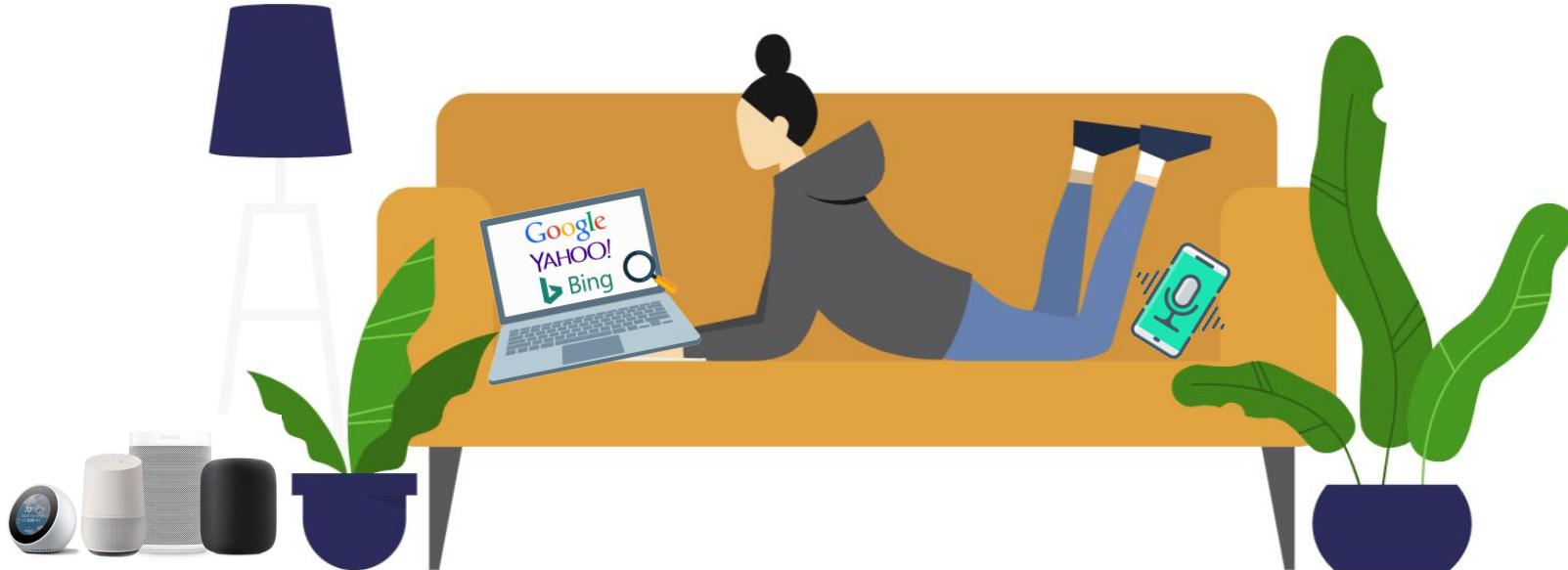


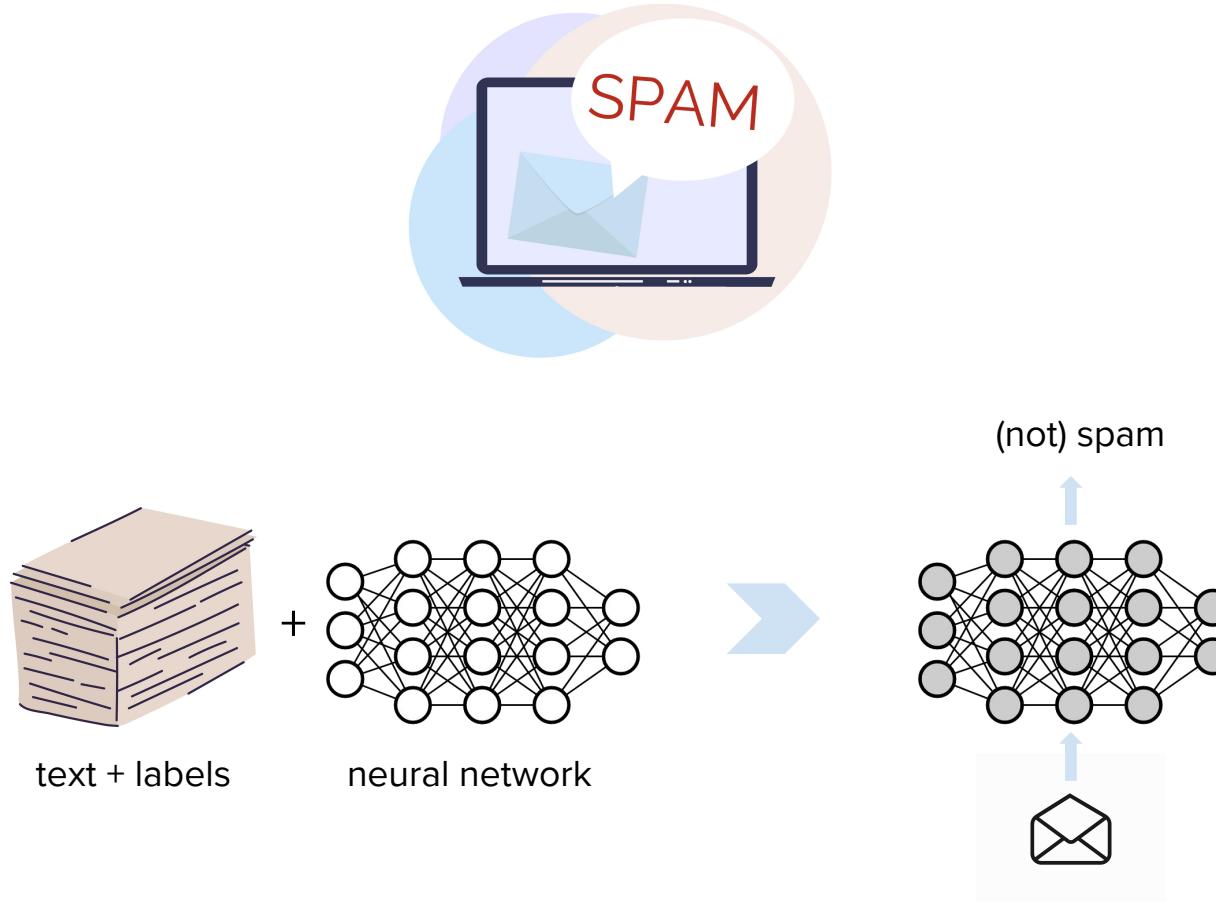
A Quick Tour of NLP Explainability

Ana Marasović

Allen Institute for AI (AI2) × AllenNLP × University of Washington

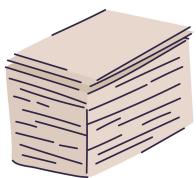
NLP technology has become an integral part of most people's daily lives



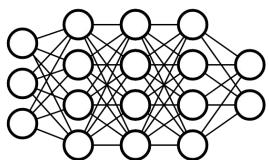




NLP Developer



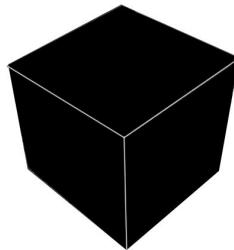
text + labels



neural network



(not) sick



(not) sick



Domain Experts
(Doctors)



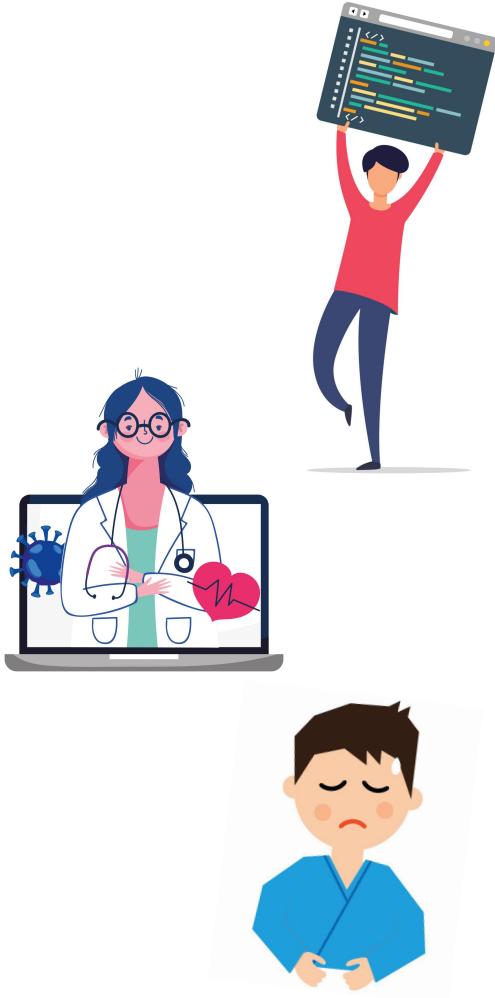
People Affected by AI
(Patients)



Increasingly harder to opt out



	Promised Benefits	Risks
Doctors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Faster diagnosis→ Better treatment→ Less burnout & stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Hurt their patients→ Bad performance review→ Getting fired→ Lawsuits
Patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Faster diagnosis→ Better treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Delayed care→ Wrong treatment→ Death



Why is this input assigned this answer?

How to change the answer?

Lecture Outline

- Why did my model make this prediction?
 - Part I: Gradient-Based Highlighting
 - Part II: Free-Text Explanations
 - Part III: Influential Train Examples
- Why did my model predict P rather than Q?
 - Contrastive Editing
- How and who explanations help?

Why did my model make this prediction?

Part I: Gradient-Based Highlighting

Slides for this part are copied & slightly modified from
the EMNLP tutorial “Interpreting Predictions of NLP Models”:
<https://github.com/Eric-Wallace/interpretability-tutorial-emnlp2020>



Thanks to the tutorial creators **Eric Wallace, Matt Gardner, & Sameer Singh!**

Why did my model make this prediction?



highlighting

Which parts of the input are
responsible for this prediction?

Highlighting methods highlight input features (pixels, words, ect.) that were important for a model prediction

Input highlights are also known as:

1. Saliency maps (for images)
2. Sensitivity maps (for images)
3. Input (feature) attribution
4. Input feature importance
5. Input feature relevance
6. Input feature contribution
7. Extractive rationales

Highlighting Techniques in General

- Compute the relative “*importance*” of each token in the input
- “Importance” is, loosely:
if you change or remove the token, how much is the prediction affected?

Examples of Highlights:

Sentiment an **intelligent** **fiction** about learning through cultural **clash**.

MLM [CLS] The [MASK] ran to the **emergency** room to see **her** patient . [SEP]

- Compute the relative “*importance*” of each token in the input
- “Importance” is, loosely:
 - if you change or remove the token, how much is the prediction affected?

“Importance” is measured with:

1. Gradients magnitudes
2. Attention scores
3. Input perturbations

...

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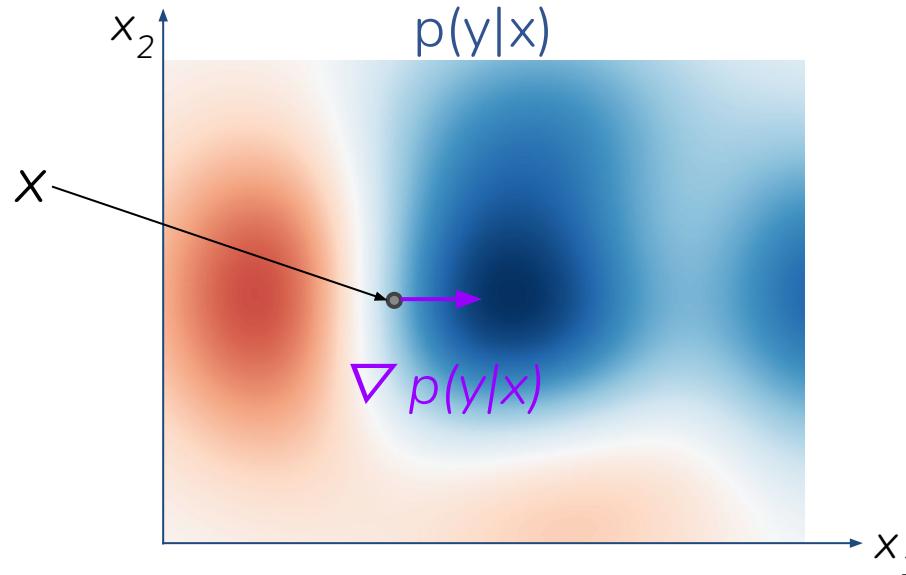
“Importance” is measured with:

1. **Gradient magnitudes**
2. Attention scores
3. Input perturbations

...

Highlighting via Input Gradients

- Estimate importance of a feature using derivative of output w.r.t that feature
- i.e., with a “tiny change” to the feature, what happens to the prediction?



- We then visualize the importance values of each feature in a heatmap

Gradient-based Highlights for NLP

For NLP, derivative of output w.r.t a feature

=

derivative of **output** w.r.t an **input token**



What to use as the output?

- Top prediction probability
- Top prediction logits
- Loss (with the top prediction as the ground-truth class)

Word is actually an embedding. How to turn gradient w.r.t embedding into a scalar score?

- Sum it?
- Take an L_p norm?
- Dot product with embedding itself?

Do we normalize values across sentence?

$$-\nabla_{e(t)} \mathcal{L}_{\hat{y}} \cdot e(t)$$

Summary of Gradient-Based Highlighting

Positives:

- Fast to compute: single (or a few) calls to backward()
- Visually appealing: spectrum of importance values

Negatives:

- Needs white-box (gradient) access to the model
- Not “customizable”
 - small changes in a individual “token” are not necessarily meaningful
 - distance is implicitly Euclidean (L_2)
- Gradients can be unintuitive with saturated or thresholded values
- Difficult to apply to non-classification tasks

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Why did my model make this prediction?

Part II: Free-Text Explanations

Why did my model make this prediction?



Free-text explanations

Answer in plain English that immediately gives the gist of the reasoning

Answering “why” by highlighting...

...doesn't work when the reason is not explicitly stated in the input



[Zellers et al., 2019]

Question: What is going to happen next?

Answer: [person2] holding the photo will tell [person4] how cute their children are.

Free-text explanation: It looks like [person4] is showing the photo to [person2], and they will want to be polite.

Answering “why” by highlighting...

...doesn't work when the reason is not explicitly stated in the input



[Zellers et al., 2019]

Free-text explanation:

- [person4] is showing the photo to [person2]
- [person2] will want to be polite

We cannot highlight this in the input!

Answering “why” by highlighting...

...doesn't work when the reason is not explicitly stated in the input

Question: Where is a frisbee in play likely to be?

Answer choices: outside, park, roof, tree, air

Free-text explanation: A frisbee is a concave plastic disc designed for skimming through the air as an outdoor game so while in play it is most likely to be in the air.

[Aggarwal et al., 2021]

How to generate free-text explanations?

Step 1:

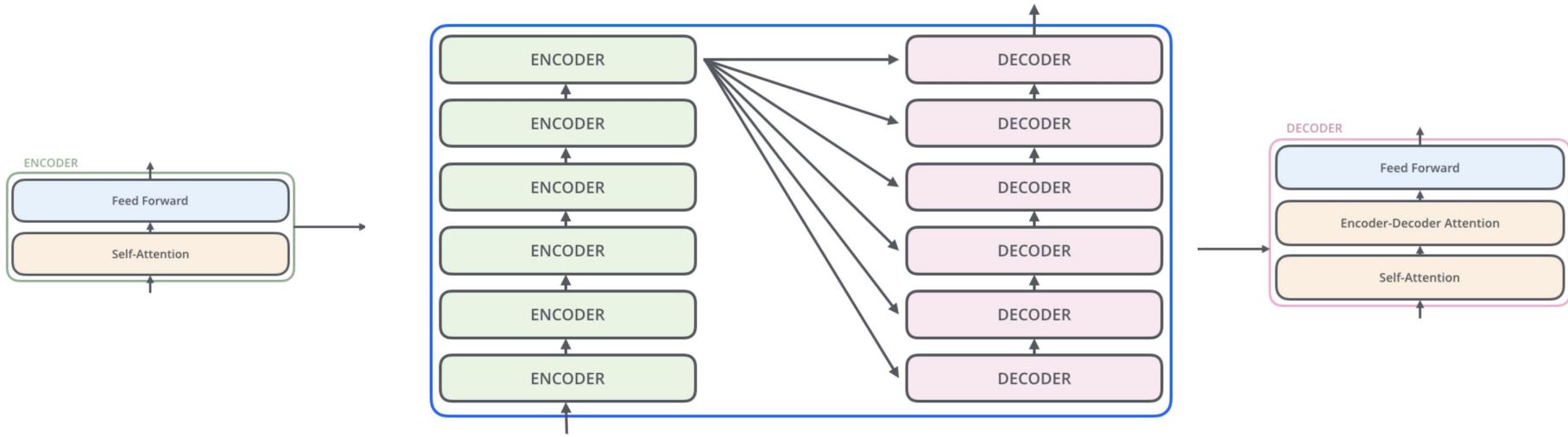
Find some human-written explanations[◊]

Step 2:

Finetune a pretrained transformer-based generation models (GPT-2)

[◊][Wiegreffe* and Marasović*, NeurIPS 2021]

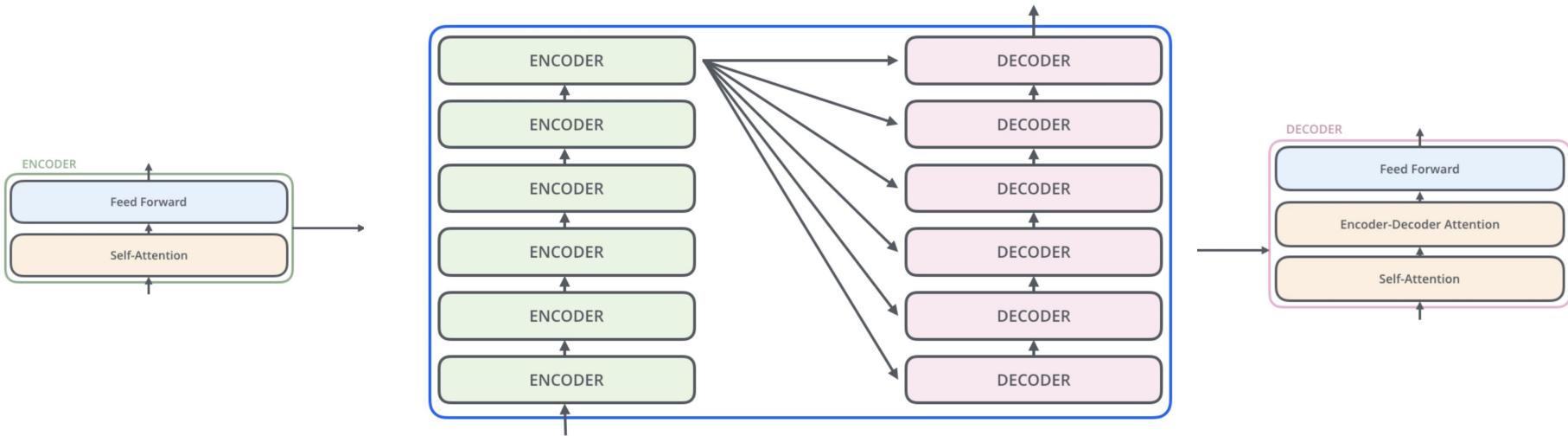
Generating Explanations



question: where is a frisbee in play likely
to be? choice: outside choice: park choice:
roof choice: tree choice: air

Generating Explanations

Air because a frisbee is a concave plastic disc designed for skimming through the air as an outdoor game so while in play it is most likely to be in the air.



question: where is a frisbee in play likely
to be? choice: outside choice: park choice:
roof choice: tree choice: air

Summary of Free-Text Explanations

Positives:

- Easy to comprehend, cognitive load of understanding is low
- Can explain instances of reasoning tasks

Negatives:

- Standard approach requires human-written explanations for supervision
- Can be used to deceive users

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Part III: Influential Train Examples

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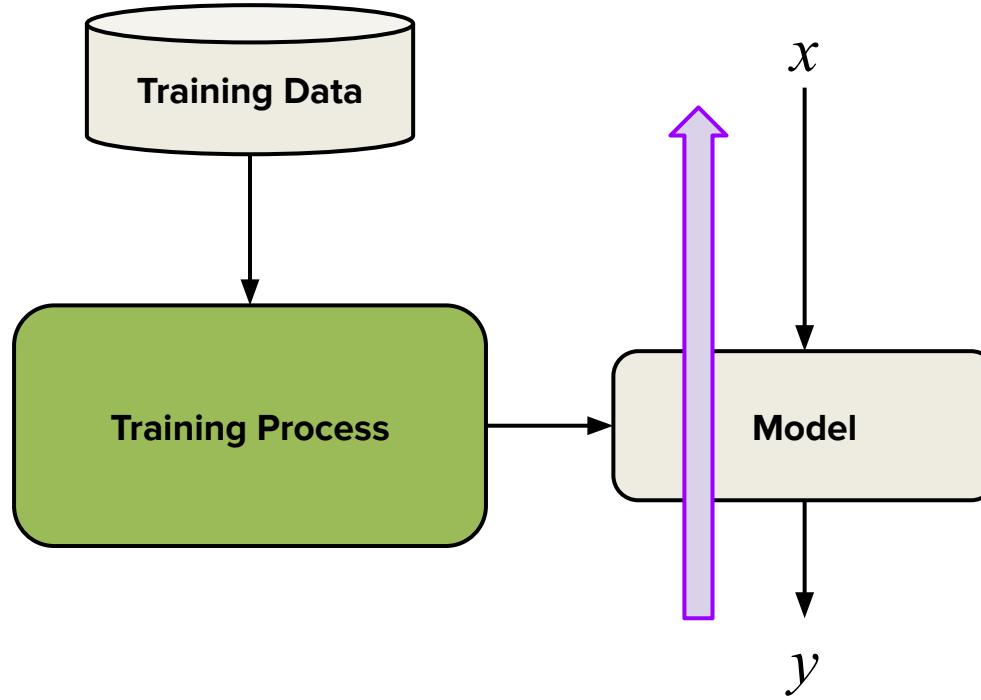
Thanks to the tutorial creators **Eric Wallace, Matt Gardner, & Sameer Singh!**

Why did my model make this prediction?

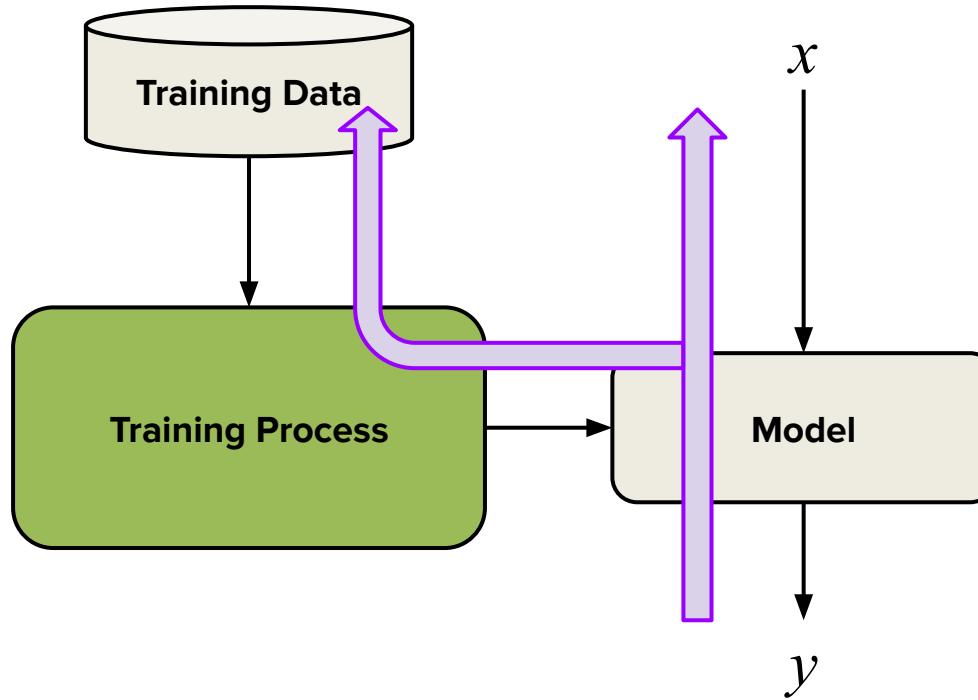


Which training examples were
responsible for this prediction?

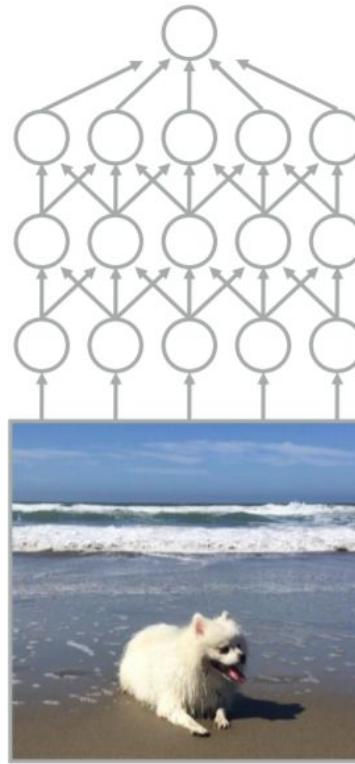
So far...



Data Influence



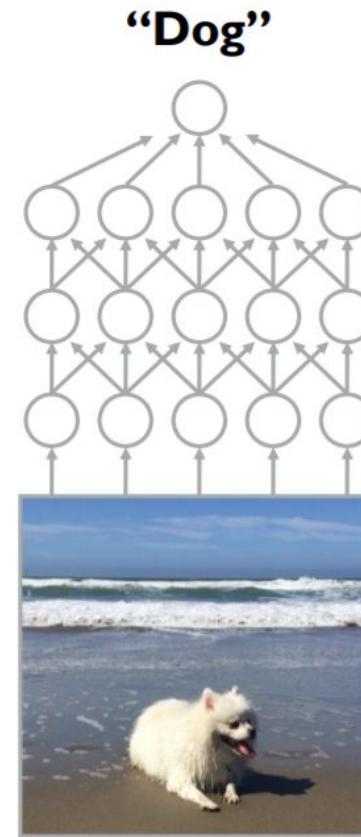
“Dog”





Training data

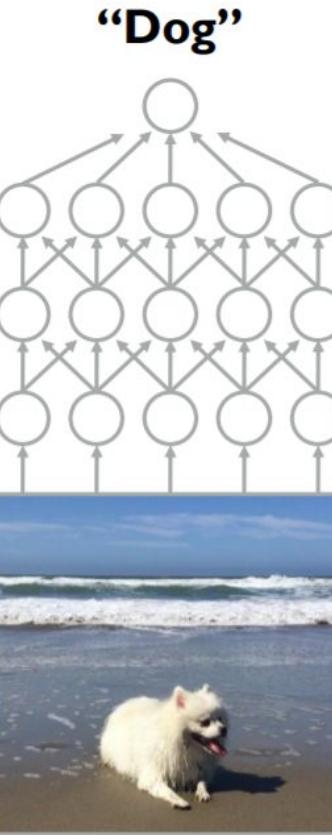
Training



**Most
Important**



Training



Data Influence: Example Use Cases [Yeh et al. 2018]

Test Example



Polar Bear ✗

Data Influence: Example Use Cases [Yeh et al. 2018]

Test Example



Polar Bear ✗

Influential Training Examples



Polar Bear ✗



Beaver



Pig

Influence Functions

Why did my model make this prediction?



Which training examples were
responsible for this prediction?

Influence Functions

Why did my model make this prediction?



Which training examples were responsible for this prediction?



Which examples, if removed, would change the loss a lot?

Fish



Dog

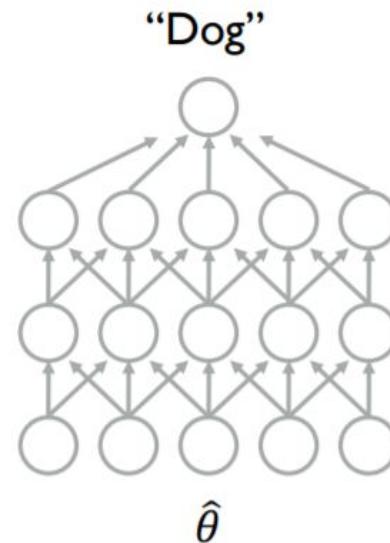


Dog



Training data z_1, z_2, \dots, z_n

Pick $\hat{\theta}$ to minimize $\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n L(z_i, \theta)$

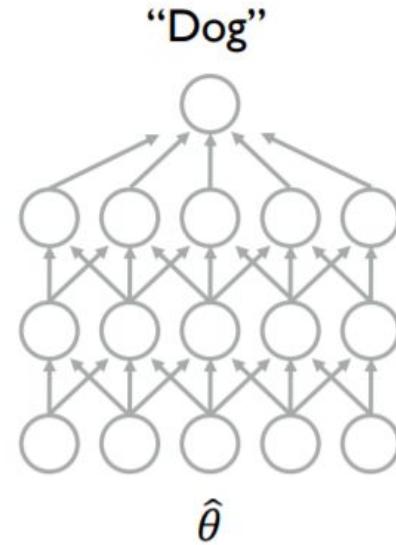




Training data z_1, z_2, \dots, z_n

Pick $\hat{\theta}$ to minimize $\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n L(z_i, \theta)$

z_{train}



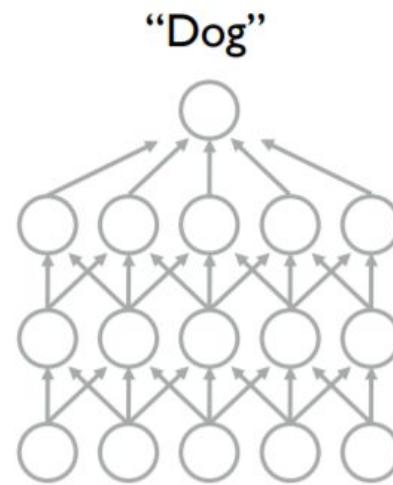


Training data z_1, z_2, \dots, z_n

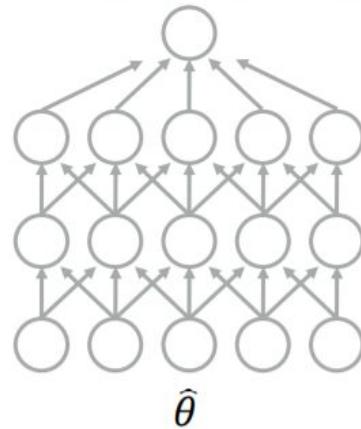
Pick $\hat{\theta}$ to minimize $\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n L(z_i, \theta)$

Pick $\hat{\theta}_{-z_{train}}$ to minimize

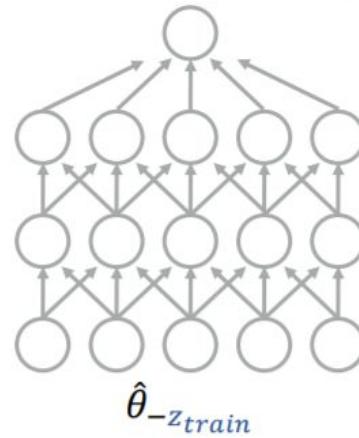
$$\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n L(z_i, \theta) - \frac{1}{n} L(z_{train}, \theta)$$



“Dog” (82% confidence)



“Dog” (79% confidence)

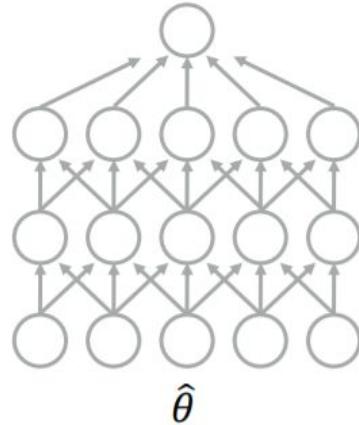


vs.

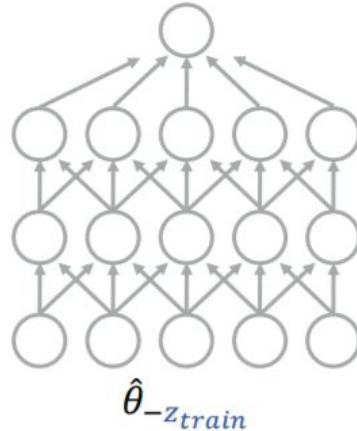


Test input z_{test}

“Dog” (82% confidence)



“Dog” (79% confidence)



vs.



What is $L(z_{test}, \hat{\theta}_{-z_{train}}) - L(z_{test}, \hat{\theta})$?

Use Case of Data Influence: Text Classification (NLI)

Test input

P: The manager was encouraged by the secretary. *H*: The secretary encouraged the manager. {entail}

Most supporting training examples

P: Because you're having fun. *H*: Because you're having fun. [entail]

P: I don't know if I was in heaven or hell, said Lillian Carter, the president's mother, after a visit. *H*: The president's mother visited. [entail]

P: Inverse price caps. *H*: Inward caps on price. [entail]

P: Do it now, think 'bout it later. *H*: Don't think about it now, just do it. [entail]

Influence Functions Summary

Pros:

- Principled approach (in the convex setting) for estimating influence of individual training points
- Works empirically for many models

Influence Functions Summary

Cons:

- Influential points can be **uninterpretable**
 - What influence did it actually have?
- Computationally **expensive** [[Garima et al. 2020](#)]
 - Especially with large training data!
- Often requires approximations that may be **invalid** [[Basu et al. 2020](#)]
 - Would prediction really change if training example wasn't there?
- How does it interact with **pretrained models**?
 - Are the influential points too specific to choice of pretrained models?

Need more work in this area!

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Why did my model
predict P rather than Q?

So far:
Why did my model make this prediction?

Insights from Social Science

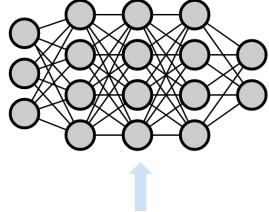
Explanations are **contrastive** = responses to:

“Why P rather than Q?”

“What changes to the input would hypothetically change the answer from P to Q?”

where **P** is an observed event (**fact**), and **Q** an imagined, counterfactual event that did not occur (**foil**)

do not admit to hospital



The patient reports to have a strong headache... They have dementia in Alzheimer's disease... They have not previously been treated for cardiovascular problems...



Why am I sent home?

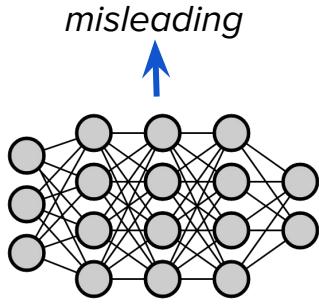
- Headache
- Dementia in Alzheimer's disease
- No cardiovascular problems

...

Why am I sent home [**rather than** admitted to a hospital]?

- No cardiovascular problems

The patient reports to have a strong headache... They have dementia in Alzheimer's disease... They have **not** previously been treated for cardiovascular problems...



misleading



+ documents from
the Web

Savings Solutions
4 January at 10:55 · [...](#)

I AM SO HAPPY I JUST LEARNED THIS!
As an American over 65, I qualified for the "Elderly Spend Card", which pays for my groceries, my dental, and my prescription refills. All I did to qualify, was tap the image below, entered my zip and I got my flex card in the mail a week later!

HUGEDIISCOUNT.LIFE
Seniors Must Claim Today:> [Learn More](#)

453457 People Already Register

1.6K [Like](#) 1.2K comments 318 shares [Comment](#) [Share](#)



*Why is my post misleading?
How can I change it to
make it clear/correct?*

misleading



*Why is my post misleading?
How can I change it to
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Contrastive explanations: explain how to minimally modify
the input to change the prediction to something else



mislabeled

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correct

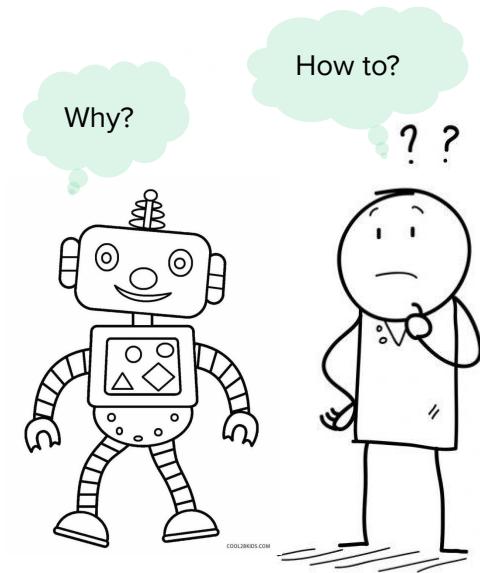
I AM SO HAPPY I JUST LEARNED THIS!
As ~~an American over 65~~ someone who has private health insurance with the Medicare Advantage plan, lives in X, and is chronically ill, I qualified for the “Elderly Spend Card”, which pays for my groceries, my dental, and my prescription refills. All I did ~~to qualify~~, was tap the image below, entered my zip and I got my flex card in the mail a week later!

Contrastive explanations: explain how to minimally modify the input to change the prediction to something else

“Understanding how people define, generate, select, evaluate, and present explanations seems almost essential”

People assign human-like traits to AI models
(anthropomorphic bias)

- ⇒ People expect explanations of models' behavior to follow the same conceptual framework used to explain human behavior
- ⇒ No users' agency otherwise



Contrastive Explanations of NLP Models



Contrastive input editing:

Minimal edits to the input that change model output to the contrast case

Yang et al. COLING 2020.

Jacovi and Goldberg. TACL 2021.

Ross et al. Findings of ACL 2021.

Wu et al. ACL 2021.

Collect **free-text** human
contrastive explanations, ...

...and **generate them**
left-to-right Chen et al. ACL 2021.

...abstract them into
templates, automatically fill
in the templates
(template-based infilling)

Paranjape et al. Findings of ACL 2021.

Contrastive vector representation:

A dense representation of the input that captures latent features that differentiate two classes

Jacovi et al. EMNLP 2021.

Contrastive Explanations of NLP Models



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Contrastive vector representation:

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Jacovi et al. EMNLP 2021.

Contrastive Explanations via **Contrastive Editing**

Question:

Ann and her children are going to Linda's home ____.

- (a) by bus (b) by car (c) on foot (d) by train

Why “**by train**” (d) and not “**on foot**” (c)?

How to change the answer from “**by train**” (d) to “**on foot**” (c)?

Context:

...Dear Ann, I hope that you and your children will be here in two weeks. My husband and I will go to meet you at the train station. Our town is small...

MiCE-Edited Context:

...Dear Ann, I hope that you and your children will be here in two weeks. My husband and I will go to meet you at ~~the train station~~ **your home on foot**. Our ~~town~~ **house** is small...

Goal:

Explain a **Predictor** model by *automatically* finding a **minimal edit** to the input that causes **Predictor's output to change to the contrast case**

Goal:

Explain a **Predictor** model by *automatically* finding a **minimal edit** to the input that causes **Predictor's output to change to the contrast case**

A very high-level idea of 🐭:

- Use an **Editor** model to edit the input by **masking input words & filling masked positions** until we find cause **Predictor's** output to change to the contrast case
- Simultaneously, minimize the masking percentage \sim the edit size

input: Sylvester Stallone has made some crap films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the worst. A totally dull story...

the contrast label (foil)

label: positive **input:** Sylvester Stallone has made some crap films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the worst. A totally dull story...

the contrast label (foil)

label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some crap films in his lifetime,
but this has got to be one of the worst. A totally dull story...



mask $n\%$ of input tokens

label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some <mask> films in his lifetime,
but this has got to be one of the <mask>. A totally <mask> story...

the contrast label (foil)

label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some crap films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the worst. A totally dull story...



mask $n\%$ of input tokens

label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some <mask> films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the <mask>. A totally <mask> story...



sample 15 spans at each masked position

1. label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some **good** films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the **worst**. A totally **novel** story...
2. label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some **great** films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the **greatest of all time**. A totally **boring** story...
- ...
15. label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some **wonderful** films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the **greatest**. A totally **tedious** story...

the contrast label (foil)

label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some crap films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the worst. A totally dull story...



mask $n\%$ of input tokens

label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some <mask> films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the <mask>. A totally <mask> story...



sample 15 spans at each masked position

1. label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some **good** films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the **worst**. A totally **novel** story...
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- ...
15. label: positive input: Sylvester Stallone has made some **wonderful** films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the **greatest**. A totally **tedious** story...

get the logit of the contrast label



$$l(pos) = 0.2$$

$$l(pos) = 0.6$$

$$l(pos) = 0.65$$

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask $n\%$ of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

x

4 different values of n to minimize the edit



4*15=60 samples

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask $n\%$ of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

x

4 different values of n to minimize the edit

How to pick which values for n ?

Binary search on [0,55]

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask $n\%$ of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

×

4 different values of n to minimize the edit

How to pick which values for n ?

Binary search on [0,55]

Start: $n^{(1)} = 27.5\%$

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask $n\%$ of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

×

4 different values of n to minimize the edit

How to pick which values for n ?

Binary search on [0,55]

Start: $n^{(1)}=27.5\%$

→ If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(2)}=13.75\%$

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask **n%** of the input tokens
3. Sample **15** spans at masked positions

×

4 different values of n to minimize the edit

How to pick which values for n ?

Binary search on [0,55]

Start: $n^{(1)}=27.5\%$

- If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(2)}=13.75\%$
- If a contrastive edit **not** found: $n^{(2)}=41.25\%$

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask $n\%$ of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

×

4 different values of n to minimize the edit

How to pick which values for n ?

Binary search on [0,55]

Start: $n^{(1)}=27.5\%$

- If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(2)}=13.75\%$
 - ◆ If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(3)}=6.875\%$
- If a contrastive edit **not** found: $n^{(2)}=41.25\%$
 - ◆ If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(3)}=20.625\%$

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask $n\%$ of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

x

4 different values of n
to minimize the edit

How to pick which values for n ?

Binary search on [0,55]

Start: $n^{(1)}=27.5\%$

- If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(2)}=13.75\%$
 - ◆ If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(3)}=6.875\%$
 - ◆ If a contrastive edit **not** found: $n^{(3)}=20.625\%$
- If a contrastive edit **not** found: $n^{(2)}=41.25\%$
 - ◆ If a contrastive edit found: $n^{(3)}=20.625\%$
 - ◆ If a contrastive edit **not** found: $n^{(3)}=48.125\%$

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask ***n*%** of the input tokens
3. Sample ***15*** spans at masked positions

×

4 different values of *n* to minimize the edit

How to pick masking positions?

Based on token importance for the original prediction

Rank input tokens based on the gradient magnitude of the model we're explaining

Mask top-*n*% of **ranked** tokens

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask $n\%$ of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

x

4 different values of n to minimize the edit



4*15=60 samples

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4 different values of n to minimize the edit



$$4 * 15 = 60 \text{ samples}$$



rank 60 samples w.r.t. the logit of the contrast label

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keep top-3 samples **beam**

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x

4 different values of n to minimize the edit



$4 \times 15 = 60$ samples



rank 60 samples w.r.t. the logit of the contrast label



keep top-3 samples **beam**



if a contrastive edit is found

Repeat for every instance in the beam at most **2 more rounds**

1. Prepend the contrast label to the input
2. Mask *n%* of the input tokens
3. Sample 15 spans at masked positions

x

4 different values of *n* to minimize the edit



$$4 * 15 = 60 \text{ samples}$$



rank 60 samples w.r.t. the logit of the contrast label



keep top-3 samples **beam**

**Can a pretrained model without any
additional tweaks fill in the spans?**

Can a pretrained model without any additional tweaks fill in the spans?

We find it's important to **prepare the editor** by finetuning it to infill masked spans given masked text and **a target end-task label**

(standard masking) Sylvester Stallone has made some <mask> films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the <mask>. A totally <mask> story...

(targeted masking) label: negative input: Sylvester Stallone has made some <mask> films in his lifetime, but this has got to be one of the <mask>. A totally <mask> story...

Can a pretrained model without any additional tweaks fill in the spans?

We find it's important to **prepare the editor** by finetuning it to infill masked spans given masked text and **a target end-task label**

We find that **labels predicted by the model** we're explaining **can be used** in this step without a big loss in performance

Can a pretrained model without any additional tweaks fill in the spans?

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Gradient-based masking in this step gives better performance

MiCE is a **two-stage approach** to generating contrastive edits

- Stage 1: Prepare an editor
- Stage 2: Make edits guided with gradients & logits of the model we're explaining

The maximum number of iterations for a single instance:

binary search levels $s \times$ # samples at each maskin position $m +$

beam size $b \times$ # binary search levels $s \times$ # samples at each masking position $m \times$ # of rounds =

$4 \times 15 + 3 \times 4 \times 15 \times 2 = 420$

first round

other rounds

That's a lot, and also there is no guarantee that a smaller contrastive edit does not exist

Methodology for Detecting Artifacts with Local Explanations

1. **Construct a validation set:** use a standard split, or intentionally construct a small set of potentially challenging samples
2. **Produce local explanations** for examples in Step 1
3. **Identify candidate artifacts:**
 - a. **Granular:** aggregate the important granular features from local explanations in Step 2 & identify features that appear disproportionately
 - b. **Abstract:** inspect local explanations from Step 2 manually
4. **Verify candidate artifacts** by manipulating examples in Step 1, e.g., observing the effect of removing/replacing identified artifacts on the model prediction

How MiCE Edits Can Be Used?

MiCE's edits can offer hypotheses about model “bugs”

Original prediction: positive

An interesting pairing of stories, this little flick manages to bring together seemingly different characters and story lines all in the backdrop of WWII and succeeds in tying them together without losing the audience. I was impressed by the depth portrayed by the different characters and also by how much I really felt I understood them and their motivations, even though the time spent on the development of each character was very limited. The outstanding acting abilities of the individuals involved with this picture are easily noted. A fun, stylized movie with a slew of comic moments and a bunch more head shaking events. 7/10

How MiCE Edits Can Be Used?

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MiCE's edit × contrast prediction (negative)

An interesting pairing of stories, this little flick manages to bring together seemingly different characters and story lines all in the backdrop of WWII and succeeds in tying them together without losing the audience. I was impressed by the depth portrayed by the different characters and also by how much I really felt I understood them and their motivations, even though the time spent on the development of each character was very limited. The outstanding acting abilities of the individuals involved with this picture are easily noted. A fun, stylized movie with a slew of comic moments and a bunch more head shaking events. **7/10 4/10**

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How MiCE Edits Can Be Used?

MiCE's edits can offer hypotheses about model “bugs”

Hypothesis:

Model learned to rely heavily on numerical ratings 

Test the hypothesis using MiCE's edits:

1. Filter instances with edits smaller than ≤ 0.05
2. Select tokens that are removed/inserted more than expected given their frequency in the original IMDB inputs

$y_c = \text{positive}$		$y_c = \text{negative}$	
Removed	Inserted	Removed	Inserted
4/10 ridiculous	excellent enjoy	10/10 8/10	awful disappointed
horrible	amazing	7/10	1
4	entertaining	9	4
predictable	10	enjoyable	annoying

Who? What are *expectations, background, & needs* of a person for who explanations are introduced?



Debugging

Why? What are the goals of producing explanations?

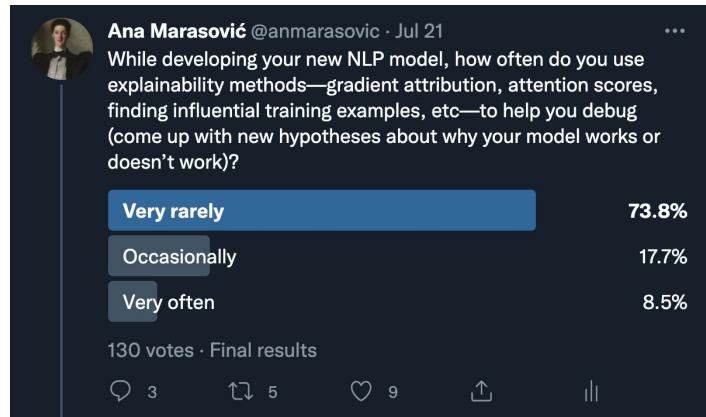


What? is the content we should to include in the explanation?

How? What type of explanation is the most appropriate?

How and who
explanations help?

Although local explanations are specifically motivated for people to use, there is no convincing evidence yet that local explanations help people who are using language technology



An **AI** model is **trustworthy** to a given **contract** if it is capable of maintaining the **contract**.

If a **human** perceives that an **AI** model is trustworthy to a **contract**, and therefore accepts vulnerability to **AI**'s actions, then the **human** **trusts AI contractually**. Otherwise, **human distrusts AI contractually**.

Trust does not exist if the **human** does not perceive risk.

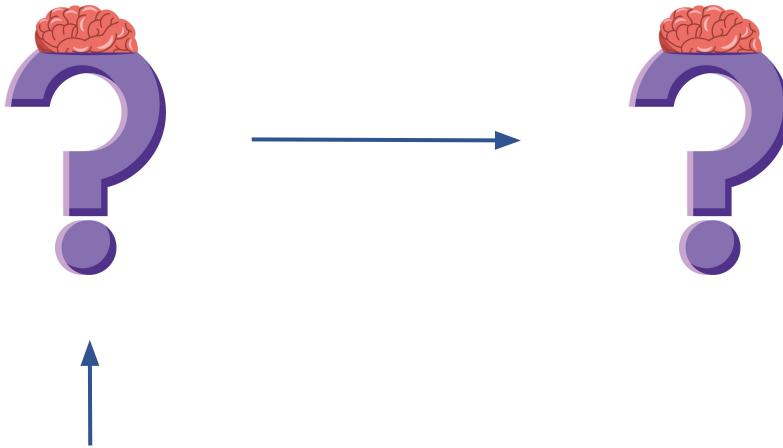
Human's contractual trust in **AI** is **warranted** if it is caused by trustworthiness in **AI**. Otherwise, **human's** trust in **AI** is **unwarranted**.

Trust does not exist if the human does not perceive risk, but...

Researchers focus on grand AI challenges that people are good at (e.g., commonsense QA, “*Where is a frisbee in play likely to be?*”)

Researchers focus use simple tasks that people don’t need help with (e.g., claim verification against a very short text)

Who? What are *expectations, background, & needs* of a person for who explanations are introduced?



Why? What are the goals of producing explanations?

What is the content we should to include in the explanation?

How? What type of explanation is the most appropriate?

Thank you!

Questions?

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