degrees of freedom, here 1, a p-value can be calculated. Do this calculation for all 3.4 million bigrams and I'll be left with the significance of the frequency of each bigram in relation to my target variable.

Thankfully Sk-learn has a method for calculating this statistic and I don't have to implement it myself. Once a statistic is calculated for each bigram, they can then be filtered by test statistic or p-value associated with that statistic. I'll choose to filter by p-value, only keeping those features (bigrams) that have a p-value under 0.05. This is a standard choice for statistical inference, but I also tried other values here and this worked the best. This method results in a feature space reduction of 96%, down to 150,709 bigrams. This is smaller than my original vocabulary of 160,000 words and should be more informative.

With virtually the same process as above, I will specify these 150,000 or so bigrams as being the vocabulary for my count vectorizer to use in transformation. Splitting into a train and test set,

	precision	recall	f1-score
Good	0.93	0.94	0.94
Neutral/Bad	0.89	0.87	0.88

fitting to the train set and predicting on the test set gives this classification report. Even with a feature reduction of 96%, the classifier has slightly more balanced performance and a higher f1 score for predicting neutral and bad reviews. This

model is much better than the one with 3.4 million bigrams as it runs much more quickly, is less prone to overfitting, and doesn't carry nearly as much extraneous information.

Just for kicks, I am curious how this model performs when asked to classify reviews into the 5 original buckets. Using the same vocabulary of bigrams and changing the target variable back to the original star system gives much better classification performance than in the first instance of just words. This method of bigrams and feature selection works extremely well in improving classifier performance regardless of target.

I am curious whether using this same process with trigrams or quad-grams to incorporate even more information on ordering would improve classification performance further. Unfortunately, with the sheer size of the vocabulary I can't perform these operations on my local machine. However, I would expect diminishing rates of return as you incorporate more information. Additionally, the performance on the binary target is already pretty strong and may not have much room to improve due to inherent textual discrepancies in a corpus this large (typos, foreign language, emojis, etc).

Overall, this shows a relatively straightforward method for building a classifier from a collection of reviews. To recap, first I cleaned and tokenized each review by removing stop-words and punctuation before pulling out a list of singular words and later bigrams from each review. Performing feature selection over these bigrams with the chi squared statistic allowed me to reduce vocabulary size and decrease chances of overfitting. I then tried both Count Vectorizer and TFIDF Vectorizer as a means for transforming the corpus into useable machine learning features, with better performance achieved by Count Vectorizer. Finally, using a Naive Bayes Classifier on the sparse matrix of feature vectors generates fast and relatively accurate predictions of class labels, here good or bad reviews. Increased performance could likely be

achieved by more rigorous cleaning procedures and using a higher ngram representation. For now, the current model is fairly strong and I will now move on to part 2 of the project.

Part 2: Sentiment Analysis

The second half of this project attempts to find out if I can use sentiment analysis to identify undervalued burritos, relative to star rating. Specifically, using the subset of reviews that mention the word 'burrito' or its analogs I will pull out the sentence concerning the topic of interest and run sentiment analysis on it.

The first step in this process is splitting the sentence or sentences that contain the word 'burrito' (or analogs) from the rest of the review. To do this, I will first apply the custom function 'split_sentence_return_burrito'. This function checks for the presence of punctuation (some reviews do not have punctuation for whatever reason) then applies the regular expression re.split on sentence ending punctuation. This returns a list that can be iterated through to pull out the sentence or sentences that contain the word 'burrito'. The 'burrito_sentence' is then added to a new column of the burritos dataframe.

The second step in this process is running these collected sentences through a sentiment analyzer. There are many out of the box sentiment analysis APIs for various use cases and purposes. Originally I attempted to use Google's Natural Language API as it is highly regarded but the runtime on my machine was massive (~32 hours for sentiment analysis of every burrito sentence). The tool I decided to use instead is VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and Sentiment Reasoner). VADER is a "lexicon and rule-based sentiment analysis tool that is specifically attuned to sentiments expressed in social media, and works well on texts from other domains" (https://github.com/cjhutto/vaderSentiment). The package is fast, clean and relatively straightforward.

The output, given a sentence, is a polarity dictionary with 4 measures, positive, negative, neutral, and compound. Positive, neutral and negative are percentages of words that fall into each class in a given sentence and add up to 1. The compound score is the more useful measure as a true sentiment score, offering a value from -1 (most negative) to 1 (most positive). The package calls this compound measure a "normalized weighted composite score." To get a sense for how this works, an example is reproduced below. There's a lot going on here, but the workflow is simple. I take an original text review, pull out the sentence(s) that have the word 'burrito', and run it through the sentiment analyzer. A polarity dictionary is returned where we see that this sentence has been correctly classified as positive and neutral with a fairly high compound score.

```
Original review: Just love, love love it here. I love the cute beachy decor and the place is always clean. The menu has a great selection. I just love the California Burrito - it is yummy. We get it without onions. My daughter loves the Cheese Quesadilla. We always get a side of fries. They are now selling Hamburgers too - not sure why they added it but if you are trying to please everyone in a group for me it is a great thing to add to the menu. I love that you can call your order in and it is ready for pick-up. For a great mexican food - check this out.

Sentence to be analyzed: ['i just love the california burrito - it is yummy']

Polarity dictionary: {'neg': 0.0, 'neu': 0.656, 'pos': 0.344, 'compound': 0.6369}
```

Figure 6: Positive review and burrito sentiment classified by VADER Sentiment Analyzer

An example of a negative sentence is reproduced below. This review is obviously quite poor overall, and the sentence about the burrito isn't much better. The analyzer nails this one too, identifying the negative sentiment associated with 'fake egg' and 'not very satisfying'. The compound score, as expected, is quite low.

```
Original review: We split a breakfast burrito, which had a decent chorizo flavor, but the egg was fake and not very appetizing. The salsa was not good at all and we were afraid to eat it after visual inspection. I also felt a bit sick afterwards and this was the only thing I ate. Chili's express might be a better choice for airport dining.

Sentence to be analyzed: ['we split a breakfast burrito, which had a decent chorizo flavor, but the egg was fake and not very appetizing']

Polarity dictionary: {'neg': 0.196, 'neu': 0.804, 'pos': 0.0, 'compound': -0.631}
```

Figure 7: Negative review and burrito sentiment classified by VADER Sentiment Analyzer

So now that I have a sentiment analysis tool, I can plug in every burrito sentence and get back a score that may be useful in ranking burritos. Again, the goal here is to identify those restaurants that may not have great star ratings overall but are consistently complimented on their burritos.

Finding the Best Burritos

As mentioned previously, one might expect star ratings to be a good starting spot for finding the best burritos. So let's begin there. Looking at all the reviews that mention burritos, grouping by restaurant and only keeping the restaurants that have >10 reviews(793 restaurants) gives me this list (reproduced below). The best burrito restaurant according to this ranking system is Pollos LaChuya in Tempe, Arizona with a mean star rating of 4.92 based on 12 reviews. However, their mean burrito sentiment score is fairly low, 0.16. Their burritos don't make anyone feel too strongly, apparently.

	Restaurant Name	Mean Sentiment Score	Mean Stars	Review Count
562	Pollos LaChuya	0.169492	4.916667	12
529	Cocina Madrigal	0.181900	4.875000	16
130	Garden Grill	0.298246	4.846154	13
78	El Frescos Cocina Mexicana	0.331225	4.812500	32
177	Kiss Pollos Estilo Sinaloa	0.282415	4.769231	26
386	La Purisima Bakery	0.222075	4.750000	12
557	El Cordobes	0.170783	4.750000	12
150	Del Yaqui	0.289464	4.727273	11
421	Humberto's Mexican Food	0.213009	4.727273	11
346	Tacos Kissi	0.232714	4.714286	14

Figure 8: Top burrito restaurants with more than 10 reviews sorted by star ratings

By changing the sort_values argument, I will next look at the top 10 restaurants based on mean sentiment score. The top 10 has completely changed. The new number 1 is Rosarita's Beach in Las Vegas, Nevada (although now closed - not a great review of this method) they garnered a mean sentiment score of 0.50. Their mean stars tell us this is a poor restaurant, but apparently their burritos make reviewers feel quite positive.

	Restaurant Name	Mean Sentiment Score	Mean Stars	Review Count
0	Rosarita's Beach	0.508306	3.375000	16
1	Mexquite Mexican Eatery	0.456758	4.000000	12
2	Betitos Mexican Food	0.455457	4.285714	14
3	Super B Burrito	0.454376	3.644444	135
4	Burrito's Juarez	0.449913	3.600000	15
5	Los Picos Parrilla Restaurant	0.446238	3.769231	13
6	Mexico City	0.433089	3.388889	18
7	Chronic Cantina	0.427884	3.684211	19
8	Jose' and Tony's Mexican Restaurant	0.423275	3.250000	12
9	Amigos Tacos	0.417572	3.916667	36

Figure 8: Top burrito restaurants with more than 10 reviews sorted by sentiment score

To dive further into this method, let's look at a few samples of burrito reviews from each of the top ranking restaurants. First are three reviews for Rosarita's Beach (top based on sentiment), the next three reviews are for Pollos LaChuya (top based on stars). What is immediately apparent is that the reviews for Rosarita's Beach have more features (words) to work with. This results in a more confident sentiment analysis. For example, the first review shown for Pollos LaChuya was labeled as totally neutral by the sentiment analyzer. While this is correct given the narrow question being asked, there is a high chance that a restaurant with 'phenomenal meats'

also has phenomenal burritos. Alas, therein lies the limitation of this relatively simple approach to sentiment analysis.

```
Rosarita's Beach Burrito Reviews

["their breakfast burritos are a pretty good size and it's pretty hearty and very filling with eggs, potatoes, pico and your choice of either ham or bacon", 'the breakfast burrito we had was better executed as far as the way the eggs and bacon are c hopped and mixed, better seasoned, and pico is even different ', 'stars for having a better tasting burrito, good location, good deal and quick service']

['really love the chicken tacos here and my gf loves the veggie burrito']

['my husband ordered the chicken asdo burrito, it was fresh, tasty and awesome\nfree fixings bar, excellent tortillas, clean and nicely decorated for what it is, a taqueria']

Pollos LaChuya Burrito Reviews

['next time, i might try one of their phenomenal meats in a burrito']

["this is probably one of the best burritos i've ever had", 'i went back a second time just to try the asada burrito', 'the service was exceptional just be prepared to wait a little longer than those chain burrito places']

["the only reason why i didn't give it a 5 star review is because there was quite a bit of gristle in the carne burrito i or dered"]
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However, this does not make the results of this method invalid. As an attempt to use sentiment analysis to yield potentially undervalued restaurants, working with sentences that contain a keyword of interest seems to hold promise. To improve performance and reliability I have some tweaks in mind. First, getting more reviews for each restaurant would definitely help. As illustrated above, sentences classified as totally neutral really hurt a restaurants ranking. Getting more reviews would work towards solving this problem because I could drop the reviews that don't really tell me anything about the quality of the burrito. Sentences such as "I think I want to try the burrito next time." are actually surprisingly common and weight down reviews that actually praise the quality of the burritos. The second tweak I have in mind is including more information for the sentiment analyzer to work with. Oftentimes, a review will include potentially useful information AFTER the sentence about the burrito, as shown in the following example: "I tried the burrito again. Last time it was terrible but with the new cook it's delicious." This review would get classified as totally neutral because all the useful information is contained in the second independent sentence. This would be tough to implement, but perhaps searching for a keyword such as 'it's' in the next sentence - hopefully referring to the burrito - could allow this extra information to be kept around when parsing sentences.