

Machine Learning Engineer Nanodegree

Capstone Project

Toxic Comment Classification on social media platforms

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December 26th, 2018

I. Definition

Project Overview

My project draws upon the domain of document classification with an emphasis on the natural language processing component of document classification. Machine learning has been successfully used to classify documents by topic for several decades. However, machine learning techniques do not perform as well when performing sentiment analysis which requires the parsing of more complex language structures. This is where ideas from natural language processing must be applied. My aim with this project is to make progress towards solving a complex natural language processing problem using machine learning. I think that it would be very beneficial if computers could interpret and produce the same kind of natural language of which even young children are capable. This would allow machine learning to be applied to a wider variety of tasks than it is currently capable of solving. In particular, machine learning could be applied to many problems that are not well structured and for which there is not much training data.

This capstone project is based on the [Toxic Comment Classification Challenge](#)

Discussing things you care about can be difficult. The threat of abuse and harassment online means that many people stop expressing themselves and give up on seeking different opinions. Platforms struggle to effectively facilitate conversations, leading many communities to limit or completely shut down user comments.

The Conversation AI team, a research initiative founded by Jigsaw and Google (both a part of Alphabet) are working on tools to help improve online conversation. One area of focus is the study of negative online behaviors, like toxic comments (i.e. comments that are rude, disrespectful or otherwise likely to make someone leave a discussion). So far they've built a range of publicly available models served through the Perspective API, including toxicity. But the current models still make errors, and they don't allow users to select which types of toxicity they're interested in finding (e.g. some platforms may be fine with profanity, but not with other types of toxic content).

With more people joining social media than ever before, it becomes imperative that this problem is solved. Classifying toxic comments (obscene, threat, insult, identity-based hate) will be the core of this project.

Problem Statement

In this project, I will build a multi-headed model that will be capable of detecting different types of toxicity like threats, obscenity, insults, and identity-based hate from a given comment. I'll be using a dataset of comments from Wikipedia's talk page edits which have been labeled by human raters for toxic behavior. Improvements to the current models will hopefully help online discussion become more productive and respectful.

This is a supervised multi-class classification problem and as such different measurable evaluation metrics could be applied. I'll be using the AUC-ROC metric to measure the efficiency of my models. Given a comment, the solution will be a machine learning model that receives as input the comment and outputs a class probability for every toxicity type [*toxicity_type*] : toxic, severe_toxic, obscene, threat, insult, identity_hate.

Example 1

Input Text : *You, sir, are my hero!*

Output will be : toxic : 0.1 , obscence : 0.0, ..

The output states that the algorithm thinks that there is a 0.1 probability or 10% chance that the given text is toxic. Similarly the algorithm thinks that there is 0 probability or 0% chance that this text is obscene.

Example 2

Input Text : *Oh my, you are so fuckable!*

Output will be : toxic : 0.1 , obscence : 0.8, ..

The output states that the algorithm thinks that there is a 0.1 probability or 10% chance that the given text is toxic. Similarly the algorithm thinks that there is 0.8 probability or 80% chance that this text is obscene. These class probabilities will enable us to make many smart decisions. Such a comment should be fine on a platform that tolerates obscenity. Such platforms can use this class probability and mark this post as *NSFW*. Other platforms that don't tolerate obscenity can choose to delete such comments automatically.

Generally, if the class probability for a particular type of toxicity is > 0.5 , we will label it as a toxic comment with that toxicity type.

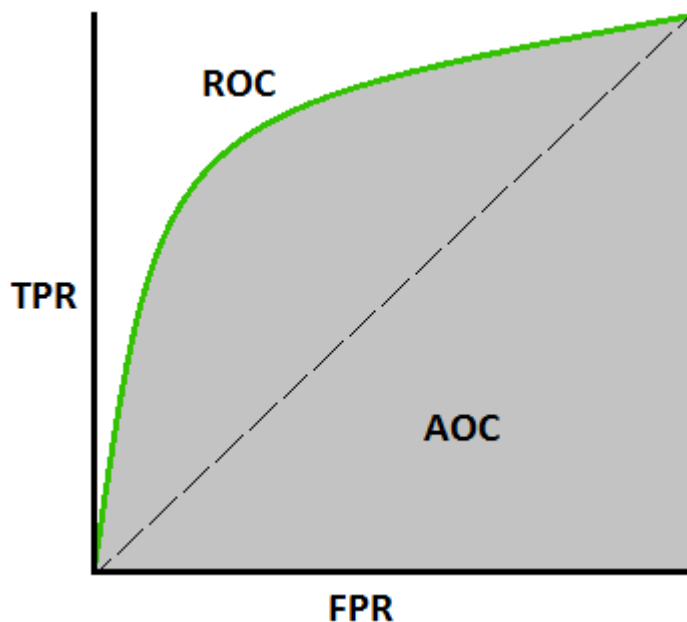
Metrics

There are many different metrics that could be used to evaluate the solution, given that this is a multi-class classification problem. The most common metric is accuracy. We can create a confusion matrix for each toxicity type and study the algorithm's accuracy for that toxicity type.

Generally, if the class probability for a particular type of toxicity is > 0.5 , we can label it as a toxic comment with that toxicity type. Therefore we can easily build a confusion matrix for each toxicity class.

		Actual Values	
		Positive (1)	Negative (0)
Predicted Values	Positive (1)	TP	FP
	Negative (0)	FN	TN

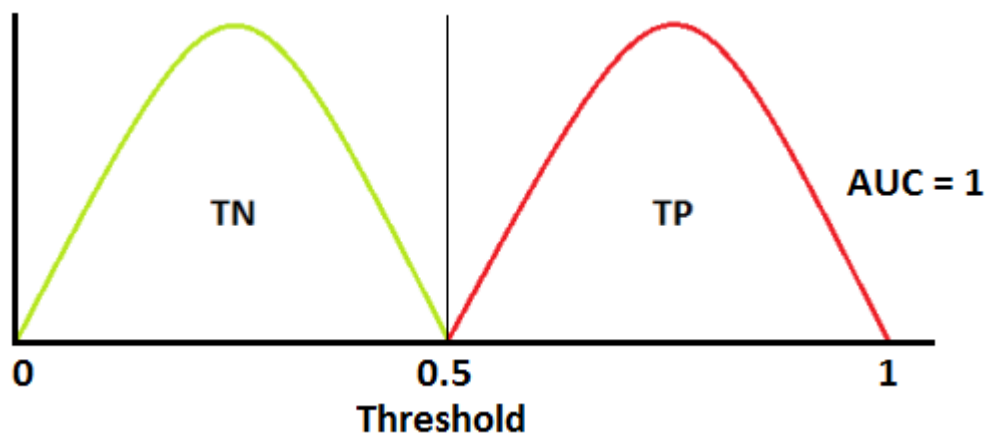
But since we are more interested in probabilities and we have defined our solution as : *Given a comment, the solution will be a machine learning model that receives as input the comment and outputs a class probability for every toxicity type*, an evaluation metric like the **AUC - ROC Curve (Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristics)** makes more sense. AUC - ROC curve is a performance measurement for classification problems at various thresholds settings. ROC (Receiver Operating Characteristics) is a probability curve and its AUC(Area Under Curve) represents the degree or measure of separability. It tells us how much a given model is capable of distinguishing between classes. Higher the AUC, better the model is at predicting 0s as 0s and 1s as 1s. The ROC curve is plotted with TPR(True Positive Rate) against the FPR(False Positive Rate) where TPR is on the y-axis and FPR is on the the x-axis.



$$\text{TPR / Recall / Sensitivity} = \frac{\text{TP}}{\text{TP} + \text{FN}}$$

$$\text{Specificity} = \frac{\text{TN}}{\text{TN} + \text{FP}}$$

An excellent model has AUC near to 1 which means it has a good measure of separability. A poor model has AUC near to the 0 which means it has worst measure of separability. In fact it means it is reciprocating the result. It is predicting 0s as 1s and 1s as 0s. And when AUC is 0.5, it means our model has no class separation capacity whatsoever.



Since our models will output probabilities, the AUC-ROC which is based on probability distributions will prove to be the correct metric. We will be using the AUC-ROC score while we cross validate our models.

II. Analysis

Data Exploration

I'll be using a dataset of comments from Wikipedia's talk page edits which have been labeled by human raters for toxic behavior.

The types of toxicity are:

- toxic
- severe_toxic
- obscene
- threat
- insult
- identity_hate

Both the train and test datasets are in the form of a csv and are stored in the data directory. The train dataset has 159571 observations and the test dataset has 153164 observations. Each train observation corresponds to a different comment. There are a total of 8 variables/columns in this dataset and they are described below :

Variable	Data Type/ Values it can take	Description
id	object/string	Unique identifier
comment_text	string	The comment text we need to evaluate
toxic	int64/Boolean. The possible values are 0 and 1	Specifies whether the given comment is toxic or not.
severe_toxic	int64/Boolean. The possible values are 0 and 1	Specifies whether the given comment is severely toxic or not.
obscene	int64/Boolean. The possible values are 0 and 1	Specifies whether the given comment is obscene/vulgar.
threat	int64/Boolean. The possible values are 0 and 1	Specifies whether the given comment is a threat.
insult	int64/Boolean. The possible values are 0 and 1	Specifies whether the given comment is an insult.
identity_hate	int64/Boolean. The possible values are 0 and 1	Specifies whether the given comment is identity hate.

The train and test dataset *do not* contain any null values.

Sample Data :

	id	comment_text	toxic	severe_toxic	obscene	threat	insult	identity_hate
156473	ceb4e0d4125d9385	"\n\nTo erase a souce and to replace it with a...	0	0	0	0	0	0
14253	259fccb27ad999c9	The Heidi books are one of the best known work...	0	0	0	0	0	0
80445	d73a4f1a66d12dcc	"\n\nTo all Wikipedia Editors of the Jehovah's...	0	0	0	0	0	0
134108	cd364e4d181c0087	I think what you have suggested would be accep...	0	0	0	0	0	0
105644	3546938b74dd3ed9	What's your problem? \n\nI've already explaine...	0	0	0	0	0	0

The distribution of different toxicity types are as follows :

Class/Toxicity Type	Percentage (%)
Clean	80.3
Toxic	8.6
Severe Toxic	0.9
Obscene	4.7
Threat	0.3
Insult	4.4
Identity hate	0.8

Exploratory Visualization

In this section, you will need to provide some form of visualization that summarizes or extracts a relevant characteristic or feature about the data. The visualization should adequately support the data being used. Discuss why this visualization was chosen and how it is relevant. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Have you visualized a relevant characteristic or feature about the dataset or input data?*
- *Is the visualization thoroughly analyzed and discussed?*
- *If a plot is provided, are the axes, title, and datum clearly defined?*

Algorithms and Techniques

In this section, you will need to discuss the algorithms and techniques you intend to use for solving the problem. You should justify the use of each one based on the characteristics of the problem and the problem domain. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Are the algorithms you will use, including any default variables/parameters in the project clearly defined?*
- *Are the techniques to be used thoroughly discussed and justified?*
- *Is it made clear how the input data or datasets will be handled by the algorithms and techniques chosen?*

Benchmark

In this section, you will need to provide a clearly defined benchmark result or threshold for comparing across performances obtained by your solution. The reasoning behind the benchmark (in the case where it is not an established result) should be discussed. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Has some result or value been provided that acts as a benchmark for measuring performance?*
- *Is it clear how this result or value was obtained (whether by data or by hypothesis)?*

III. Methodology

(approx. 3-5 pages)

Data Preprocessing

In this section, all of your preprocessing steps will need to be clearly documented, if any were necessary. From the previous section, any of the abnormalities or characteristics that you identified about the dataset will be addressed and corrected here. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *If the algorithms chosen require preprocessing steps like feature selection or feature transformations, have they been properly documented?*
- *Based on the **Data Exploration** section, if there were abnormalities or characteristics that needed to be addressed, have they been properly corrected?*
- *If no preprocessing is needed, has it been made clear why?*

Implementation

In this section, the process for which metrics, algorithms, and techniques that you implemented for the given data will need to be clearly documented. It should be abundantly clear how the implementation was carried out, and discussion should be made regarding any complications that occurred during this process. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Is it made clear how the algorithms and techniques were implemented with the given datasets or input data?*
- *Were there any complications with the original metrics or techniques that required changing prior to acquiring a solution?*
- *Was there any part of the coding process (e.g., writing complicated functions) that should be documented?*

Refinement

In this section, you will need to discuss the process of improvement you made upon the algorithms and techniques you used in your implementation. For example, adjusting parameters for certain models to acquire improved solutions would fall under the refinement category. Your initial and final solutions should be reported, as well as any significant intermediate results as necessary. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Has an initial solution been found and clearly reported?*
- *Is the process of improvement clearly documented, such as what techniques were used?*
- *Are intermediate and final solutions clearly reported as the process is improved?*

IV. Results

(approx. 2-3 pages)

Model Evaluation and Validation

In this section, the final model and any supporting qualities should be evaluated in detail. It should be clear how the final model was derived and why this model was chosen. In addition, some type of analysis should be used to validate the robustness of this model and its solution, such as manipulating the input data or environment to see how the model's solution is affected (this is called sensitivity analysis). Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Is the final model reasonable and aligning with solution expectations? Are the final parameters of the model appropriate?*
- *Has the final model been tested with various inputs to evaluate whether the model generalizes well to unseen data?*
- *Is the model robust enough for the problem? Do small perturbations (changes) in training data or the input space greatly affect the results?*
- *Can results found from the model be trusted?*

Justification

In this section, your model's final solution and its results should be compared to the benchmark you established earlier in the project using some type of statistical analysis. You should also justify

whether these results and the solution are significant enough to have solved the problem posed in the project. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Are the final results found stronger than the benchmark result reported earlier?*
- *Have you thoroughly analyzed and discussed the final solution?*
- *Is the final solution significant enough to have solved the problem?*

V. Conclusion

(approx. 1-2 pages)

Free-Form Visualization

In this section, you will need to provide some form of visualization that emphasizes an important quality about the project. It is much more free-form, but should reasonably support a significant result or characteristic about the problem that you want to discuss. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Have you visualized a relevant or important quality about the problem, dataset, input data, or results?*
- *Is the visualization thoroughly analyzed and discussed?*
- *If a plot is provided, are the axes, title, and datum clearly defined?*

Reflection

In this section, you will summarize the entire end-to-end problem solution and discuss one or two particular aspects of the project you found interesting or difficult. You are expected to reflect on the project as a whole to show that you have a firm understanding of the entire process employed in your work. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Have you thoroughly summarized the entire process you used for this project?*
- *Were there any interesting aspects of the project?*
- *Were there any difficult aspects of the project?*
- *Does the final model and solution fit your expectations for the problem, and should it be used in a general setting to solve these types of problems?*

Improvement

In this section, you will need to provide discussion as to how one aspect of the implementation you designed could be improved. As an example, consider ways your implementation can be made more general, and what would need to be modified. You do not need to make this improvement, but the potential solutions resulting from these changes are considered and compared/contrasted to your current solution. Questions to ask yourself when writing this section:

- *Are there further improvements that could be made on the algorithms or techniques you used in this project?*
- *Were there algorithms or techniques you researched that you did not know how to implement, but would consider using if you knew how?*
- *If you used your final solution as the new benchmark, do you think an even better solution exists?*

Before submitting, ask yourself. . .

- Does the project report you've written follow a well-organized structure similar to that of the project template?
- Is each section (particularly **Analysis** and **Methodology**) written in a clear, concise and specific fashion? Are there any ambiguous terms or phrases that need clarification?
- Would the intended audience of your project be able to understand your analysis, methods, and results?
- Have you properly proof-read your project report to assure there are minimal grammatical and spelling mistakes?
- Are all the resources used for this project correctly cited and referenced?
- Is the code that implements your solution easily readable and properly commented?
- Does the code execute without error and produce results similar to those reported?