

Program Synthesis using Neural Sequence Generation

Shirish Karande and Ganesh Prasath Ramani,
Tata Consultancy Services - Research

Talk Sketch

- ❑ What is Program Synthesis ?
- ❑ Program Synthesis as Sequence Generation Task (with Karel as example)
- ❑ Pre-trained Language Models for complex code related tasks
- ❑ LLMs for code, tricks that help when fine-tuning is not an option
- ❑ Anecdotes about ChatGPT

What is Program Synthesis ?

A Transformer model generating python code from natural language

sat

S Write a python code to print welcome to the Bridge Program. Generate an execution trace of the program.

Here's the code to print "Welcome to the Bridge Program":

```
python
print("Welcome to the Bridge Program")
```

And here's the execution trace of the program:

```
scss
Line 1: print("Welcome to the Bridge Program")
```

When the code is executed, it prints the following output:

```
css
Welcome to the Bridge Program
```

ChatGPT Jan 30 Version. Free Research Preview. Our goal is to make AI systems more natural and safe to interact with. Your feedback will help us improve.

What is Program Synthesis ?

Generate code (in some language) from suitable specifications (intent)

Natural Language

Python, C, C++, ...

Input-Output Examples

SQL, SPARQL

Code Smells and Properties

Custom Language:

Traces/Demonstration

FlashFill, Karel,

Another Formal Language

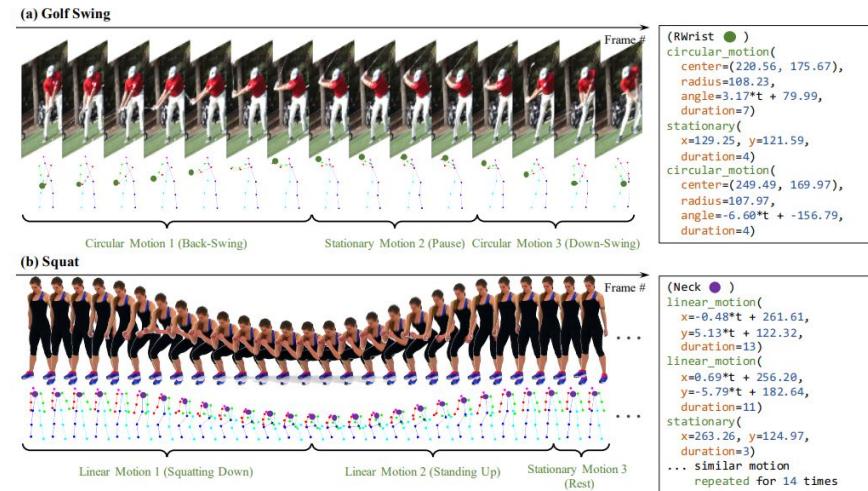
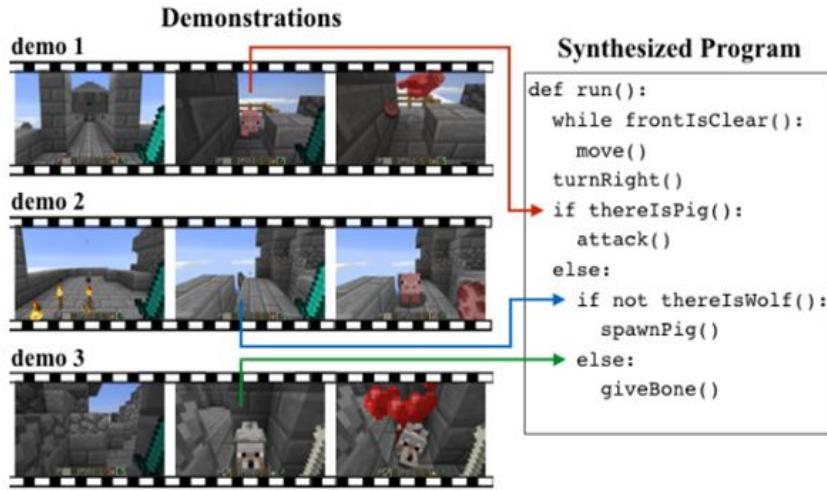
What is Program Synthesis ?

DSL for String Modification	Specification in I/O examples	Program						
<pre> Program <i>p</i> := Concat(<i>e</i>₁,<i>e</i>₂,<i>e</i>₃,...) Expression <i>e</i> := <i>f</i> <i>n</i> <i>n</i>₁(<i>n</i>₂) <i>n(f)</i> ConstStr(<i>c</i>) Substring <i>f</i> := SubStr(<i>k</i>₁,<i>k</i>₂) GetSpan(<i>r</i>₁,<i>i</i>₁,<i>y</i>₁,<i>r</i>₂,<i>i</i>₂,<i>y</i>₂) Nesting <i>n</i> := GetToken(<i>t</i>,<i>i</i>) ToCase(<i>s</i>) Replace(<i>d</i>₁,<i>d</i>₂) Trim() GetUpto(<i>r</i>) GetFrom(<i>r</i>) GetFirst(<i>t</i>,<i>i</i>) GetAll(<i>t</i>) Regex <i>r</i> := <i>t</i>₁ ... <i>t</i>_{<i>n</i>} <i>d</i>₁ ... <i>d</i>_{<i>m</i>} Type <i>t</i> := Number Word Alphanum AllCaps PropCase Lower Digit Char Case <i>s</i> := Proper AllCaps Lower Position <i>k</i> := -100, -99, ..., 1, 2, ..., 100 Index <i>i</i> := -5, -4, -3, -2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Character <i>c</i> := A – Z, a – z, 0 – 9, !?, @... Delimiter <i>d</i> := &..?!@()[]%{};/;:\$#"/ Boundary <i>y</i> := Start End </pre>	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>I</i>₁ = January</td> <td><i>O</i>₁ = jan</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>I</i>₂ = February</td> <td><i>O</i>₂ = feb</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>I</i>₃ = March</td> <td><i>O</i>₃ = mar</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>I</i> ₁ = January	<i>O</i> ₁ = jan	<i>I</i> ₂ = February	<i>O</i> ₂ = feb	<i>I</i> ₃ = March	<i>O</i> ₃ = mar	$\tilde{P} = \text{ToCase}(\text{Lower}, \text{SubStr}(1, 3))$
<i>I</i> ₁ = January	<i>O</i> ₁ = jan							
<i>I</i> ₂ = February	<i>O</i> ₂ = feb							
<i>I</i> ₃ = March	<i>O</i> ₃ = mar							

Production Rules,
Terminal/Non-terminal symbols.

RobustFill: Neural Program Learning under Noisy I/O. Devlin et. al., 2017

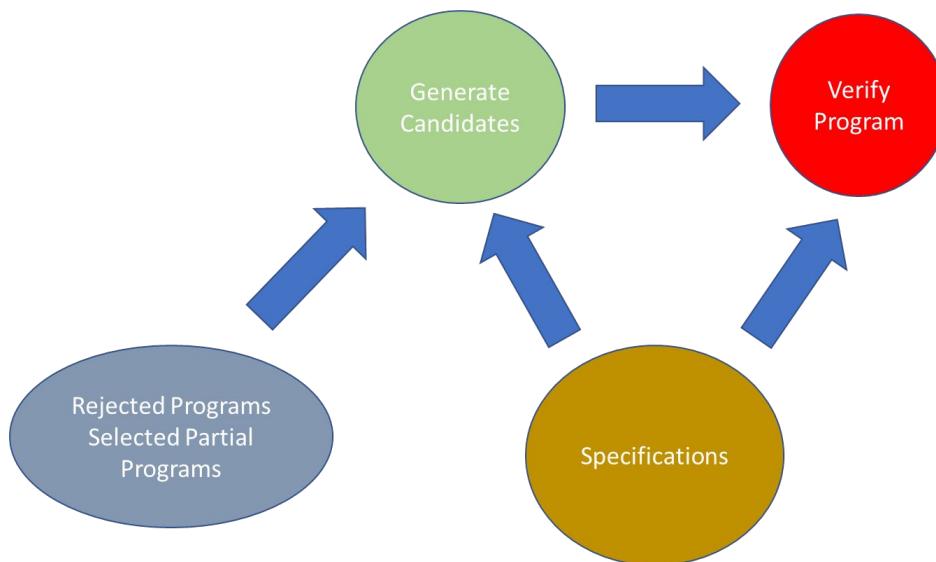
What is Program Synthesis ?



Neural Program Synthesis from Diverse Demonstration Videos, Sun et. al, 2018

Hierarchical Motion Understanding with Motion Programs, Kulal et. al, 2021

Explicit Enumeration and Search to Synthesize Programs



Program Space Representation

- Grammar to generate candidates
- Top Down v/s Bottom Up

Fast checking of equivalence

Fast checking for incorrectness

Neural Networks for Program Synthesis

How can use of Neural Networks help ?



Figure 2: Neural network predicts the probability of each function appearing in the source code.

Deepcoder, Balog et. al, ICLR 2017.:

- ❑ “Sort and add” enumeration: Choose top k functions, feed to a traditional solver like Sketch or λ^2
- ❑ Depth First Search: When growing programs choose functions in an order guided by NN

*Distribution on any attributes can be learned.

Represent Search Space

- Statistical Distribution of Program

Represent Intent and Tasks

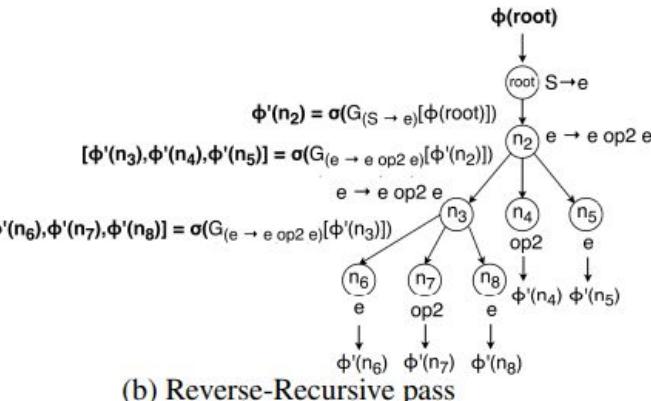
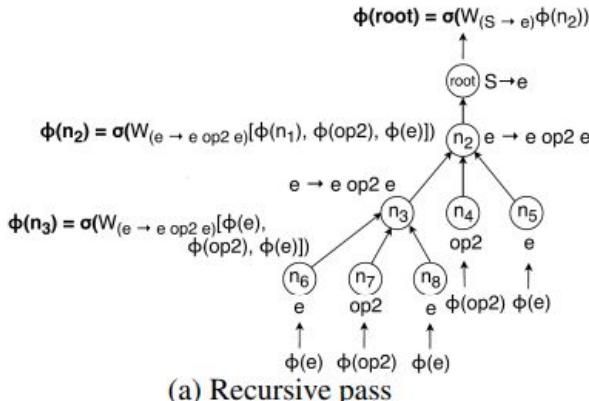
- Natural Language, Images,

Represent Programs

- Predict Properties
- Predict Execution
- Predict Correctness (Repair)
- Predict Equivalence

Program Synthesis with Tree Structured Neural Architecture

- ❑ Representation for every symbol and production rule
- ❑ Forward and Reverse NN for each production rule
- ❑ Partial Program Trees of Depth T
- ❑ Task representation (I/O pairs) is concatenated at leafs



String e	$:=$	Concat(f_1, \dots, f_n)
Substring f	$:=$	ConstStr(s)
	$ $	SubStr(v, p_l, p_r)
Position p	$:=$	(r, k, Dir)
	$ $	ConstPos(k)
Direction Dir	$:=$	Start End
Regex r	$:=$	$s \mid T_1 \dots \mid T_n$

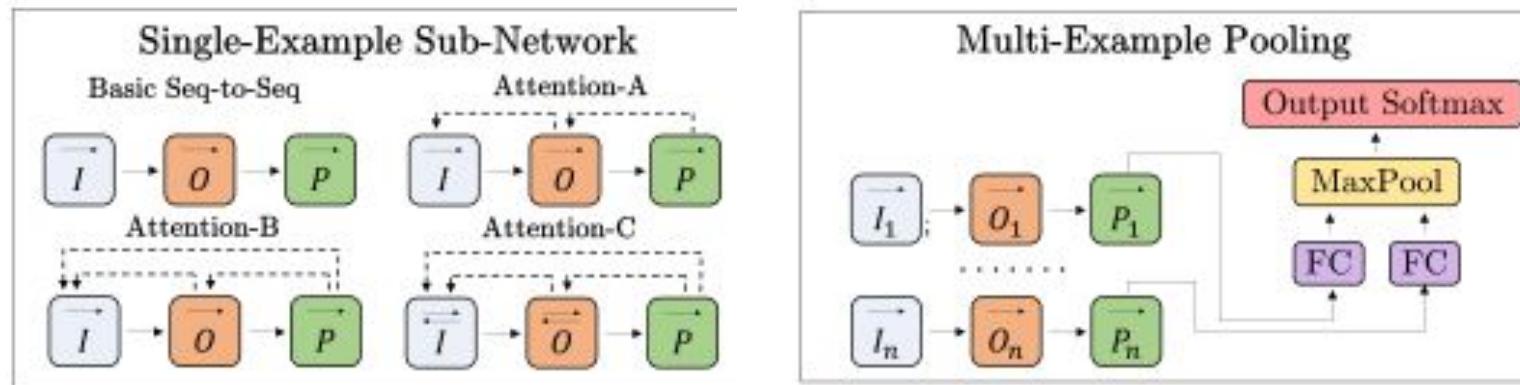
Neuro-Symbolic
Program
Synthesis,
Parisotto et. al,
2017

Program Synthesis as Sequence Generation

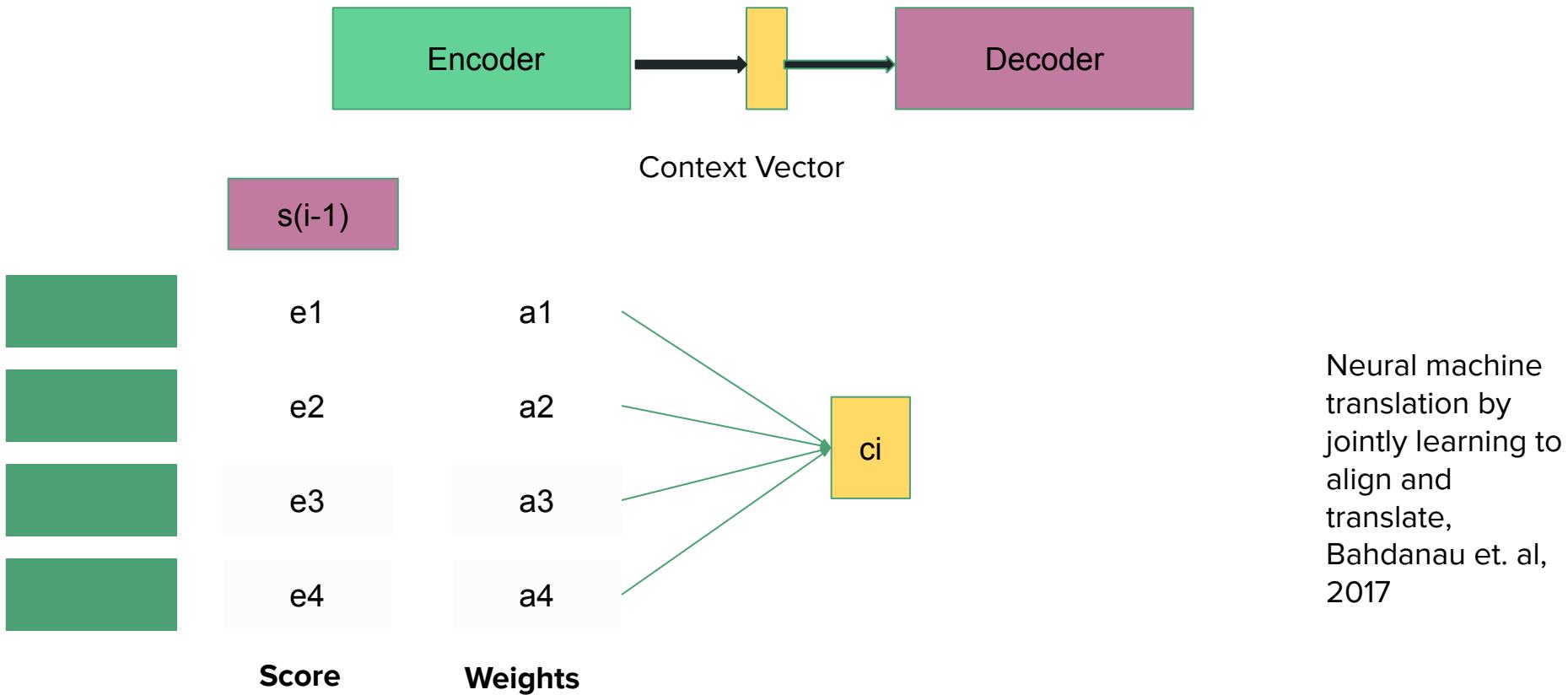
LSTM for representation of Input, Output, Program Generation

- 95 ASCII tokens for I and O
- 495 Program tokens for P
- Late Fusion: Predict program tokens after Max Pool
- Attention and Bi-Directional plays an important role

System	Beam	
	100	1000
Parisotto et al. (2017)	23%	34%
Basic Seq-to-Seq	51%	56%
Attention-C	83%	86%
Attention-C-DP	89%	92%



Primer on Attention in sequence-sequence models



Program Synthesis for Karel using Sequence Generation

Program Synthesis for Karel

```

Prog p := def main():s
Stmt s := while(b) : s | repeat(r) : s | s1; s2
          | a | if(b) : s | if(b) : s1 else : s2
Cond b := markersPresent() | leftIsClear()
           | rightIsClear() | frontIsClear() | not(b)
Action a := move() | turnLeft() | turnRight()
           | pickMarker() | putMarker()
Cste r := 0 | 1 | ... | 19
  
```

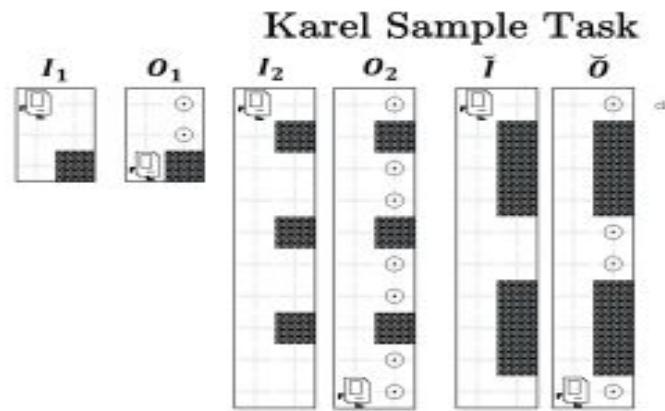
Scope Representation in Sequence

Conditionals: c(<body> c)

If: i(<body> i)

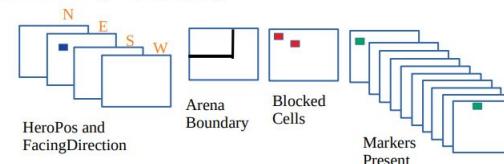
Else: e(<body> e)

Repeat: r(and r)



Neural Program Meta-Induction, Devlin et. al, 2017

- Feature Map = (16,18,18)



State : {
HeroPos : (2,2);
HeroDir : 1;
Boundary : { (0,0), (10, 10) };
BlockedCells : { (1,2), (4,4) };
Markers : {(2,1) = 1,
 (1,5) = 10 }
}

(b) State Representation

Channel (1:4) : Hero Position and Facing Direction

Channel (5) : Arena Boundary (Hero has to move inside the arena)

Channel (6) : Cells with walls (where Hero cannot go)

Channel (7:16) : Number of markers at a position.

Value of any marker in Channel 7 = 1

...

Value of any marker in Channel 16 = 10

Program Synthesis for Karel

1. CNN to embed I/O example
2. Late Fusion as done in RobustFill
3. Task Embedding + Previous Token

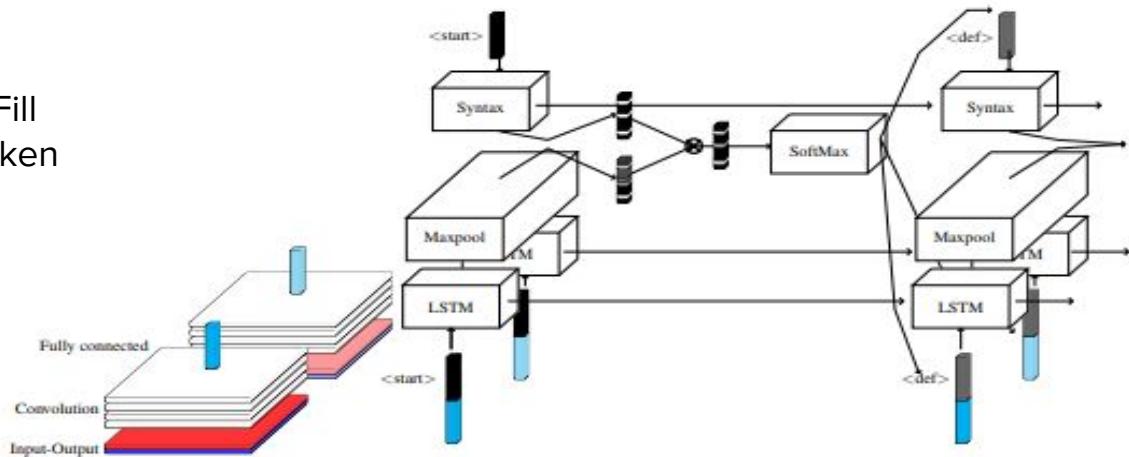
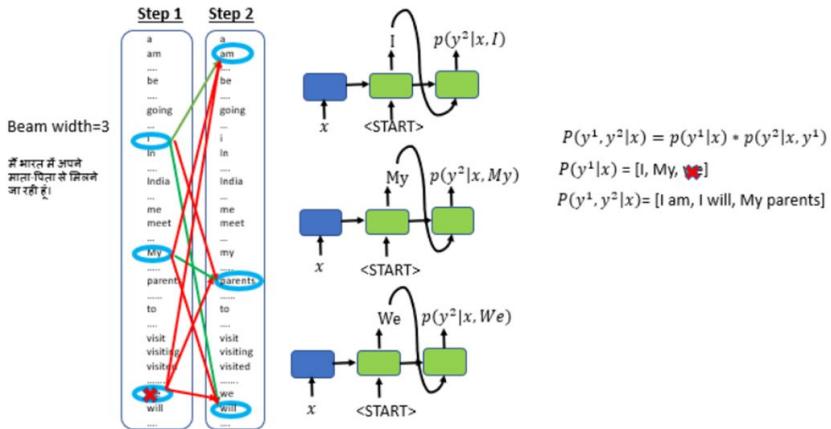


Figure 2: Architecture of our model. Each pair of Input-Output is embedded jointly by a CNN. One decoder LSTM is run for each example, getting fed in a concatenation of the previous token and the IO pair embedding (constant across timestep). Results of all the decoders are maxpooled and the prediction is modulated by the mask generated by the syntax model. The probability over the next token is then obtained by a Softmax transformation.

Leveraging Grammer and Reinforcement Learning For Neural Program Synthesis, Devlin et. al, 2017

Grammar constrained decoding

Beam Search



Grammatical correctness can be used to apply masks on the tokens that can be selected at each step.

Leveraging Grammar and Reinforcement Learning
For Neural Program Synthesis, Devlin et. al, 2017

<https://towardsdatascience.com/an-intuitive-explanation-of-beam-search-9b1d744e7a0f>

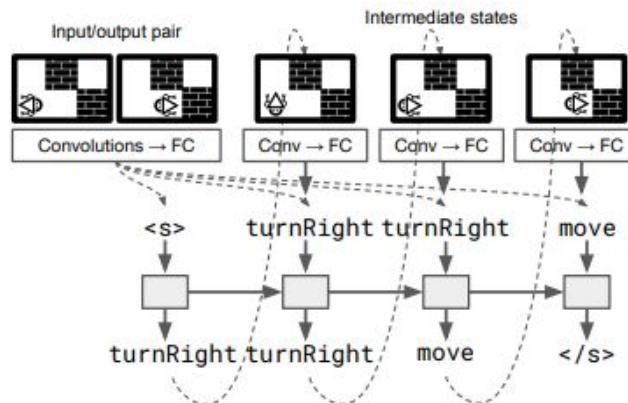
Neural generation of traces for program synthesis

Synthesize traces from the Input-Output States

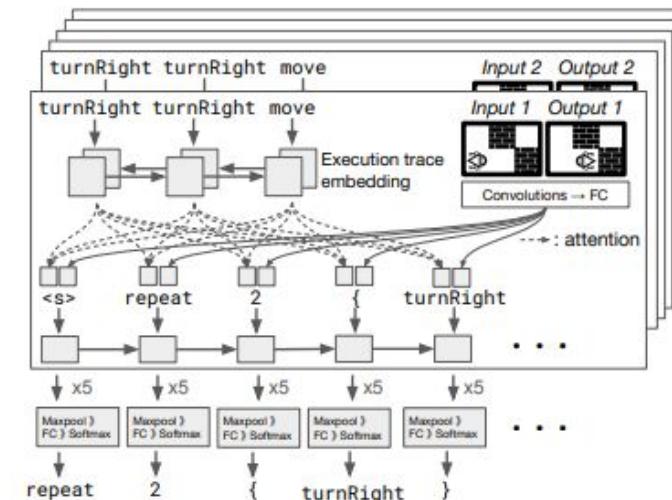
Use Karel interpreter to replay actions and find out corresponding intermediate states.

Use Bi-LSTM to get an embedding of trace, state interleaved,

Continue using late fusion

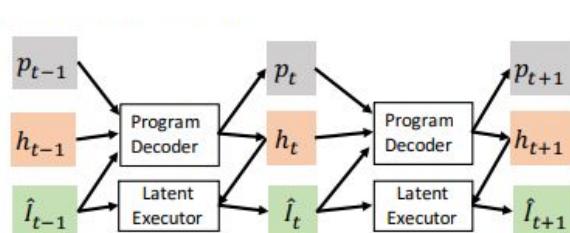


Improving Neural Program Synthesis with Inferred Execution Traces, Shin et. al, 2018

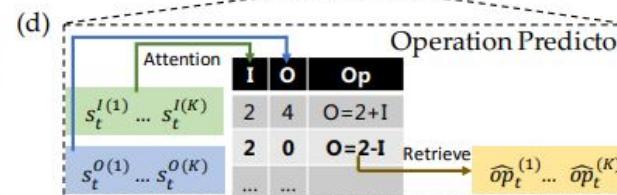
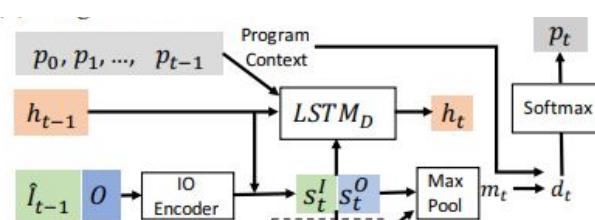
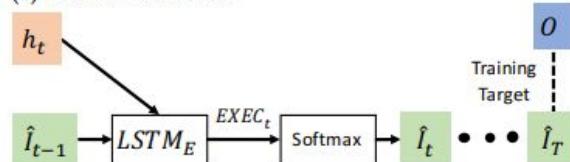


Latent Execution for Neural Program Synthesis

- ❑ LSTM to represent Intermediate State s.t. If given as input to remaining partial program it leads to same output.
- ❑ Use updated states for synthesis (work for snippets of C as well)



(c) Latent Executor



Latent Execution for Neural Program Synthesis, Chen et. al, 2021

Neural Debugger

Train an LSTM to debug the program generated by the synthesizer LSTM

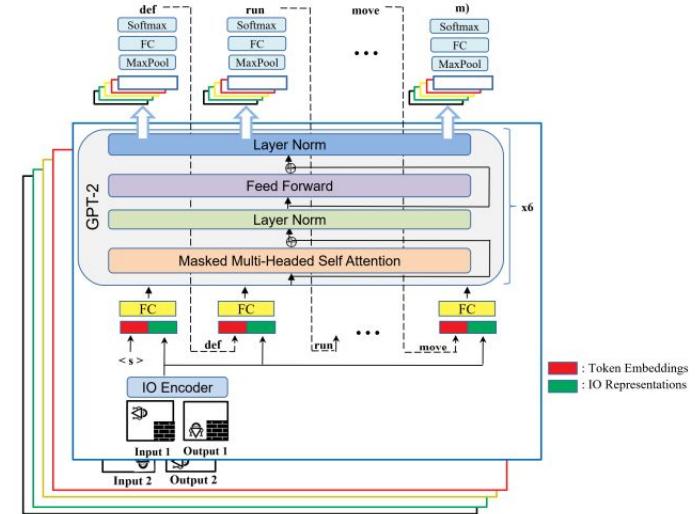
Debugging Language: KEEP, DELETE, INSERT, REPLACE

I/O Examples	Gold Program	Synthesizer Output	Edit Operations	SED Output
 Input 1 Input 2	Def run m(REPEAT R=3 r(move r) putMarker m)	Def → KEEP run → KEEP m(→ KEEP move → INSERT (move) putMarker → INSERT (move) m) → KEEP	Def run m(move move move putMarker m)	
 Output 1 Output 2				

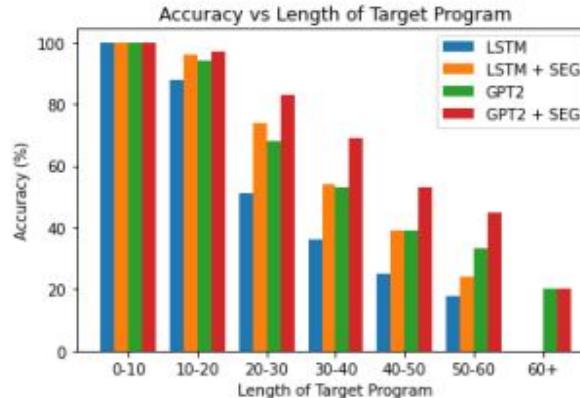
Transformers for the Synthesizer

Transformer Decoder for Synthesizer

Performance gain greater on longer programs



Method	Top-1 Gen	Exact Match
Leveraging Grammar + LSTM [3]	73.67%	39.94%
IO->Trace->Program [32]	81.30%	42.80%
Latent Execution [7]	83.68%	41.12%
Execution Guided Decoding [6]	86.04%	40.88%
Learning to Repair [16]	89.80%	43.48%
Execution Guided Decoding (Ensemble) [6]	92.00%	47.08%
LSTM Decoder	73.48%	40.88%
LSTM + SEG	84.48%	43.28%
Transformer Decoder	82.40%	43.36%
Transformer + SEG	89.64%	44.80%
Transformer + Debugger	90.44%	44.88%



Are Transformers All
That Karel Needs,
Garg et. al, 2021

Why Transformers?

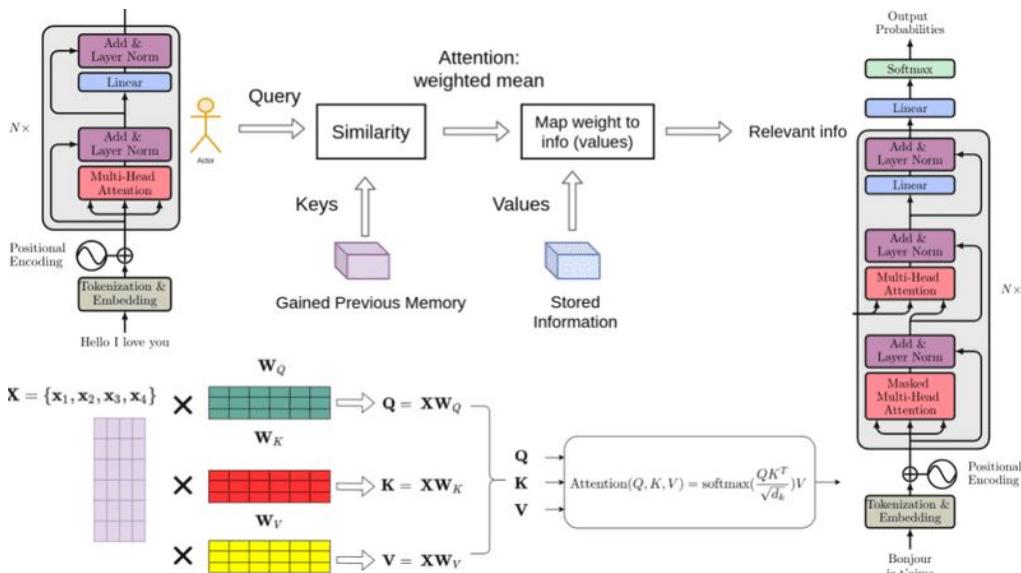


Table 1: Maximum path lengths, per-layer complexity and minimum number of sequential operations for different layer types. n is the sequence length, d is the representation dimension, k is the kernel size of convolutions and r the size of the neighborhood in restricted self-attention.

Layer Type	Complexity per Layer	Sequential Operations	Maximum Path Length
Self-Attention	$O(n^2 \cdot d)$	$O(1)$	$O(1)$
Recurrent	$O(n \cdot d^2)$	$O(n)$	$O(n)$
Convolutional	$O(k \cdot n \cdot d^2)$	$O(1)$	$O(log_k(n))$
Self-Attention (restricted)	$O(r \cdot n \cdot d)$	$O(1)$	$O(n/r)$

- Infinite Reference
- Non Sequential Processing
- Parallelism (multi GPU)
- Less Complex Computations

Source: <https://theaisummer.com/transformer/>

Attention is all you need, Vaswani et. al. (2017)

Code Generation using Pre-trained (Fine-tunable) Language Models

Tasks

Category	Task	Dataset Name	Language	Train/Dev/Test Size	Baselines	Task definition
Code-Code	Clone Detection	BigCloneBench	Java	900K/416K/416K	CodeBERT	Predict semantic equivalence for a pair of codes.
		POJ-104	C/C++	32K/8K/12K		Retrieve semantically similar codes.
	Defect Detection	Devign	C	21k/2.7k/2.7k		Identify whether a function is vulnerable.
	Cloze Test	CT-all	Python, Java, PHP, JavaScript, Ruby, Go	-/-/176k		Tokens to be predicted come from the entire vocab.
		CT-max/min	Python, Java, PHP, JavaScript, Ruby, Go	-/-/2.6k		Tokens to be predicted come from {max, min}.
	Code Completion	PY150	Python	100k/5k/50k	CodeGPT	Predict following tokens given contexts of codes.
		GitHub Java Corpus	Java	13k/7k/8k		
	Code Repair	Bugs2Fix	Java	98K/12K/12K	Encoder-Decoder	Automatically refine codes by fixing bugs.
	Code Translation	CodeTrans	Java-C#	10K/0.5K/1K		Translate the codes from one programming language to another programming language.
Text-Code	NL Code Search	CodeSearchNet, AdvTest	Python	251K/9.6K/19K	CodeBERT	Given a natural language query as input, find semantically similar codes.
		CodeSearchNet, WebQueryTest	Python	251K/9.6K/1k		Given a pair of natural language and code, predict whether they are relevant or not.
	Text-to-Code Generation	CONCODE	Java	100K/2K/2K	CodeGPT	Given a natural language docstring/comment as input, generate a code.
Code-Text	Code Summarization	CodeSearchNet	Python, Java, PHP, JavaScript, Ruby, Go	908K/45K/53K	Encoder-Decoder	Given a code, generate its natural language docstring/comment.
Text-Text	Documentation Translation	Microsoft Docs	English-Latvian/Danish/Norwegian/Chinese	156K/4K/4K		Translate code documentation between human languages (e.g. En-Zh), intended to test low-resource multi-lingual translation.

CodeXGLUE, A machine learning benchmark dataset for code understanding and generation, Chen et. al, 2021

Metrics of Performance

- Exact Match
- Program is grammatically correct
- Program satisfies the I/O example used to specify intent and can generalize to held out examples as well.

Other notions of equivalence haven't been used (atleast not consistently):

- Similar logic is being employed
- Similar usage of resources

Structured Information about the Code

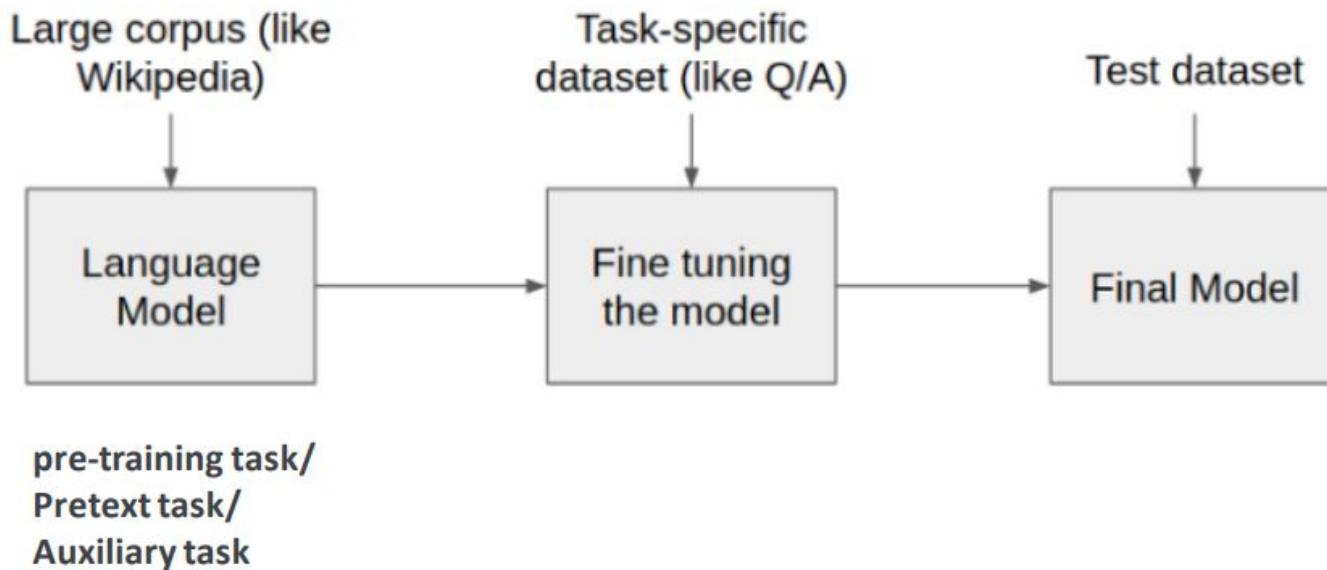
What:

- Abstract Syntax Tree
- Control flow
- Data flow

How:

- Linearize use preorder traversal, path decomposition, etc
- Structured pre-training tasks
- Overlaying the embedding space

Idea behind using pre-trained LMs



Self Supervision Tasks in NLP

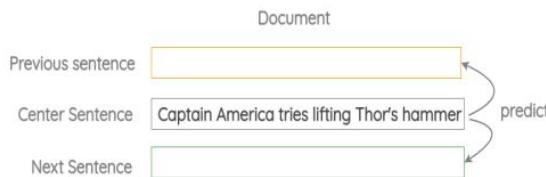
1. Center Word Prediction



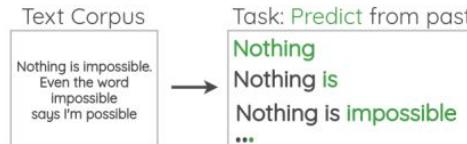
2. Neighbor Word Prediction

A quick **brown** fox jumps over the lazy dog

3. Neighbor Sentence Prediction



4. Auto-regressive Language Modeling



5. Masked Language Modeling



6. Next Sentence Prediction

Sentence 1	Sentence 2	Next Sentence
I am going outside	I will be back in the evening	yes
I am going outside	You know nothing John Snow	no

7. Sentence Order Prediction

Sentence 1	Sentence 2	Correct order
I completed high school	Then I did my undergrad	yes
Then I did my undergrad	I completed high school	no

8. Sentence Permutation

I did X. Then I did Y. Finally I did Z.

9. Document Rotation

I am going outside. I will be back in the evening.
original text

10. Gap Sentence Generation

TRANSFORMER

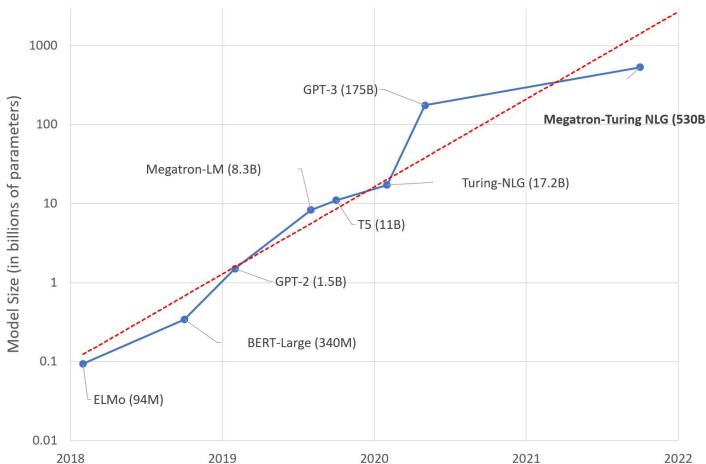
Self-Supervision tasks for pretraining code LMs

Code BERT	Encoder Only	MLM, Replaced Token Detection
Code GPT	Decode Only	Next token prediction
Transcoder	Encoder Only	Crosslingual MLM, Denoising AE, Back Translation
PL BART	Encoder - Decoder	MLM, Token Deletion, Token Infilling (masked span)
Code T5	Encoder - Decoder	Masked Span, Identifier Tagging, Identifier Masking, Dual Generation
CodeGen	Decoder only	Next Token Prediction

Code Generation using Pre-trained Large Language Models

Large Language Models

- Size usually in hundreds of billions of parameters
 - Lambda 135 billion, GPT3 - 175 billion, Megatron 530 billion
- Trained for multitasking, prompt/prefix based task selection
- Shows in Context learning and other emergent capabilities.



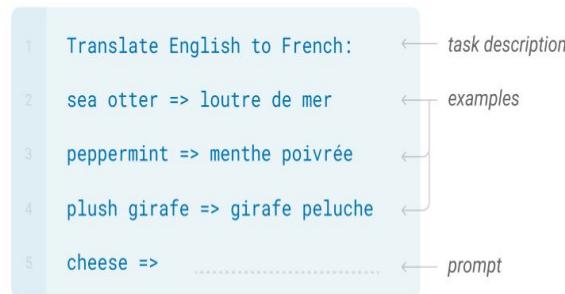
Challenges:

- Generally too large for fine tuning
- Model parameters not openly available
- Access to Model itself is restricted to the APIs

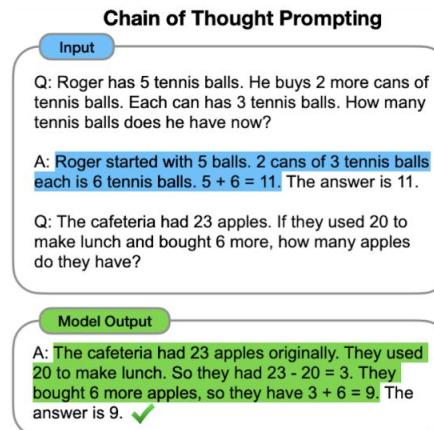
Non Invasive Generation improvements for LLMs

Few-shot

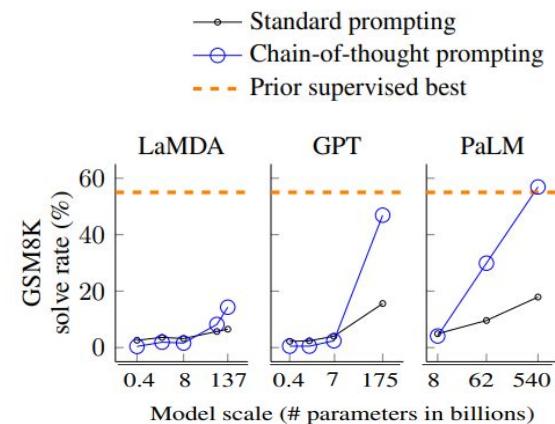
In addition to the task description, the model sees a few examples of the task. No gradient updates are performed.



Comparable to PBE



Comparable to Execution traces



[Attention is all you need, Vaswani et.al \(2017\)](#)

[Chain of Thought prompting elicits reasoning in large language models, Wei et.al \(2022\)](#)

CoT Example - GPT3

$$129990102991 + 90 =$$

1300909901991



$$2390+8 = 2398$$

$$8978 + 5 = 8983$$

$$129990102991 + 90 = 129990103$$

$$071 + 10 = 081$$



$$2390+8 = 2398$$

$$8978 + 5 = 8983$$

$$129990102991 + 90 =$$

Lets think step by step:

1. Add the last digit (90) to the ones digit (1) of the number, which gives us 91.
2. Add the carried over digit (9) to the tens digit (9) of the number, which gives us 18.
3. Add the carried over digit (1) to the hundreds digit (0) of the number, which gives us 1.
4. Add the carried over digit (0) to the thousands digit (2) of the number, which gives us 2.
5. Add the carried over digit (0) to the ten thousands digit (9) of the number, which gives us 9.
6. Add the carried over digit (0) to the hundred thousands digit (9) of the number, which gives us 9.
7. Add the carried over digit (0) to the millions digit (1) of the number, which gives us 1.

Therefore, the answer is 129990103081.

Can Large Language models do zero shot coding?

Generate a python function to return thrice the input with five added:

```
def thrice_plus_five(input):  
    return (input*3)+5
```



Generate a Karel program to move 5 cells and take a left turn

```
//Karel program to move 5 cells and take a left turn
```

```
move();  
move();  
move();  
move();  
move();  
turnLeft();
```

Generate a Karel program to move 5 cells and take a left turn. Shorten the program as much as possible:

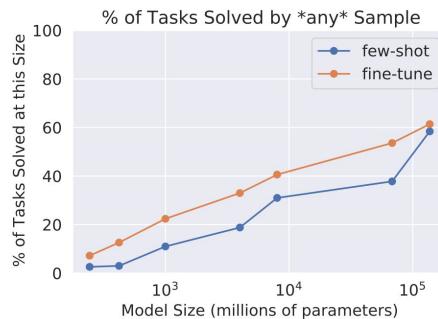
```
move();  
left();  
move()  
left();  
move();  
left();  
move();  
left();  
move();  
left();
```

1

...
Generate a karel program using python API to move N steps and turn left.
...

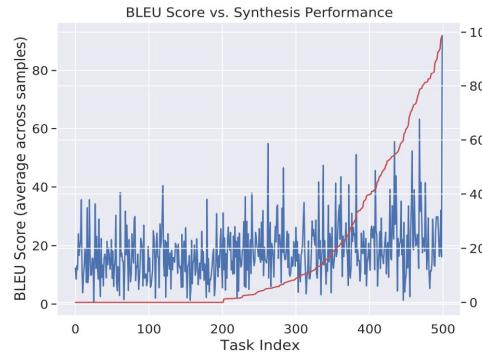
```
from karel.stanfordkarel import *
def main():
    n = int(input('Enter the number of steps: '))
    for i in range(n):
        move()
    turn_left()
if __name__ == '__main__':
    run_karel_program()
```

Performance of LLMs in Code Generation



Percentage of samples solved increases with model size and shows no sign of flattening.

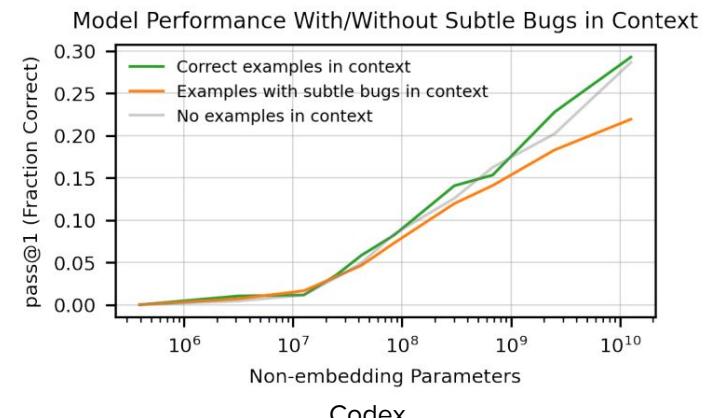
- Evaluated on MBPP & MathQA datasets
- Program synthesis tasks has to be approached and evaluated differently than text generation



Text generation metrics such as Bleu score correlates weakly with program performance.

Factors improving performance

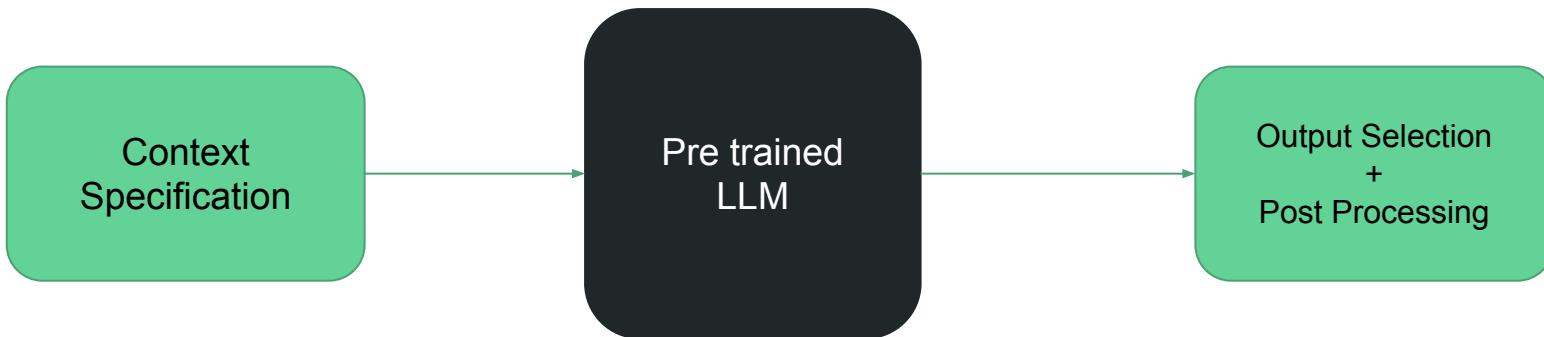
- Model Size
- Prompt Quality
- Few-shot example relevance
- Human - Model alignment
- Sampling Strategy / Post Processing



[Program synthesis using Large Language models, Austin, Et.al \(2021\)](#)
[Evaluating Large Language Models Trained on Code, Chen Et. al \(2021\)](#)

Reliable code generation using LLMs

What can we control?



- Relevance to the task
- Context length
- Few shot selection strategy
- Decomposing and planning through Sketching.

- Sampling Strategies
- Selection and scoring strategies
- Correction / Post Processing

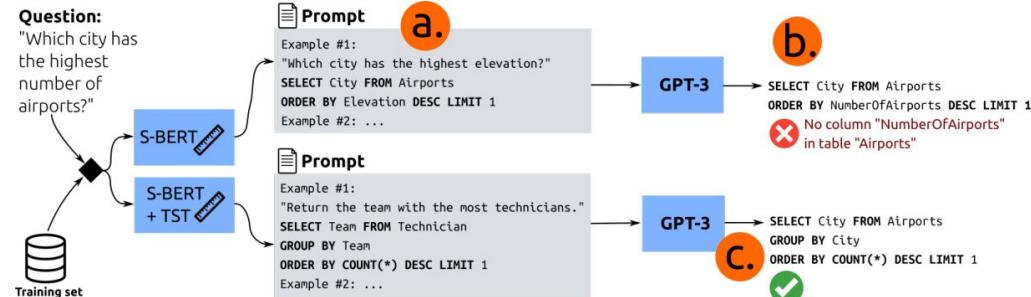
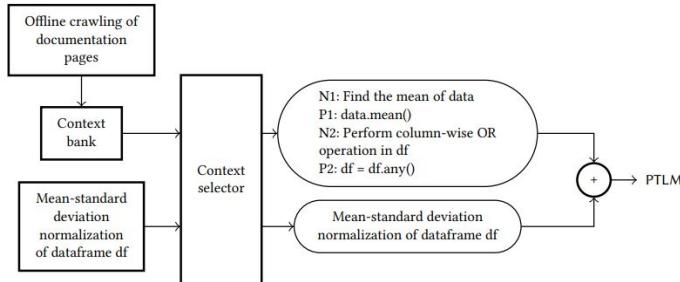
Context Specification

Example Prompt from an API reference:

Load a feather-format object from the file path.

```
pandas.read_feather(path, columns=None, use_threads=True, storage_options=None)
```

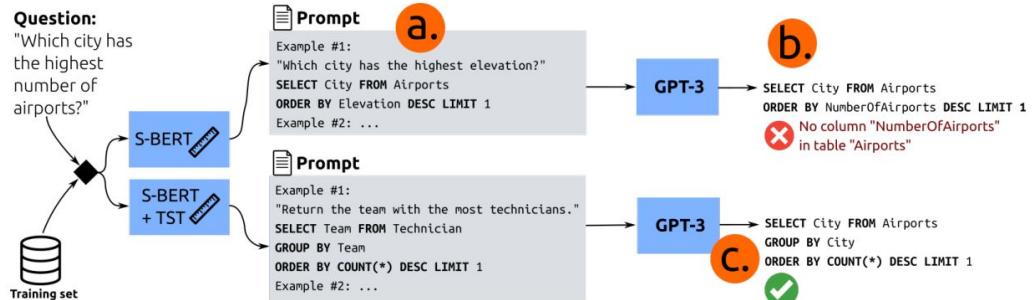
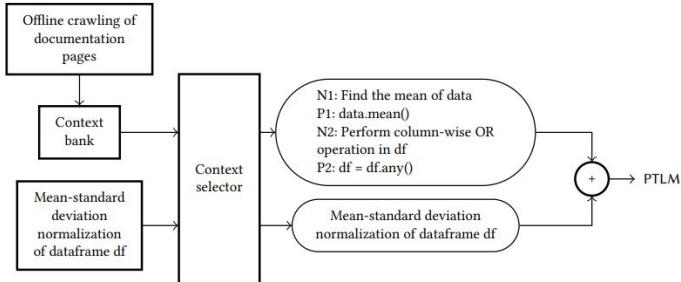
- Prompt Repository
 - Public API Documentations
 - Code Summaries
 - Few shot examples
 - Private Libraries
 - Schema Information



TST - Target Similarity Tuning, CSD - Constrained semantic Decoding

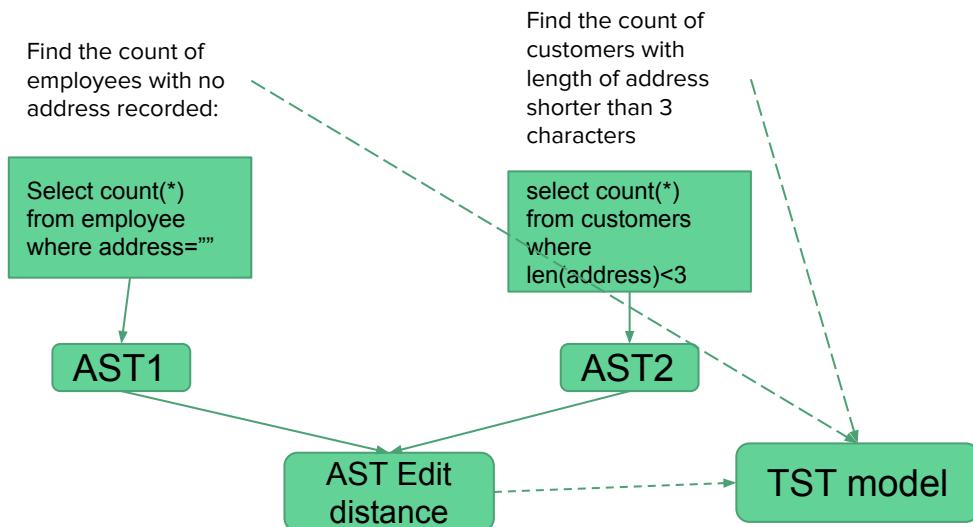
Context Selection

- Context selection using Similarity with Query
 - TF-IDF
 - Embedding distance
 - TST - AST Edit distance of Programs



TST - Target Similarity Tuning, CSD - Constrained semantic Decoding

Target Specific Tuning

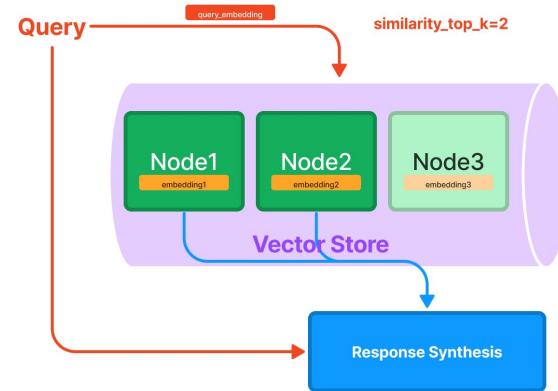


- Model learns from random pairs of positive and negative examples from training set.
- Natural language queries are the strings to match and the AST edit distance is the expected similarity score.
- Once trained we have a way to compare NL queries based on the target they achieve.

Handling Large context repositories

- Large documentations, API references, manuals etc. can be splitted into meaningful chunks and vectorized using embeddings from GPT3, BERT etc.
- Store the embeddings in Vector Databases
- Retrieve based on Query similarity.

Tools like GPT3-Index, Faiss, Weaviate can help.



Note: Corresponds to a chunk of text from a Document

Image from [GPT3-Index](#)

Output Sampling strategies

- Beam Search may not be the right choice
- Not every sample will be valid
- Grammar / Execution based scoring and selection can reduce errors

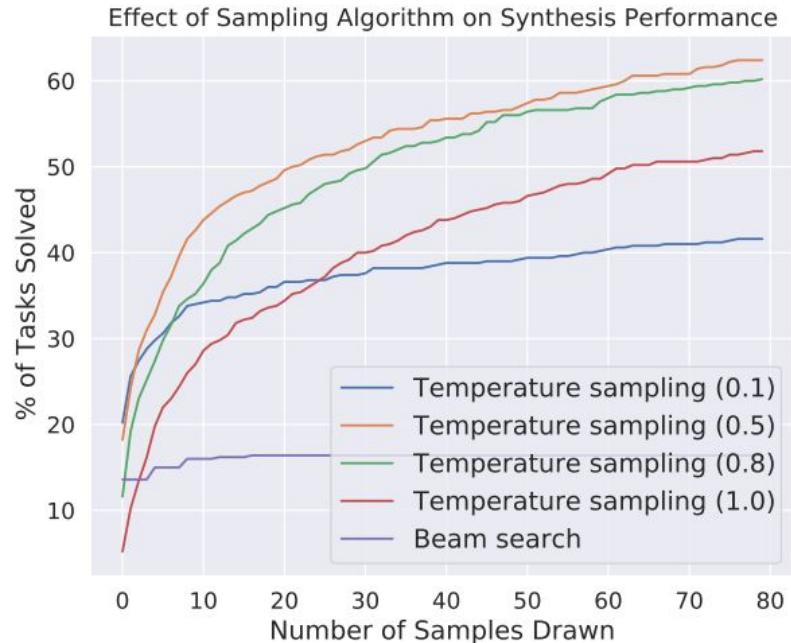
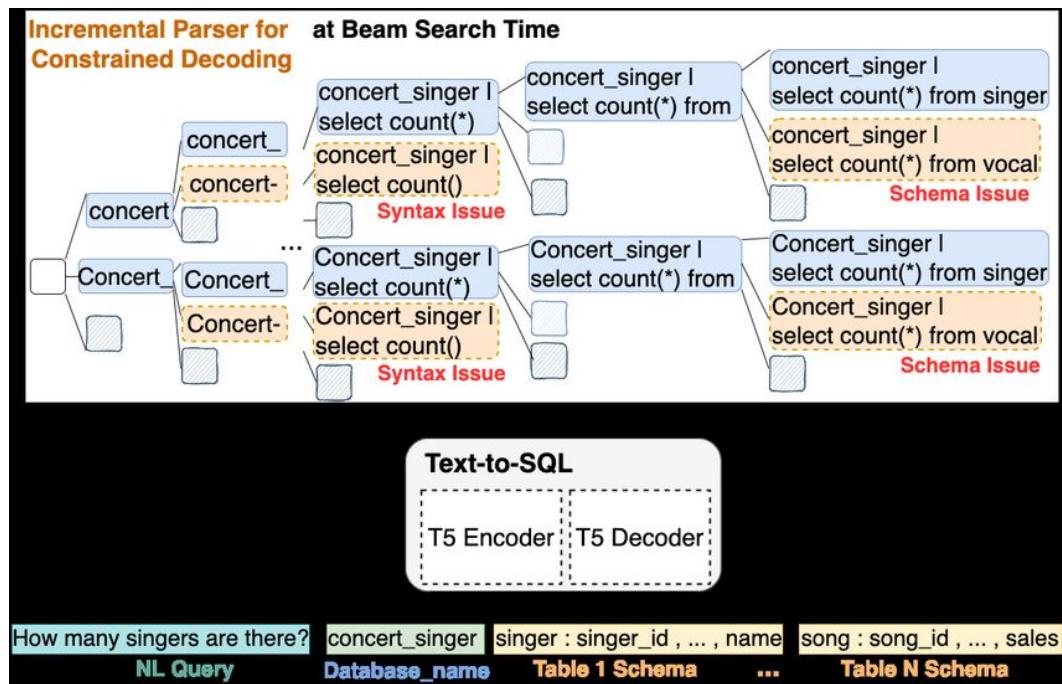
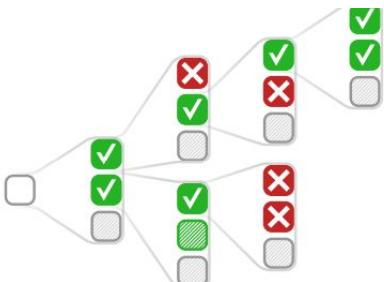


Figure 9: Higher temperatures achieve better scaling with more samples, but perform worse with a smaller budget.

Grammar based Guidance

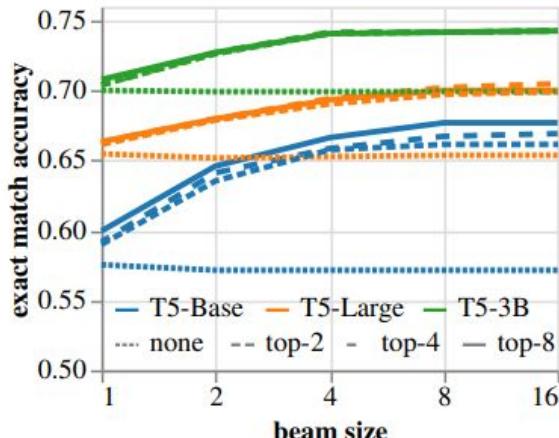
Task : NL \rightarrow SQL (Spider, CoSQL)

- Constrain Autoregressive decoding through incremental parsing
- Filter output tokens based on SQL Grammar & Database Schema.
- Lexing, Parsing with and without Guards.



Grammar Based Guidance

Performance similar to SOTA even with smaller models.



System	Development		Test	
	EM%	EX%	EM%	EX%
BRIDGE v2 + BERT (ensemble) [†] (Lin et al., 2020)	71.1	70.3	67.5	68.3
SMBOP + GRAPPA [†] (Rubin and Berant, 2021)	74.7	75.0	69.5	71.1
RATSQL + GAP [†] (Shi et al., 2021)	71.8	-	69.7	-
DT-Fixup SQL-SP + ROBERTA [†] (Xu et al., 2021)	75.0	-	70.9	-
LGESQL + ELECTRA [†] (Cao et al., 2021)	75.1	-	72.0	-
T5-Base (Shaw et al., 2021)	57.1	-	-	-
T5-3B (Shaw et al., 2021)	70.0	-	-	-
T5-Base (ours)	57.2	57.9	-	-
T5-Base+PICARD	65.8	68.4	-	-
T5-Large	65.3	67.2	-	-
T5-Large+PICARD	69.1	72.9	-	-
T5-3B (ours)	69.9	71.4	-	-
T5-3B+PICARD	74.1	76.3	-	-
T5-3B [†]	71.5	74.4	68.0	70.1
T5-3B+PICARD [†]	75.5	79.3	71.9	75.1

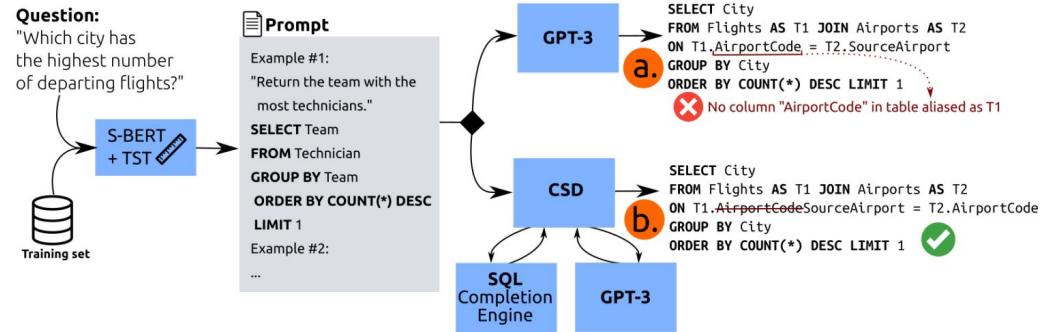
* A dagger (†) indicates use of database content, otherwise schema only.

Output Guidance Strategies

TST - Target Similarity Tuning
CSD - Constrained semantic Decoding

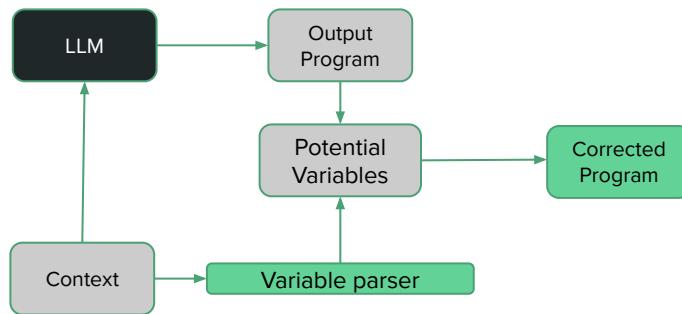
Token by token decoding where the set of next tokens are given by a constraint engine.

The constraint might be based on Syntax or Semantics of the target.

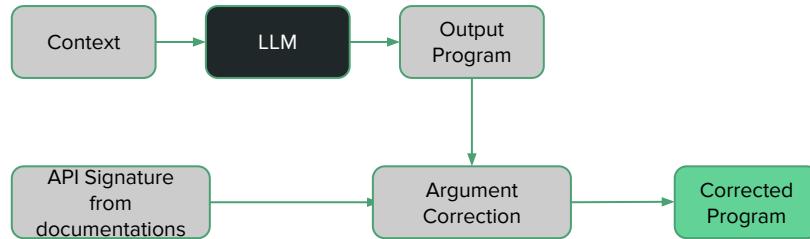


Language	Constraint	Example of partial program	Valid/Invalid Examples
SQL	A valid identifier must follow after AS.	SELECT Name, Role FROM User AS ^	U ✓ T1 ✓ 2 ✗
	Column names must come from schema, even behind aliases.	SELECT U.Name FROM User AS U WHERE U. ^	Name ✓ DoB ✓ Birthday ✗

Output Correction methods - Rule Based

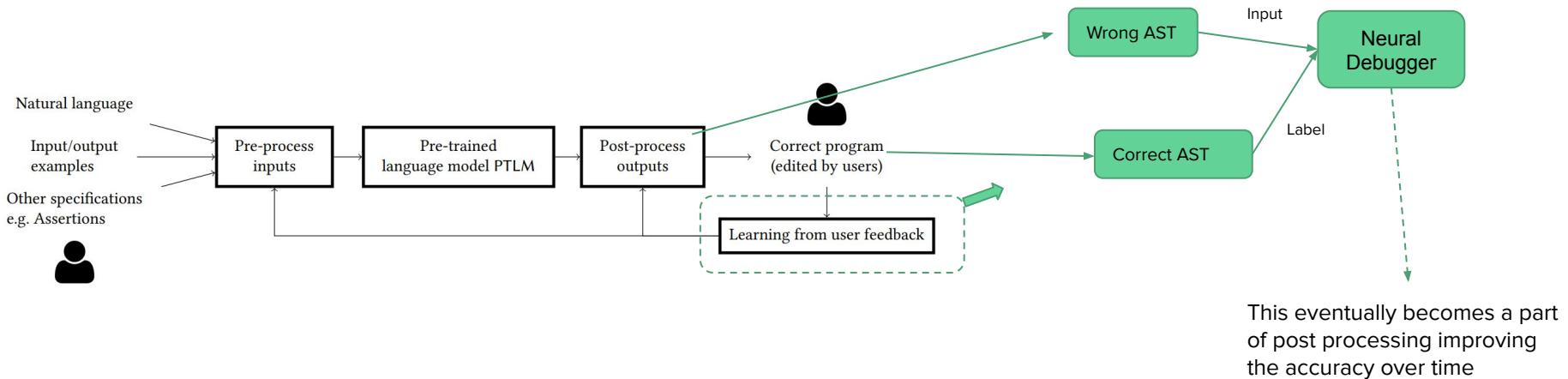


Variable Corrections



Argument Corrections

Output Corrections - Learnable Methods



Addressing Proprietary Libraries/APIs

LM models are mostly unaware of proprietary libraries/apis: Most enterprise projects will use proprietary libraries which may have never been exposed to the Models. This increases the chances of failure in retrieving the right program for the task.

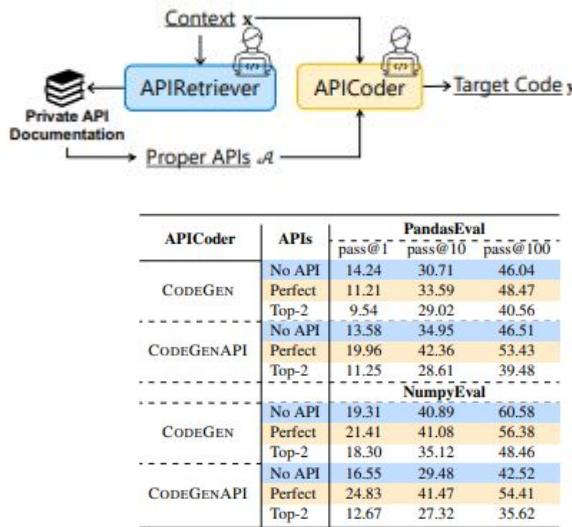


Table 3: Results of CODEGEN and CODEGENAPI on PandasEval and NumpyEval.

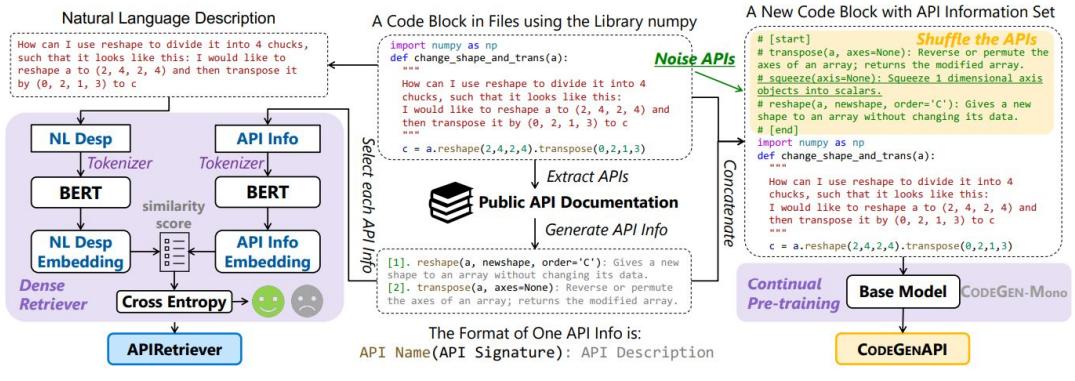


Figure 3: The training process of APIRetriever and CODEGENAPI.

Figures from the paper "When Language model meets Private Library"