Programming Language Representation with Semantic-level Structure

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ABSTRACT

Natural language processing (NLP) technique becomes one of the core techniques for developing text analytics applications. For developing the NLP applications, the applications are required to achieve high reliability before it goes to market. The trustworthiness of the prevalent NLP applications is obtained by measuring the accuracy of the applications on held-out dataset. However, evaluating NLP on testset does with held-out accuracy is limited to show its quality because the held-out datasets are often not comprehensive. While the behavioral testing over multiple general linguistic capabilities are employed, it relies on manually created test cases, and is still limited to measure its comprehensive performance for each linguistic capability. In this work, we introduce Auto-CHECKLIST, an NLP model testing methodology. Given a linguistic capability, The Auto-CHECKLIST finds relevant testcases to test the linguistic capability from existing datasets as seed inputs, generates sufficient number of new test cases by fuzzing the seed inputs based on their context-free grammar (Context-free grammar). We illustrate the usefulness of the Auto-CHECKLIST by showing input diversity and identifying critical failures in state-of-the-art models for NLP task. In our experiment, we show that the Auto-CHECKLIST generates more test cases with higher diversity, and finds more bugs.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Software testing is the crucial process when developing software. It evaluates an attribute or capability of the software and determines that it meets the requirements by examining the behavior of the software under test. Software testing in the early stage of the development finds bugs, and fixing them saves amount of costs. In addition, reliable software testing methodology ensures software quality to users in that the software meets requirements by verification and validation. Regarding that, NLP application is a branch of artifical intelligence software, and testing NLP application also becomes important process as well.

The prevalent models of NLP are evaluated via train-validation-test splits. train and validation set is used to train the NLP model and the hold-out set is used for testing by measuring accuracy. The accuracy is a indicator of the performance of the models.

Despite its usefulness, the main limitation of the testing paradigm is that the hold-out set often overestimates the performances. Each dataset comes with specific biases, and the biases increase the discrepancy of distribution between dataset and real-world [13]. The aforementioned accuracy on hold-out set does not consider the discrepancy and it is limited to achieve comprehensive performrance of the NLP model. As a consequence, it is difficult to analyze where the errors comes from [23].

On the subject of the limitation of traditional testing paradigm, a number of methods have been proposed. First, multiple diagnostic datasets for evaluating NLP model were introduced for obtaining generalized evaluation of the NLP model [22]. Not only that, model is evaluated on different aspects such as robustness of the model on adversarial sets [2, 5, 16, 19], fairness [12, 18], logical consistancy [14], prediction interpretations [15] and interactive error analysis [23]. Especially, CHECKLIST implements behavioral testing methodolgy for evaluating multiple linguistic capabilities of NLP model [17]. CHECKLIST introduces input-output behaviors of linguistic capabilities and generates behavior-guided inputs for validating the behaviors. It provides comprehensive behavioral testing of NLP models through a number of generated inputs. However, the approach only relies on manually generated input templates, thus the template generation becomes expensive and time consuming. In addition, the generated templates are selective and often too simple, and it is limited to provide restricted evaluation of linguistic capabilities. Thus, it does not garauntee the comprehensive evaluation.

In this paper, we present Auto-CHECKLIST, an automated NLP model evaluation method for comprehensive behavioral testing of NLP models on sentiment analysis task. For each behavior of linguistic capability, Auto-CHECKLIST does not rely on the manual input generation. Instead, it establishes input requirement for evaluating a linguistic capability and finds suitable inputs that meet the requirement from existing public dataset. Therefore, Auto-CHECKLIST increases input diversity and generality. Further, Auto-CHECKLIST applies the fuzzing testing principle to generate inputs by mutating the selected inputs as seed inputs. Fuzzer in Auto-CHECKLIST first expands seed input grammar structures and determines its available part-of-speech to maintain structural naturalness. After that, to hold contextual naturalness of the mutated inputs, the fuzzer completes the expanded new structures via data-driven context-aware word suggestion. Additionally, sentiment-independent words in the inputs are replaced with rule-based word suggestion.

We demonstrate its generality and utility as a NLP model evaluation tool by evaluating well-known sentiment analysis models: BERT-base [4], RoBERTa-base [10] and DistilBERT-base [20]. We show that

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2 BACKGROUND

Shiyi: We should motivate the testing of linguistic capabilities. Give background of the work that has been done in CheckList: what capabilities they support and their limitations. Maybe find a motivating example?

3 RELATED WORK

NLP Testing. With the increasing use of NLP models, evaluation of NLP models is becoming more important. Wang *et al.* [22] propose multiple diagnostic datasets to evaluate NLP models. Few recent works have also considered model robustness as an aspect for model evaluation. Different methods like adversarial set generation [2, 5, 16, 19], fairness evaluation [12, 18], logical consistency evaluation [14], prediction interpretations [15] and interactive error analysis [23] have been proposed to evaluate model robustness. More recently, CHECKLIST introduces input-output behaviors of linguistic capabilities and generates behavior-guided inputs for validating the behaviors. [17] However, the approach only relies on manually generated input templates, thus the template generation becomes expensive and time consuming. Also, it does not guarantee the comprehensive evaluation.

4 SPECIFICATION- AND SYNTAX-BASED LINGUISTIC CAPABILITY TESTING

Shiyi: Some paragraphs in this overview part should go earlier in the paper. I am just writing them here for now as I don't think we have them in the intro/background yet. We design and implement *Specification- and Syntax-based Linguistic Capability Testing (S^2LCT)* to automatically generate test cases to test the robustness of sentiment analysis models. We identify four goals for a large and effective test suite:

G1 the test suite should contain realistic sentences;
G2 the test suite should cover diverse syntactic structures;
G3 each test case should be categorized into a linguistic capability;
G4 the label of each test case should be automatically and accurately defined.

CHECKLIST's templates generate complete and realistic sentences, and each template maps to a linguistic capability, satisfying **G1** and **G3**. But CHECKLIST only uses Shiyi: X manually created templates to generate its test suite; all test cases generated by the same template share the same syntactic structure, thus violating **G2**. In addition, the label of each CHECKLIST test case has to be decided manually, associated with each template, violating **G4**.

We present S^2LCT, a new linguistic capability test case generation tool, that satisfies all of these criteria. Shiyi: I could not summarize a cohesive idea that drives our design. Leaving it here to fill in. Also, I felt my writing below still lacks justification for some design choices (e.g., why we do the differentiation). Figure 1 shows the overview of S^2LCT, which consists of two phases. The *specification-based seed generation* phase performs rule-based searches from a real-world dataset (**G1**) and template-based transformation to obtain the initial seed sentences. The search rules (e.g., search for neutral sentences that do not include any positive or negative words) and transformation templates (e.g., Shiyi: add an example JL: sentence negation) are defined in the *linguistic capability specifications*, which guarantee that each resulting seed conforms to a specific linguistic capability (**G3**) and is labelled correctly (**G4**).

The *syntax-based sentence expansion* phase expands the seed sentences with additional syntactic elements (i.e., words Shiyi: more?JL: and production ruls in context-free grammar) to cover many real-world syntactic structures (**G2**). It first performs a syntax analysis to identify the part-of-speech (PoS) tags that can be inserted to each seed, by comparing the PoS parse trees between the seed sentence and many other sentences from a large reference dataset. Each identified tag is inserted into the seed as a *mask*. It then uses an NLP recommendation model (i.e., BERT []) to suggest possible words. If a resulting sentence is validated to be consistent with the specification which additionally defines the rules for expansion (e.g., the expanded word should be neutral), **G3** and **G4** are still satisfied. Last, because some validated sentences may include unacceptable suggested words given the context Shiyi: is this the right motivation to do selection? JL: I edited the sentence. please let me know if it is clear, we use a heuristic (i.e., the confidence score from the NLP recommendation model) to select the more realistic context-aware expanded sentences into S^2LCT's test suite.

We now describe each phase of S^2LCT in detail.

4.1 Specification-based Seed Generation

The seed generation phase of S^2LCT starts by searching sentences in a real-world dataset that match the rules defined in the linguistic capability specification, and then transforming the matched sentences using templates to generate seed sentences that conform to individual linguistic capabilities. The reasons for this design choice are twofold. First, while generally judging which linguistic capability any sentence falls into and which label it should have is infeasible, there exist simple rules and templates to allow classifying the resulting sentences into individual linguistic capabilities and with the correct labels, with high confidence. This enables us to test each linguistic capability individually. Second, searching from a real-world dataset ensures that the sentences used as test cases for testing linguistic capabilities are realistic and diverse. The diverse test cases are more likely to achieve a high coverage of the target model's functionality in each linguistic capability, thus detecting more errors.

Table 1 shows the search rules and the transformation templates of all 11 linguistic capabilities we implemented in S^2LCT. Shiyi: @Jaeseong: revise the rest of 3.1 based on Table 1. I commented out the old text but it is still in the tex file.

4.2 Syntax-based Sentence Expansion

The simple search rules and transformation templates used to generate the seed sentences may limit the syntactic structures these seeds may cover. To address this limitation, the syntax-based sentence expansion phase extends the seed sentences to cover syntactic structures commonly used in real-life sentences. Our idea is to differentiate the parse trees between the seed sentences and the reference sentences from a large real-world dataset. The extra PoS tags in the reference parse trees are identified as potential syntactic elements for expansion and inserted into the seed sentences as masks. We then use masked language model to suggest the fill-ins. If the resulting sentences still conform to the linguistic capability

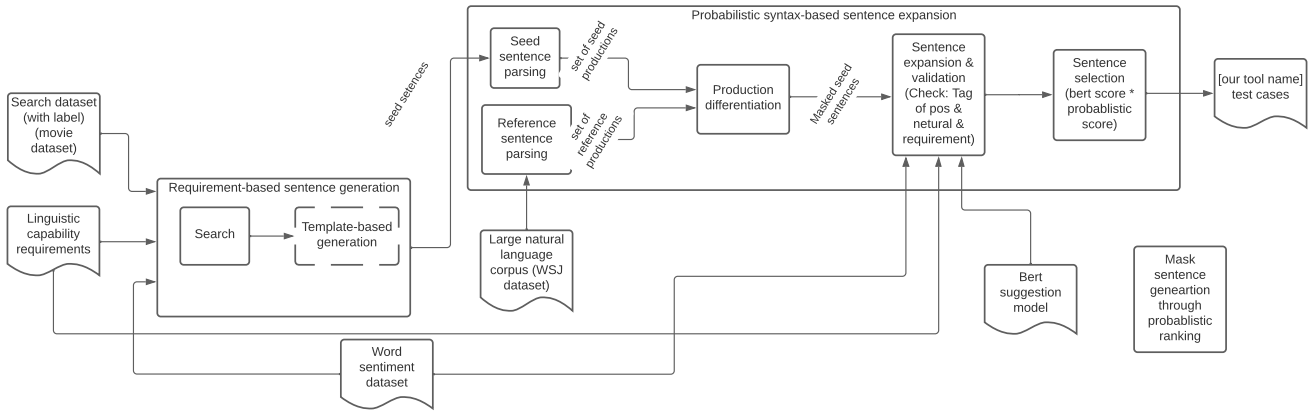

Figure 1: Overview of S^{2}LCT.

specification, they are added to S^{2}LCT's test suite. Shiyi: May have some redundancy and inconsistency with the overview part.

4.2.1 Syntax Expansion Identification. Algorithm **??** shows how masks are identified for each seed sentence. It takes the parse trees of the seeds, generated by the Berkeley Neural Parser [6, 8], and a reference context-free grammar (CFG) from the Penn Treebank corpus dataset [] as inputs. The reference CFG is learned from a large dataset [] that is representative of the distribution of real-world language usage. The algorithm identifies the discrepancy between the seed syntax and the reference grammar to decide how a seed can be expanded.

For each production of in each seed's parse tree (lines 3 and 4), we extract its non-terminal at the left-hand-side (line 5), *s_lhs*, and the grammar symbols at the right-hand-side (line 6), *s_rhs*. In line 7, the algorithm iterates through all productions in the reference context-free grammar and match these that have the same non-terminal at the left-hand-side as *s_lhs*. The right-hand-side of each matched production is called *r_rhs*. If *s_rhs* consists of a subset of the grammar symbols in *r_rhs* (line 8), the additional symbols in the *r_rhs* are inserted as masks in the parse tree of seed sentence, in their respective positions in the expanded production. The left to right traversal of the leaves of an expanded parse tree forms a masked sentence. Lastly, we randomly select k masked sentences for the next sentence expansion and validation phase. Shiyi: Add justification: why we need to select k masked sentences (performance?) and why random makes sense.

Running example. Figure 2 shows an example using Algorithm **??** to generate a masked sentence. The sentence "Or both." is a seed of Shiyi: which? linguistic capability. The tree on the left shows the parse tree of this seed; it consists of two productions: "FRAG->[CC, NP, .]" and "NP->[DT]". When matching the left-hand-side non-terminal of the second production (i.e., "NP") in the reference CFG, we found that it includes a production "NP->[DT, NNS]" which has an additional symbol "NNS" on the right-hand-side. The algorithm thus expands the parse tree with this symbol, shown in the second tree. The masked sentence "Or both {MASK}." is the result of the left-to-right traversal of this expanded parse tree.

Algorithm 1 Pseudocode of Production differentiation

1: **Input:** Parse trees of seed sentences **S**, reference probabilistic context-free grammar **R**
2: **Output:** Set of expanded masked sentences **S_exp**
3: **for** *seed* from *S* **do**
4: **for** each production rule *seed_prod* from *seed* **do**
5: $seed\_lhs = seed\_prod.lhs$
6: $seed\_rhs = seed\_prod.rhs$
7: **for** ref_rhs, ref_prob from $R[seed\_lhs]$ **do**
8: **if** *seed_rhs* is superset of ref_rhs **then**
9: $parent = seed\_prod.parent$
10: $prob = ref\_prob$
11: **while** *parent* is not empty **do**
12: **for** par_rhs, par_prob from $R[parent.lhs]$ **do**
13: **if** $parent.rhs == par\_rhs$ **then**
14: $prob = prob \cdot par\_prob$
15: $parent = parent.parent$
16: break
17: **end if**
18: **end for**
19: **end while**
20: $P.add([seed\_prod, ref\_prod, prob])$
21: **end if**
22: **end for**
23: **end for**
24: **if** *P* is not empty **then**
25: Select Top-k ref_prod along with probabilities in P
26: **for** each $seed\_prod, ref\_prod$ in the Top-k selected P **do**
27: replace $seed\_prod$ with ref_prod in *seed*
28: replace expanded component in ref_prod with *MASK* token in *seed* sentence
29: $S\_exp.add([ref\_prod, expandedsentence])$
30: **end for**
31: **end if**
32: **end for**

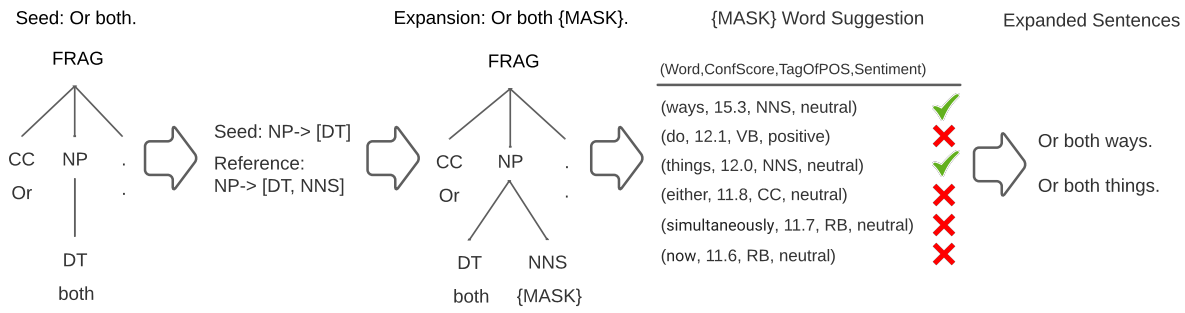

Figure 2: Example of masked sentence generation. Shiyi: Expansion: Or both {MASK}. -> Masked sentence: Or both MASK.

4.2.2 Sentence Expansion and Validation. In this phase, the words to fill in the masks in the masked sentences are suggested by the BERT pretrained model []. The BERT model suggests word for the mask symbol

according to its context Shiyi: what does context mean here? around in sentence. Shiyi: Algorithm 1 does not require we only have one mask in the masked sentence. Can the model suggest multiple words at the same time? Shiyi: Say a bit more about the BERT model suggestion. E.g., it may suggest multiple words for the same mask but they are ranked?

Because BERT model is not aware of the linguistic capability specification and the grammar symbol in the expanded parse tree, an expanded sentence using the suggested words may no longer satisfy the linguistic capability specification. Therefore, we perform validation on the suggested words and only accept them if the following three criteria are met.

First, the PoS tag of the suggested word must match the PoS tag of the expanded symbol in the parse tree. For the example in Figure 2, the masked symbol is a "NNS" (i.e., plural noun); thus, the suggested word must also be a "NNS". Shiyi: Say how we obtain the PoS tag of a suggested word. Second, we require that the sentiment of the expanded sentence is the same as the seed sentence. To ensure this, the suggested words must be neutral. Shiyi: Should we present this as part of specification, called expansion rule? Third, we additionally verify that the expanded sentences satisfied the same search rules for the seed sentence. Our goal for generating the expanded sentences is to use them for evaluating the sentiment analysis models on the associated linguistic capability in addition to the seed sentence. It is only achieved when the expanded sentences are also met with the same search rules for the linguistic capability. For LC1 as an example, the expanded sentence must still conform to the specification of the seed's linguistic capability specification. Therefore, the expanded sentences are required to be short and to only have neutral adjectives and nouns. Shiyi: Say why we use the third criteria only for LC1 and LC2. JL: I added the explanation

Running example. The third step in Figure 2 shows the words suggested by BERT. For this masked sentence, BERT suggested six words. Each word is associated with the confidence score provided by BERT, the PoS tag, and the sentiment. Among the six words, only "ways" and "things" are validated by S^{2}LCT because they have the Pos tag "NNS" and are neutral. In addition, it is found that both sentences meets the search rule of the associated linguistic capability of "Short sentences with neutral adjectives and nouns". In the end, two sentences of "Or both ways" and "Or both things" are generated. Shiyi: Do we also check if the expanded sentence meets the specification?JL: Yes. I added the explanation of validation of linguistic capability requirement

4.2.3 Sentence Selection. Shiyi: @Jaeseong: Add how we select expanded sentences and motivate why. After

Running example. Shiyi: Refer to the example to say how we use the BERT score to select. JL: I dont think we need this subsection of sentence selection it is already explained at the previous stage with running example.

5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR EVALUATION

6 EXPERIMENT

In this section, we present experiments to evaluate the effectiveness of our proposed evaluation methodology. In particular, we address the following research questions:

- **RQ1** : How effective is our proposed evaluation model for finding failures given a linguistic capability?
- **RQ2** : How effective is our proposed model for generating diverse test cases?
- **RQ3** : How effective is test cases generated from our proposed model for detecting diverse type of errors? acc score
- **RQ4** : How effective is our new test case generation using context-free grammar expansion?

For answering **RQ1** and **RQ2**, we generate test cases and use them for evaluating model on linguistic capabilities. In this experiment, We assess the ability to find failures by anlyzing model's performance on the generated test cases. We also measure the diversity among the generated test cases using similarites among them. Next, we answer **RQ3** by retraining sentiment analysis model with generated test cases and measuring performances. The idea behind this is that more comprehensive inputs becomes closer to real-world distribution and addresses more type of errors. Therefore, it leads to

improve the model performance. In this experiment, We retrain the model and compare performances of the retrained model. Not only that, we conduct ablation study of context-free grammar expansion to understand the its impact in our approach.

6.1 Experiment Setup

Seed Input Selection. For each linguistic capability, we first search all sentences that meet its requirement. Among found sentences, we randomly select 10 sentences due to memory constraint.

Word Sentiment. we extract sentiments of words using the SentiWordNet [1]. The SentiWordNet is a publicly available lexical resource of words on Wordnet with three numerical scores of objectivity, positivity and negativity. Sentiment word labels from the scores are classified from the algorithm from Mihaela et al. [3].

Context-free grammar Expansion. We build a reference Context-free grammar of natural language from the English Penn Treebank corpora [11, 21]. The corpus is sampled from 2,499 stories from a tree year Wall Street Journal collection The Treebank provides a parsed text corpus with annotation of syntactic and semantic structure. In this experiment We implement the treebank corpora available through NLTK, which is a suite of libraries and programs for Natural language processing for English. In addition, we parse the seed input using into its CFG using the Berkeley Neural Parser [7, 9], a high-accuracy parser with models for 11 languages. The input is a raw text in natural language and the output is the string representation of parse tree. Next after comparing CFGs between reference and seed input, we randomly select 10 expansions for generating templates due to memory constraint.

Synonyms. Auto-CHECKLIST searches synonyms of each token from synonym sets extracted from WordNet using Spacy open-source library for NLP.

Models. We evaluate the following sentiment analysis models via Auto-CHECKLIST: BERT-base [4], RoBERTa-base [10] and DistilBERT-base [20]. These models are fine-tuned on SST-2 and their accuracies are 92.43%, 94.04% and 91.3%.

Retraining. We retrain sentiment analysis models. we split Auto-CHECKLIST generated test cases into train/validation/test sets with the ratio of 8:1:1. The number of epochs and batch size for retraining are 1 and 16 respectively.

7 RESULT

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Table 1: Search rules and transformation templates for linguistic capabilities. Shiyi: Add transformation templates. May need to find a better specification language..

Linguistic capability	Search rule and transformation template
LC1: Short sentences with neutral adjectives and nouns	**Search** seed={length: <10; include: neutral adjs & neutral nouns; exlcude: pos adjs & neg adjs & pos nouns & neg nouns; label: neutral} **Transform** N/A
LC2: Short sentences with sentiment-laden adjectives	**Search** seed={length: <10; include: pos adjs; exlcude: neg adjs & neg verbs & neg nouns; label: pos} | {length: <10; include: neg adjs;exclude: pos adjs & pos verbs & pos nouns & neg verbs & neg nouns; label: neg} **Transform** N/A
LC3: Sentiment change over time, present should prevail	**Search** pos_sent={label: pos}, neg_sent={label: neg} **Transform** seed={['Previously, I used to like it saying that','Last time, I agreed with saying that','I liked it much as to say that']+[neg_sent, pos_sent]+['but', 'although', 'on the other hand']+['now I don't like it.', 'now I hate it.']} | {['I used to disagree with saying that','Last time, I didn't like it saying that','I hated it much as to say that']+[neg_sent, pos_sent]+['but', 'although', 'on the other hand']+['now I like it.']}
LC4: Negated negative should be positive or neutral	**Search** demonstrative_sent={start: [This, That, These, Those] + [is, are]; label: neg} **Transform** seed=negation of demonstrative_sent (['is'] -> ['is not', 'isn't'], ['are'] -> ['are not', 'aren't'])
LC5: Negated neutral should still be neutral	**Search** demonstrative_sent={start: [This, That, These, Those] + [is, are]; label: neutral} **Transform** negation of demonstrative_sent
LC6: Negation of negative at the end, should be positive or neutral	**Search** neg_sent={label: neg} **Transform** seed={['I agreed that', 'I thought that']+[neg_sent]+['but it wasn't', 'but I didn't']}
LC7: Negated positive with neutral content in the middle	**Search** pos_sent={length: <20; label: pos}, neutral_sent={length: <20; label: neutral} **Transform** seed={['I wouldn't say,', 'I do not think,', 'I don't agree with,']+[neutral_sent]+[pos_sent]}
LC8: Author sentiment is more important than others	**Search** pos_sent={label:pos}, neg_sent={label: neg} **Transform** seed={[temp1]+[pos_sent]+[temp2]+[neg_sent]} | {[temp1]+[neg_sent]+[temp2]+[pos_sent]} where temp1={['Some people think that', 'Many people agree with that', 'They think that', 'You agree with that'], temp2=['but I think that']}
LC9: Parsing sentiment in (question, yes) form	**Search** pos_sent={label: pos}, neg_sent={label: neg} **Transform** seed={['Do I think that', 'Do I agree that']+[pos_sent | neg_sent]+['? yes']}
LC10: Parsing positive sentiment in (question, no) form	**Search** pos_sent={label: pos} **Transform** seed={['Do I think that', 'Do I agree that']+[pos_sent]+['? no']}
LC11: Parsing negative sentiment in (question, no) form	**Search** neg_sent={label: neg} **Transform** seed={['Do I think that', 'Do I agree that']+[neg_sent]+['? no']}