AuSMeT: The Autocompletion for Simplifying Medical Text

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Abstract

The goal of text simplification is to transform difficult text into a version that is easier to understand and more broadly accessible. In some domains, such as healthcare and medicine, fully automated approaches cannot be used since the information must be accurately preserved. In this paper, we introduce a first-of-its-kind medical data set that pairs English Wikipedia with Simple English Wikipedia and the autocompletion task for text simplification in medical domain, which aims to assist human simplification by suggesting the next word to type when manually simplifying a text. We compare four pre-trained neural language models (PNLMs) (BERT, RoBERTa, XLNet, and GPT-2) and show how the additional context of the sentence to be simplified can be incorporated to achieve significantly better results (in the range of 9.0% to 28.8% absolute improvement). The best model, RoBERTa with context, achieves a word prediction rate of 62.4% on medical Wikipedia data. With the language model comparison, we introduce the AuTS ensemble model that comebines the adventanges of PNLMs, which outperforms RoBERTa by 2.1%.

1 Introduction

Text simplification (TS) is the process of modifying the words and structure of a text while preserving the content to make the information in the text more broadly accessible (Shardlow, 2014). Most research in text simplification has focused on fully automated (Zhu et al., 2010; Coster and Kauchak, 2011; Xu et al., 2016; Zhang and Lapata, 2017; Nishihara et al., 2019). In some domains, e.g., healthcare and medicine, using fully-automated text simplifications is not appropriate since it is critical that the information gets preserved fully and correctly during the simplification process. Instead of fully-automated approaches, support tools such as editors are better suited to generate simplifications more efficiently and with higher quality (Kloehn et al., 2018).

Autocompletion tools suggest one or more words as the user types that could follow what has been typed so far. Autocompletion has been used in a range of applications including web queries (Cai et al., 2016), database queries (Khoussainova et al., 2010), texting (Dunlop and Crossan, 2000), and e-mail composition (Dai et al., 2019). In this paper, we explore autocompletion task for sentence-level text simplification: given a difficult sentence that a user is trying to simplify and the simplification typed so far, the goal is to suggest the next word to follow what has been typed. Table 1 shows an example difficult sentence along with the simplification that the user has typed so far. The task is to predict the next word to assist in finishing the simplification, in this case a verb like "take", which might be continued to a partial simplification of "take place at the Chapel". In contrast to most autocomplete applications, for text simplification, in addition to the text that is being typed, we also have the additional context of the content being simplified. Our work is most similar to interactive machine translation tools where a user translating a foreign sentence is given guidance as they type (Green et al., 2014). The contribution of this work are three-fold:

1. We introduce a first-of-its-kind medical data set that pairs English Wikipedia and Simple Wikipedia, which is automatically extracted from the Simple Wikipedia parallel corpus (Kauchak, 2013). The resulting medical corpus has 3.3k sentence pairs, of which an estimated 2.8k are genuinely medical. 2. We also examine the PNLMs on autocompletion task for sentence simplification and provide an initial

Difficult sentence	The Chapel is actively used as a place of worship and also for some concerts and college events.
Typed	Concerts and college events

Table 1: An example text simplification autocompletion task. The user is simplifying the difficult sentence on top and has typed the words on the bottom so far.

analysis based on a number of recent models. We show that the additional context of the difficult sentence can be integrated into these models to improve the quality of the suggestions made. RoBERTa is the best individual model with 62.4% accuracy (19.4% above our base-line). 3. We introduce the AuTS, the ensemble model that combines adventages of recent PNLMs. Our model outperforms the best single PNLM, RoBERTa, by 2.1%. Further, to our best knowledge, this ensembling approach is novel and suggests a potential improvements on PNLMs for natural language processing (NLP) downstream tasks.

2 Text Simplification Autocomplete

Given a difficult sentence that a user is trying to simplify, $d_1d_2...d_m$, and the simplification typed so far, $s_1s_2...s_i$, the autocompletion task is to suggest word s_{i+1} . We examined four recent PNLMs that utilize the Transformer network (Vaswani et al., 2017): BERT (Devlin et al., 2018), RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019), XLNet (Yang et al., 2019), and GPT-2 (Radrof and Wu, 2018). The four models are state-of-the-art neural language representation models that have performed well in a range of applications.

To understand the benefit of the context of the difficult sentence, we compare models that do not use context, i.e., predict only based on $s_1s_2...s_i$, and context-aware versions that incorporate the difficult sentence into the prediction.

2.1 BERT

BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) is a method for learning language representations using bidirectional training. The main advantage of BERT is that it uses a masked approach to train the model where some of the words in the training data are replaced with a [MASK] token. The model then attempts to predict the original value of the masked words based on the context provided by the other, non-masked words in the sequence. Unlike left-to-right or right-to-left sequential models, BERT can use context both before and after the word to be predicted. BERT has been shown to produce state-of-the-art results in a wide range of generation and classification applications (Devlin et al., 2018).

We use the original BERT pre-trained model, which was trained on the BooksCorpus (Zhu et al., 2015) and English Wikipedia. To apply the model without context, we predict the masked word for the input " $s_1s_2...s_i$ [MASK].". For the context-aware version, we add the context of the difficult sentence " $d_1d_2...d_m.s_1s_2...s_i$ [MASK].". This biases the prediction to words related to those found in the encoded context from difficult sentences.

BERT is a pre-trained model designed to be fine-tuned for particular applications. For the text simplification autocompletion task, we fine-tuned BERT on a corpus of sentence-aligned difficult concatenated with the corresponding simple sentences. We used Transformer Neural Networks to fine-tune the pre-trained BERT language model¹ on this data. Since, our task is to predict the next word in the simple sentence, we mask out each word in the simple sentence portion and then predict that word.

2.2 RoBERTa

RoBERTa is A Robustly Optimized BERT Pretraining Approach. The RoBERTa uses the same model architecture as BERT. However, the differences between RoBERTa and BERT are that RoBERTa does not use Next Sentence Prediction during pre-trainining and it uses larger mini-batch size. We used the

https://github.com/huggingface/transformers/tree/master/examples/

publicly released RoBERTa 12-layer, 768-hidden, 12-heads and 125M parameters model 2 . For the context unaware version I simply predict s_{i+1} based on $s_1s_2...s_i$. Like BERT, to incorporate the context of the difficult sentence, I prepend it to the simplified text typed so far and then predict s_{i+1} .

2.3 XLNet

With the capability of modeling bidirectional contexts, denoising autoencoding based pretraining like BERT achieves better performance than pretraining approaches based on autoregressive language modeling. However, relying on corrupting the input with masks, BERT neglects dependency between the masked positions and suffers from a pretrain-finetune discrepancy. In light of these pros and cons, XLNet proposes a generalized autoregressive pretraining method that enables learning bidirectional contexts by maximizing the expected likelihood over all permutations of the factorization order and overcomes the limitations of BERT thanks to its autoregressive formulation. Furthermore, XLNet integrates ideas from Transformer-XL, the state-of-the-art autoregressive model, into pretraining. Empirically, under comparable experiment setting, XLNet outperforms BERT on 20 tasks, often by a large margin, including question answering, natural language inference, sentiment analysis, and document ranking. In this paper, we used publicly available XLNet English, 12-layers, 768-hidden, 12-heads, 110M parameters version ³.

2.4 GPT-2

Like BERT, GPT-2 is also based on the Transformer network, but uses left-to-right training and prediction. In each layer, GPT-2 has 12 independent attention mechanisms, called "heads", and the overall model contains 12 layers which can capture up to 144 different attention patterns. We use the publicly released model⁴, which has 1.5B model parameters and is trained on web text. Since GPT-2 is a traditional left-to-right model, for the context unaware version we simply predict s_{i+1} based on $s_1s_2...s_i$. Like BERT, to incorporate the context of the difficult sentence, we prepend it to the simplified text typed so far and then predict s_{i+1} . We did not do any fine-tuning for GPT-2.

3 Medical Parallel Wikipedia Corpus

In this paper, to create the medical corpus, we use the simple parallel Wikipedia corpus by (Kauchak, 2013), which contains 167K pairs of sentences, with one sentence from English Wikipedia and a corresponding sentence from Simple English Wikipedia. Table 4 shows an example sentence pair. To extract the medical samples, first, we created a medical dictionary with 269 health-related keywords⁵ and 260k medical terms selected from the Unified Medical Language System (Bodenreider, 2004). The UMLS terms were those related to medical semantic types. Second, we extracted sentences from the English Wikipedia corpus using this medical dictionary as follows: if the title and the body of a sentence from Wikipedia normal corpus have 4 matching words with our medical keywords, then that sentence (both normal and simple version) is added to the medical corpus. The resulting medical corpus has 3.3k sentence pairs, of which an estimated 2.8k are genuinely medical. An example of medical sentence pair is shown in Table 2. Table 3 shows the corpus size for two corpora.

4 Experiments

We introduce a new autocompletion task for sentence-level text simplification, which relies on a medical parallel corpus of difficult and simple sentences. Given a difficult sentence and the the first i words of the simple sentence, the goal is to predict the $i+1^{th}$ simple word. We provide the first results on this task using BERT, RoBERTa, XLNet, and GPT-2, with and without context, as well as an no-fine-tuned BERT as a baseline. We provide an initial analysis of model performance and use it to design the AuTS, which is an ensemble model which combines advantages of each PNLM.

²https://github.com/huggingface/roberta

³https://github.com/huggingface/xlnet

⁴https://github.com/openai/gpt-2

⁵https://figshare.com/articles/List_of_Health_Keywords/1084358

Difficult sentence	Lowered glucose levels result both in the reduced release of insulin from the beta cells and in the reverse conversion of glycogen to glucose when glucose levels fall.
Simple sentence	This insulin tells the cells to take up glucose from the blood. The glucose is used by cells for energy

Table 2: An example of sentence pair in Medical Wikipedia parallel corpus.

Subtask	No. Sentence Pair	
General Domain Medical Domain	163,700 3,300	
Total	167,000	

Table 3: Number of sentence pairs for General Domain and Medical Domain. The two corpora are exclusive.

4.1 Experimental setup

To evaluate the quality of the different models, we used the Simple Wikipedia parallel corpus (Kauchak, 2013), which contains 167K pairs of sentences, with one sentence from English Wikipedia and a corresponding sentence from Simple English Wikipedia. We used 70% of the sentence for training, 15% for development, and 15% for testing.

As an additional baseline that does not use context, we trained a trigram language model with Kneser-Ney smoothing using the SRILM toolkit (Stolcke, 2002). The model was trainined on the simple sentences from the training portion of the dataset and predicts s_{i+1} as the word with the highest probability given the previous two words, i.e., $argmax_{s_{i+1}} p(s_{i+1}|s_is_{i-1})$.

The BERT fine-tuning was done with a batch-size of 8, 8 epochs, and a learning rate of $5e^{-5}$. Early stopping was used based on the second time a decrease in the accuracy was seen.

TODO: Add RoBERTa, XLNet, GPT-2 fintuning set up here

To evaluate the models, we calculated how well the models predicted the next word in a test sentence, given the previous words. A simple test sentence of length n, $s_1s_2...s_n$, would result in n-1 predictions, i.e., predict s_2 given s_1 , predict s_3 given s_1s_2 , etc. For example, Figure ?? shows a difficult sentence from English Wikipedia and the corresponding simplification from Simple English Wikipedia. Given this test example, we generate six prediction tasks, one for each word in the simple sentence after the first word. Figure 5 shows these six test prediction tasks. For the context-aware approaches, they also incorporated the difficult sentence. We measured the performance of a system using accuracy based on the number of predictions that exactly matched the next word in the corpus. The test corpus contained 25K sentence pairs resulting in a total of 696K individual word predictions.

Difficult sentence	The Saxons built Banbury on the west bank of the River Cherwell.
Simple sentence	Banbury is part of the Cherwell district.

Table 4: An example sentence pair from the English Wikipedia corpus.

Typed so far	Predict
Banbury	is
Banbury is	part
Banbury is part	of
Banbury is part of	the
Banbury is part of the	Cherwell
Banbury is part of the Cherwell	district

Table 5: The resulting prediction tasks that are generated from the example in Table 4.

Model	No Context	Context-Aware
RoBERTa	56.23%	62.4%
BERT	53.28%	50.43%
XLNet	46.2%	45.7%
GPT-2	23.2%	49%

Table 6: Accuracy for the different models on the Wikipedia test corpus of 450 sentence pairs. Context-aware approaches included the context of the difficult sentence when predicting.

4.2 Prediction performance

Table 6 shows the results for the five different variants (trigram model, BERT and GPT-2 with and without context). Both neural models significantly outperform the trigram language model; they have been trained on larger corpora and have access to more context allowing for better predictions. Without context, GPT-2 performs slightly better than BERT, with an absolute improvement of 1.7%. To put these accuracy numbers in perspective, in an actual autocomplete task, without context, both BERT and GPT-2 would get about every 4th or 5th word/suggestion correct.

With context, the results improve drastically and the accuracy rates double for both models. The GPT-2 model benefits the most from the additional information with an absolute improvement of 28.8% over the model without context, resulting in the best performing model with 52% accuracy. On the actual autocompletion task, this equates to predicting every other word correctly. Note that this metric is pessimistic in that the predicted word must match exactly the word seen in the simple sentence and does not account for other possible words that could be correctly used in the context.

Table 7 shows the output of the GPT-2 model with and without context for simplifying the difficult sentence:

Each pseudostem can produce a single bunch of bananas.

The context-aware version is able to take advantage of the strong overlap between the difficult sentence and the simplified version that is being "typed". The model without context makes reasonable predictions grammatically, but without the content priming the suggestions are poor overall.

4.3 Understanding model performance

To better understand how the models are performing and how the predictions of the models differ, we broke down the performances of the neural models by part of speech (POS), difficult sentence length, the number of words typed so far. Due to the application of the autocompletion approach to real-time usages, we also provide the accuracy @ N.

POS Table 8 shows the accuracies broken down by part of speech, where the POS was automatically determined using Stanford CoreNLP (Manning et al., 2014). All of the models perform best on noncontent bearing words (i.e., "Other"). Of the content-bearing words, the models did the best on verbs and the worst on adverbs. Overall, GPT-2 with context was the best model at predicting content words with all of the accuracies above 40% except for adverbs, which was 37%.

	GPT-2		
Typed so far	No Context	Context-Aware	Actual
A	particle	pseudostem	pseudostem
A pseudostem	was	is	is
A pseudostem is	a	able	able
A pseudostem is able	to	to	to
A pseudostem is able to	create	produce	produce
A pseudostem is able to produce	a	a	a
A pseudostem is able to produce a	new	single	single
A pseudostem is able to produce a single	photon	bunch	bunch
A pseudostem is able to produce a single bunch	of	of	of
A pseudostem is able to produce a single bunch of	particles	bananas	bananas

Table 7: Sample output for simplifying the difficult sentence "Each pseudostem can produce a single bunch of bananas." using GPT-2 with and without context. "Actual" indicates the word that should be predicted.

	RoBERTa	BERT	XLNet	GPT-2
	ROBERTA	DEKI	ALINCI	OI 1-2
All words	62.4	50.43	45.7	49
Nouns	60.3	48.7	45.2	51
Verbs	64	50.7	46.2	54
Adverbs	59.1	39.3	45.1	49
Adjectives	55	35.2	34.7	49
DET	76.3	68.7	51.2	51
PropNoun	25.8	21.8	17.9	34

Table 8: Accuracy of the RoBERTa, BERT, XLNet, and GPT-2 with and without context by part-of-speech on the test data.

Difficult sentence length Figure 1 shows the performance of the context-aware models based on the length of the difficult sentence. BERT is fairly consistent regardless of the length of the difficult sentence. Only for very long sentences does the performance drop. GPT-2 performs poorly on very short sentences, but well for other lengths. We hypothesize that the training data for GPT-2 (web text) may require more context for the more technical Wikipedia task.

Number of words typed Figure 2 shows the performance of the two context-aware models based on how many words of the simplification the model has access to, i.e., i. Early on when the sentence is first being developed, both models struggle. As more and more words are typed and more context is provided, the accuracy of both models increase, however, GPT-2 improves more rapidly as additional context is provided. Like the difficult sentence length analysis, GPT-2 performs better with more context information.

Accuracy@N Table 9 shows the accuracy@N from RoBERTa, BERT, XLNet models on next word prediction. Accuracy@N is a metric that gives a model credit as long as it can provide accurate prediction within its k suggestions. As we can see from here, this relaxing schema helps the models better assist technician because the user can pick the best word in the list of suggestion and therefore can help speed up the process and improve model performance.

Performance on predicting next K words Table 10 show results from four neural network models in predicting the next k words. To further understand how performance affected by the more words it needs to predict, I run experiments with predicting next 1, 2, 3, and 4 words. This idea is the same with the Google email text suggestion when the model suggest multiple words at a time. As more words need to be predicted, the performance drop significantly for the medical domain. This confirms that the task is unsolved and open for researches to further advance the autocompletion system in medical text simplification.

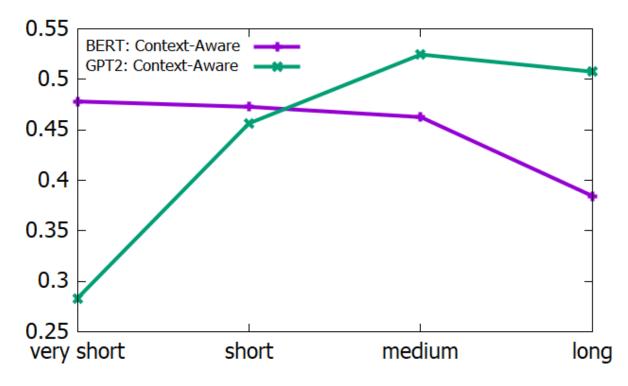


Figure 1: Accuracy for the two context-aware models based on the length of the difficult sentence: very short (≤ 5 tokens), short (6-15), medium (16-19), and long (≥ 20).

	RoBERTa	BERT	XLNet
accuracy@2	67.2	54.5	46.9
accuracy@3	70	56.2	49.2
accuracy@4	72.1	58.0	51.3
accuracy@5	73.2	59.4	53.5
accuracy@6	73.2	59.4	53.5
accuracy@7	73.2	59.4	53.5

Table 9: Accuracy @ N of the RoBERTa, BERT, and XLNet with context on next word prediction

5 AuTS ensemble model

With previous comparison and analysis of model performance, we design an ensemble approach which combines adventages of PNLMs. Table 11 shows results from our AuTS model, majority vote ensemble model, multi-class classification ensemble model, and the best single model, RoBERTa.

- 1. Majority Vote:
- 2. 4-class Classification: For this approach, we trained a multi-class classifier to predict what PNLM among (RoBERTa, BERT, XLNet, and GPT-2) to use for each prediction task described in table 5. The training data for this classifier is a text combined dificult sentence with words typed so far and the label is one of PNLMs. An example of the training data set is shown in table ??. TODO: Add table of 4 class data example

4. AuTS:

5. Upperbound: The upperbound is the best performanance the ensemble models can achieve. For this upperbound, as long as at least one model among the four PNLMs correctly predicts the next word, we mark it as correct for the model. This means no combination of PNLMs can outperform the combination of the upperbound.

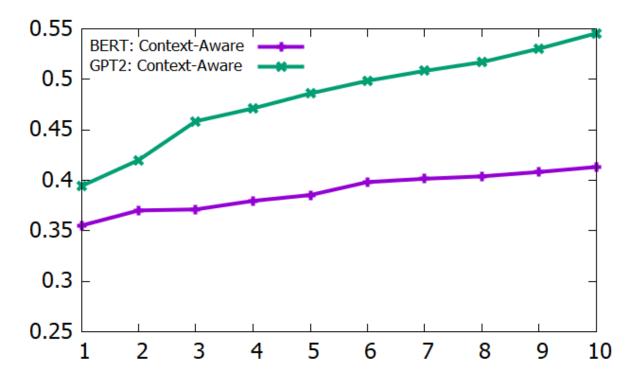


Figure 2: Accuracy for the two context-aware models based on the number of words typed so far (i).

	RoBERTa	BERT	XLNet	GPT-2
Next 1	62.4	53.28	46.2	49
Next 2	45.1	38.7	33.5	41
Next 3	36.8	31.5	26.7	31
Next 4	31.5	24.2	21	14

Table 10: Accuracy of the RoBERTa, BERT, XLNet, and GPT-2 with context on next k prediction

6 Conclusions

In this paper we have introduced a first-of-its-kind medical corpus for text simplification and proposed new task, text simplification with autocompletion. Unlike most autocomplete tasks, for text simplification, models can be guided by the sentence that the user is simplifying. We compared four recent PNMLs BERT, RoBERTa, XLNet, and GPT-2, and showed how the difficult sentence could be incorporated into the prediction process. Using context resulted in significant increases in performance with the best model, RoBERTa with context, achieving a prediction accuracy of 62.4%, getting every other word right. With an intial analysis, we designed the AuTS model, which is an ensemble model that combines adventages of PNLMs and outperforms RoBERTa by 2.1%. We hope that this new task will allow for other interesting model adaptations to be explored.

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Model	Accuracy
Majority Vote	43.25%
4 Class Classification	56.45%
Combined Class Classification	59.3%
AuTS	64.52%
Upperbound	66.44%

Table 11: Accuracy of the majority vote, 4-class classification, combined class classification, AuTS, and the upperbound of ensemble models.

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