



SE4AI & IGES

CodeSmile

ML-specific code smells detection



SOURCE CODE



DOCS



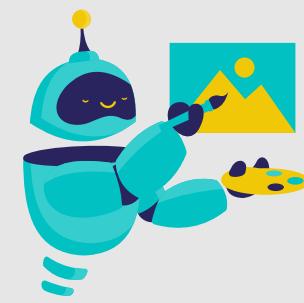
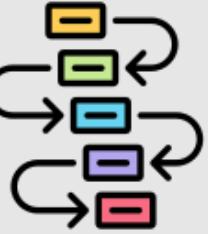


Table of Contents

1 Project Context



3 Methodical Steps



5 Challenges & Limitations



2 Project Goals

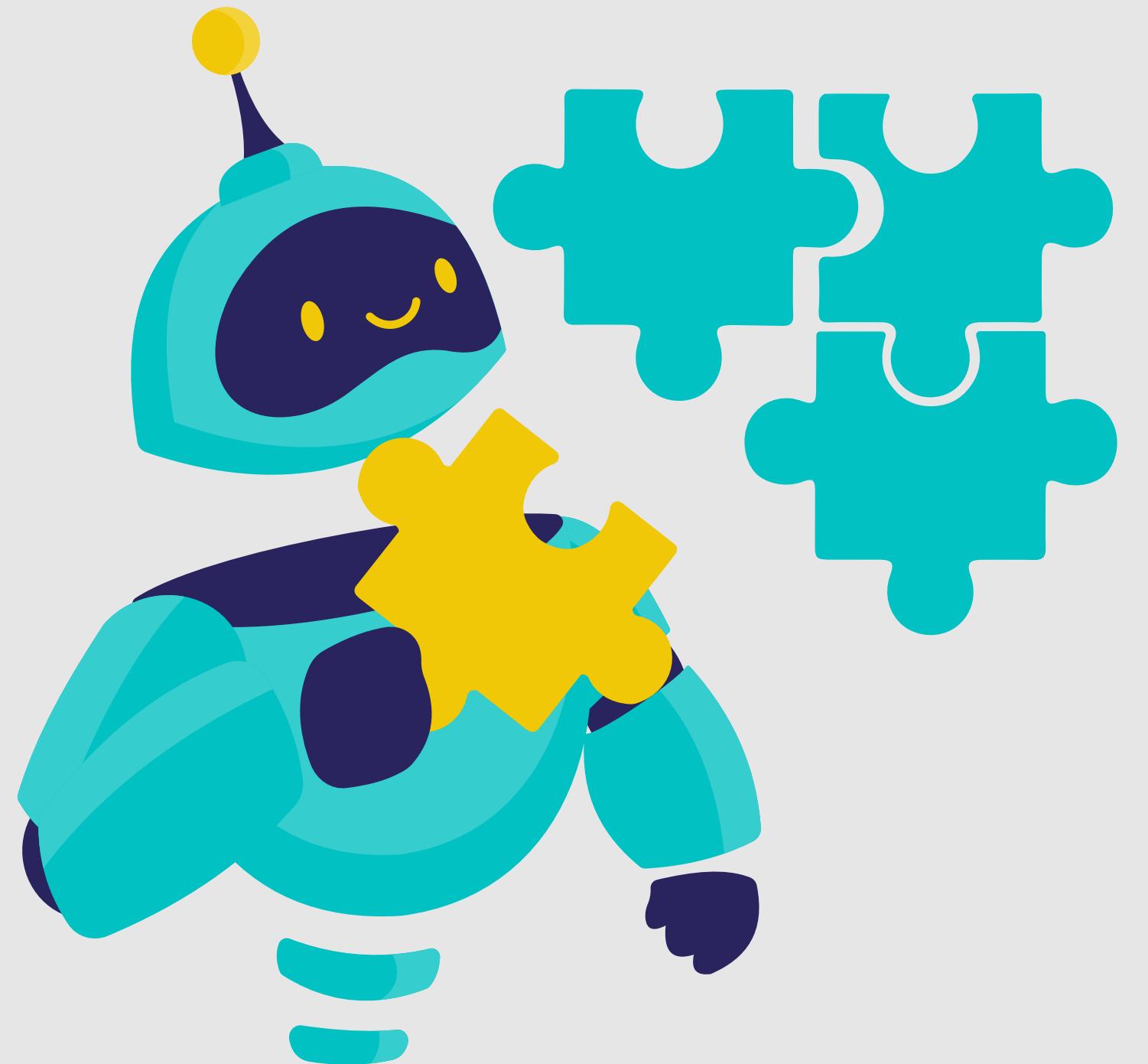


4 Results



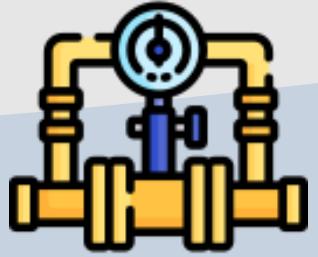
6 Implications & Future Work





Project Context

Context



Machine Learning (ML) pipelines are often **complex**, and require quality assurance



ML-specific **code smells** are suboptimal implementation patterns that lower quality, maintainability and scalability



Inefficiencies &
Technical Debt



Literature

Code Smells for Machine Learning Applications

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of machine learning has wildly expanded in recent years. Machine learning techniques have been heatedly studied in academia and applied in the industry to create business value. However, there is a lack of guidelines for code quality in machine learning applications. In particular, code smells have rarely been studied in this domain. Although machine learning code is usually integrated as a small part of an overarching system, it usually plays an important role in its core functionality. Hence ensuring code quality is quintessential to avoid issues in the long run. This paper proposes and identifies a list of 22 machine learning-specific code smells collected from various sources, including papers, grey literature, GitHub commits, and Stack Overflow posts. We pinpoint each smell with a description of its context, potential issues in the long run, and proposed solutions. In addition, we link them to their respective pipeline stage and the evidence from both academic and grey literature. The code smell catalog helps data scientists and developers produce and maintain high-quality machine learning application code.

KEYWORDS

Code Smell, Anti-pattern, Machine Learning, Code Quality, Technical Debt

ACM Reference Format:

Haiyin Zhang, Luis Cruz, and Arie van Deursen. 2022. Code Smells for Machine Learning Applications. In *1st Conference on AI Engineering - Software Engineering for AI (CAIN'22), May 16–24, 2022, Pittsburgh, PA, USA*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 12 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3522664.3528620>

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the large increase in the popularity of machine learning applications [3], there are several concerns regarding the quality con-

that practitioners are eager to learn more about engineering best practices for their machine learning applications [5].

There has been a lot of interest in various machine learning system artifacts, including models and data. Researchers make efforts to improve machine learning model quality [10] and data quality [7]. However, the quality assurance of machine learning code has not been highlighted [12]. Recent work studied the code quality for machine learning applications in a general way, finding some code quality issues such as duplicated code [20] and violations of traditional naming convention [17]. These works highlighted the fact that the existing code conventions do not necessarily fit the context of machine learning applications. For example, the typical math notation in data science tasks clashes with the naming conventions of Python [20]. Thus, we argue that more research is needed to accommodate the particularities of data-oriented codebases.

As an important artifact in the machine learning application, the quality of the code is essential. Low-quality code can lead to catastrophic consequences. In the meantime, different from traditional software, machine learning code quality is more challenging to evaluate and control. Low-quality code can lead to silent pitfalls that exist somewhere that affect the software quality, which takes a lot of time and effort to discover [22]. Therefore, it is non-trivial to improve the code quality during the development process and consider code quality assurance in the deployment process.

A common strategy to improve code quality is eliminating code smells and anti-patterns. When we talk about code smells in this paper, we refer them to the pitfalls that we can inspect at the code level but not at the data or model level. We use the term "pitfall" to represent issues that degrade the software quality. Listing 1 shows an example of such pitfalls using Python and the Pandas library. In the red (-) part of the listing, an inefficient loop is created. A better alternative is highlighted in green (+), using Pandas built-in API to replace the loop, which operates faster. While some alter-

When Code Smells Meet ML: On the Lifecycle of ML-specific Code Smells in ML-enabled Systems

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ABSTRACT

Context. The adoption of Machine Learning (ML)-enabled systems is steadily increasing. Nevertheless, there is a shortage of ML-specific quality assurance approaches, possibly because of the limited knowledge of how quality-related concerns emerge and evolve in ML-enabled systems. **Objective.** We aim to investigate the emergence and evolution of specific types of quality-related concerns known as ML-specific code smells, *i.e.*, sub-optimal implementation solutions applied on ML pipelines that may significantly decrease both quality and maintainability of ML-enabled systems. More specifically, we present a plan to study ML-specific code smells by empirically analyzing (i) their prevalence in real ML-enabled systems, (ii) how they are introduced and removed, and (iii) their survivability. **Method.** We will conduct an exploratory study, mining a large dataset of ML-enabled systems and analyzing over 400k commits about 337 projects. We will track and inspect the introduction and evolution of ML smells through CODESMILE, a novel ML smell detector that we will build to enable our investigation and to detect ML-specific code smells.

CCS CONCEPTS

• Software and its engineering → Software maintenance tools.

KEYWORDS

Technical Debt; ML-Specific Code Smells; Software Quality Assurance; Software Engineering for Artificial Intelligence.

ACM Reference Format:

Gilberto Recupito, Giammaria Giordano, Filomena Ferrucci, Dario Di Nucci,

1 INTRODUCTION

Machine Learning (ML) evolved through the emergence of complex software integrating ML modules, defined as ML-enabled systems [13]. Self-driving cars, voice assistance instruments, or conversational agents like ChatGPT¹ are just some examples of the successful integration of ML within software engineering projects.

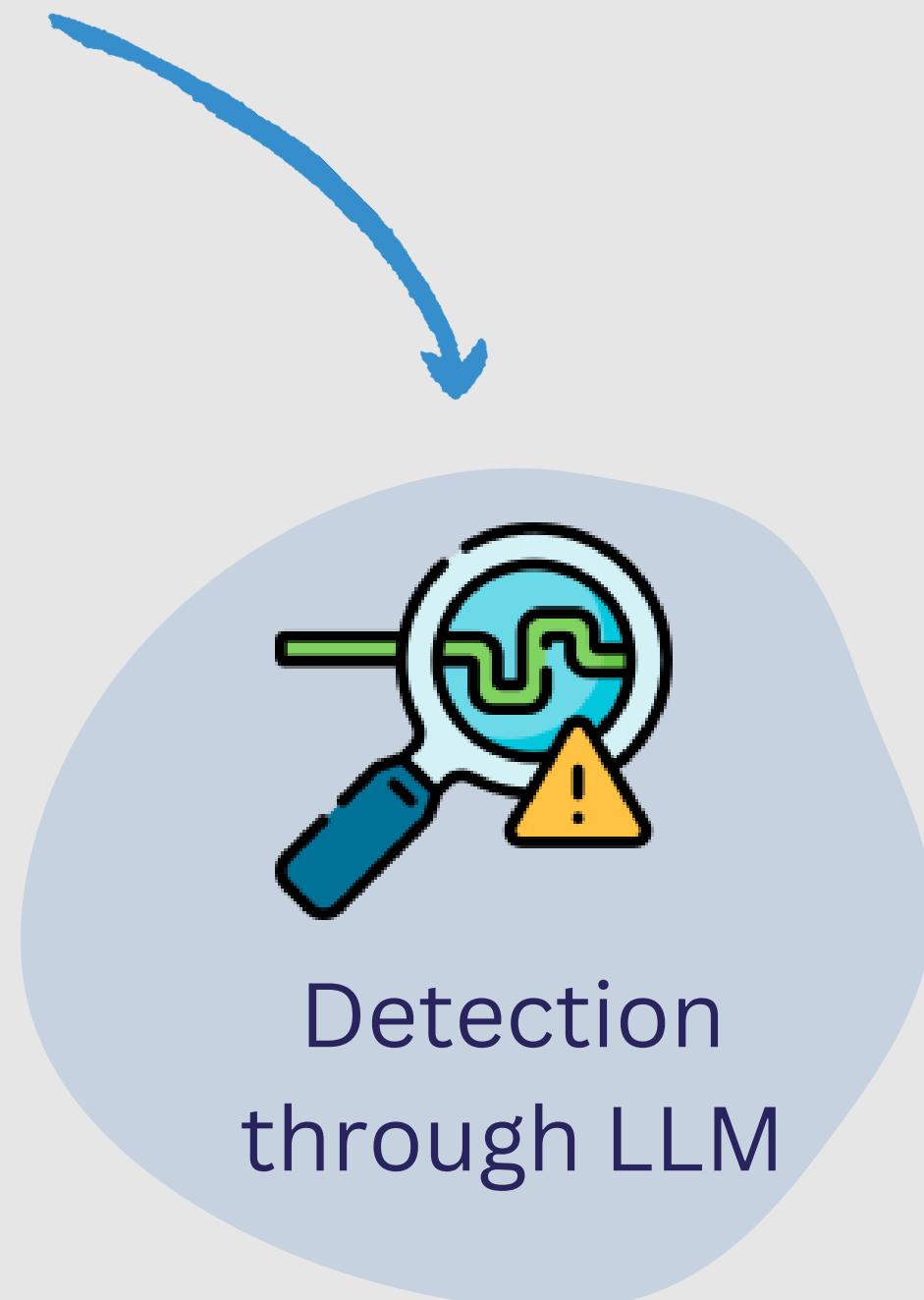
However, the strict time-to-market and change requests pressure practitioners to roll out immature software to keep pace with competitors, leading to the possible emergence of technical debt [7] *i.e.*, a technical trade-off that can give benefits in a short period, but that can compromise the software health in the long run. *Code smells* is a manifestation of technical debt. They are *symptoms* of poor design and implementation choices that, if left unaddressed, can deteriorate the overall quality of the system [8].

Sculley et al. [19] showed that ML-enabled systems are incredibly prone to technical debt and code smells, raising the need for a quality assurance process for ML components. Cardozo et al. [3] and Van Oort et al. [24] argued that while the issues in those systems are emerging, there is a lack of quality assurance tools and practices that ML developers can use. This lack of quality management assets stimulates the proliferation of code smells in ML-enabled systems [12]. Consequently, given the complex nature of those systems, new types of code smells have emerged. Considering the aspects that ML developers face when dealing with ML pipelines, Zhang et al. [29] defined a new form of code smells, *AI-specific code smells* (ML-CSs). Similarly to traditional code smells, an ML-CS is defined as a *sub-optimal implementation solution for ML pipelines that may significantly decrease the quality of ML-enabled systems*. A key example of those quality issues is using a loop operation

Study on



Smell Injection
through LLM



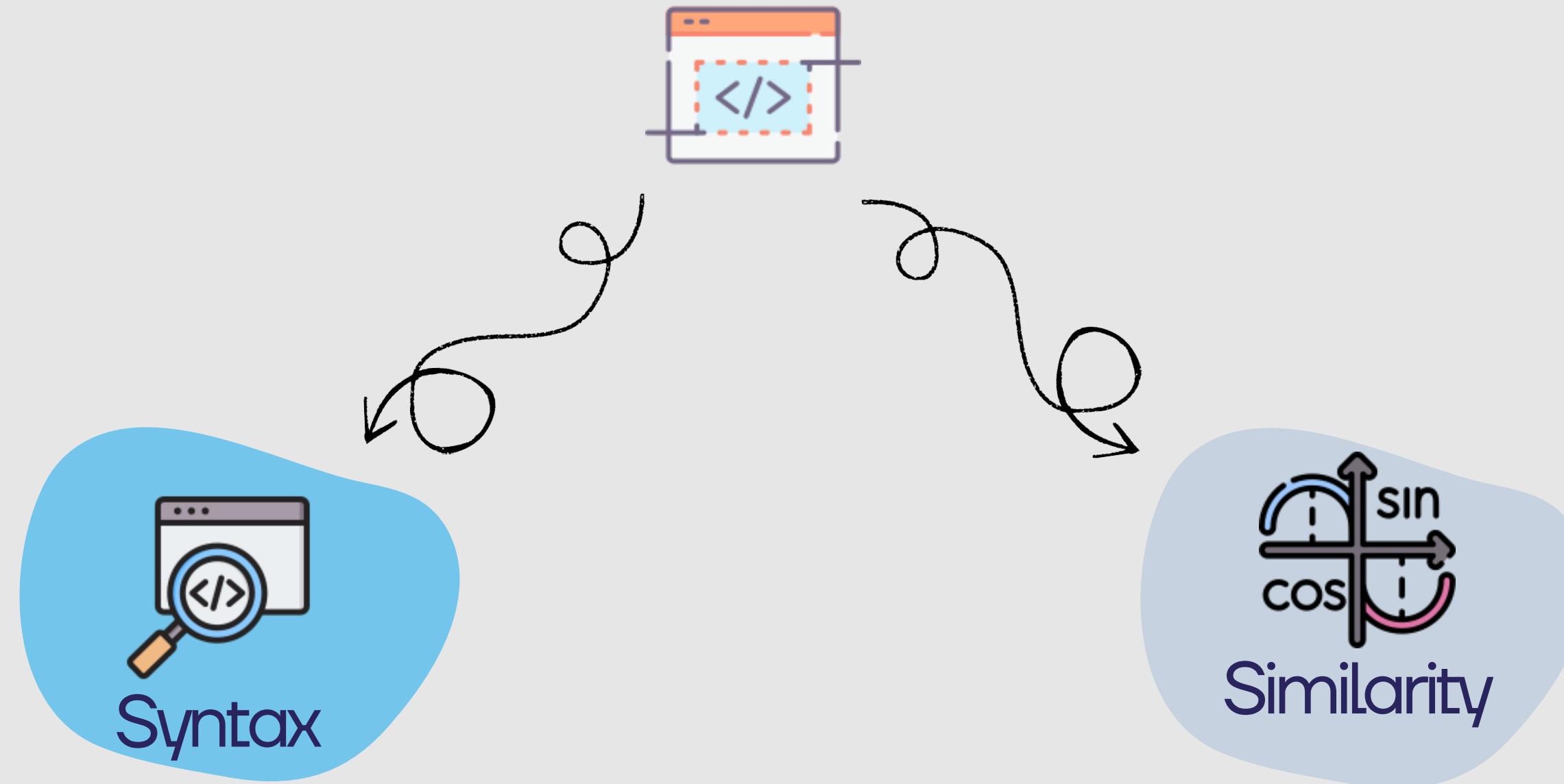
Detection
through LLM

Project Goals



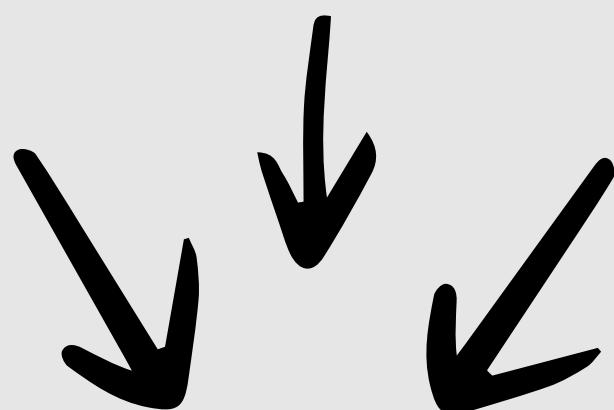
RQ1

To what extent can LLMs accurately generate realistic training data with artificially injected code smells?



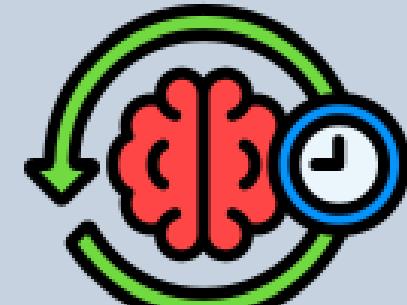
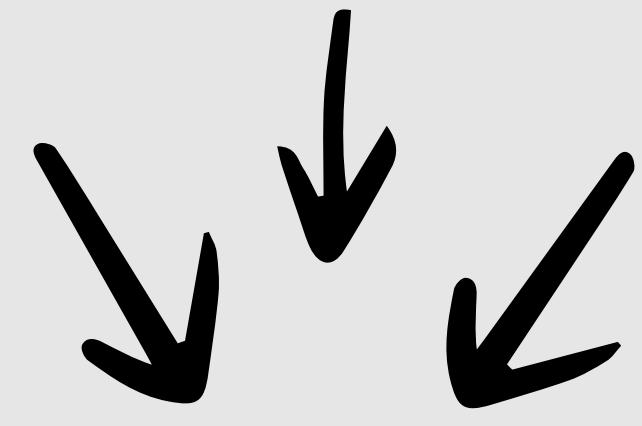
RQ2A

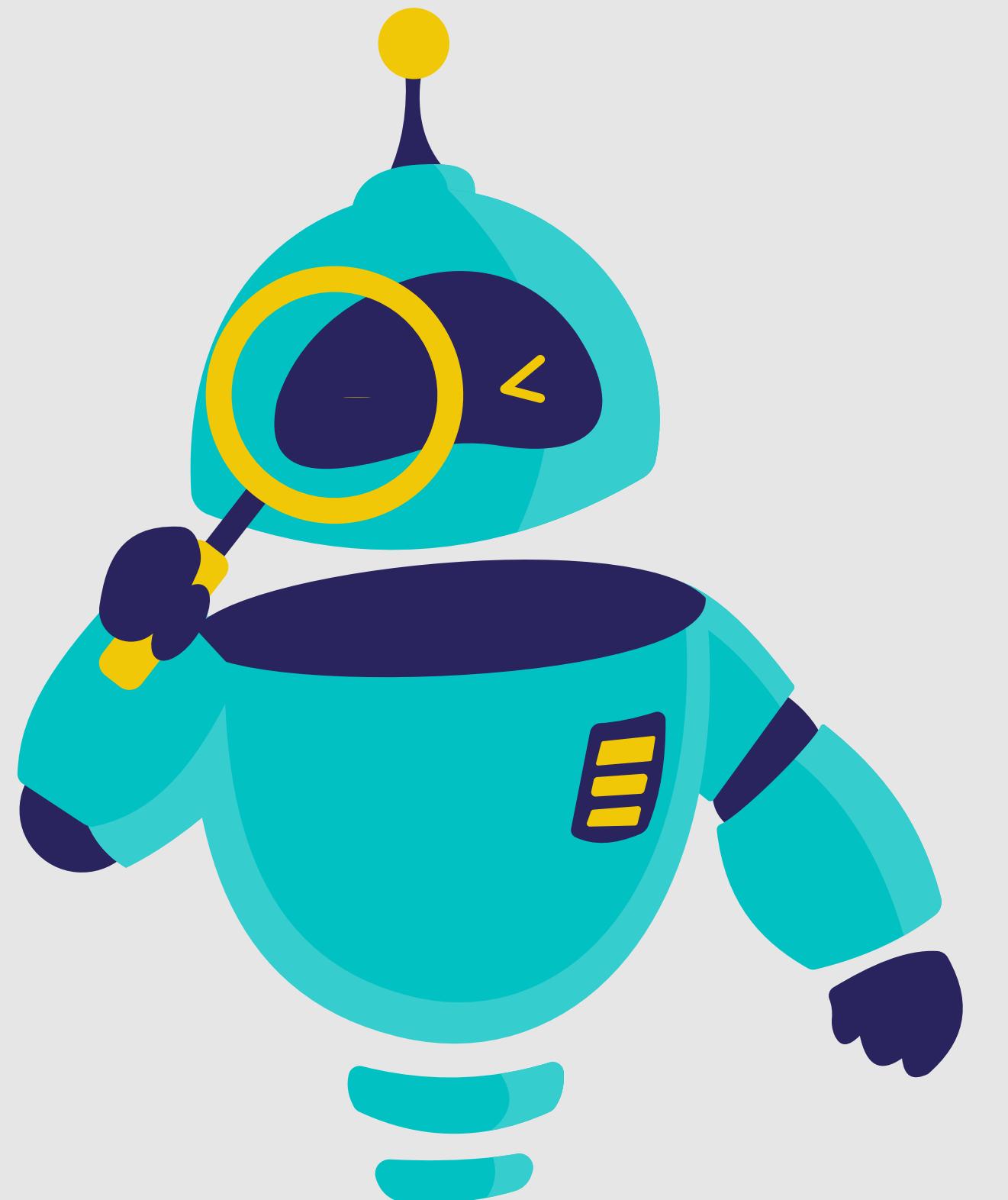
How effective is the module at identifying
individual code
smells within a single code snippet?



RQ2B

How effective is the module at detecting
multiple code smells
coexisting within a single code snippet?

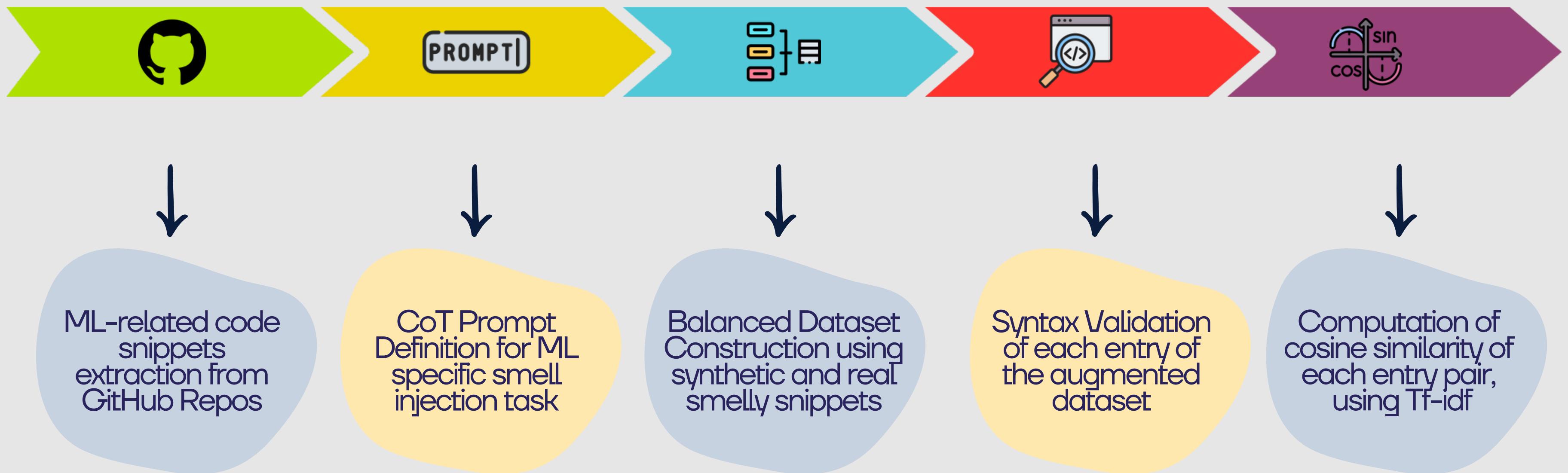




Methodical Steps

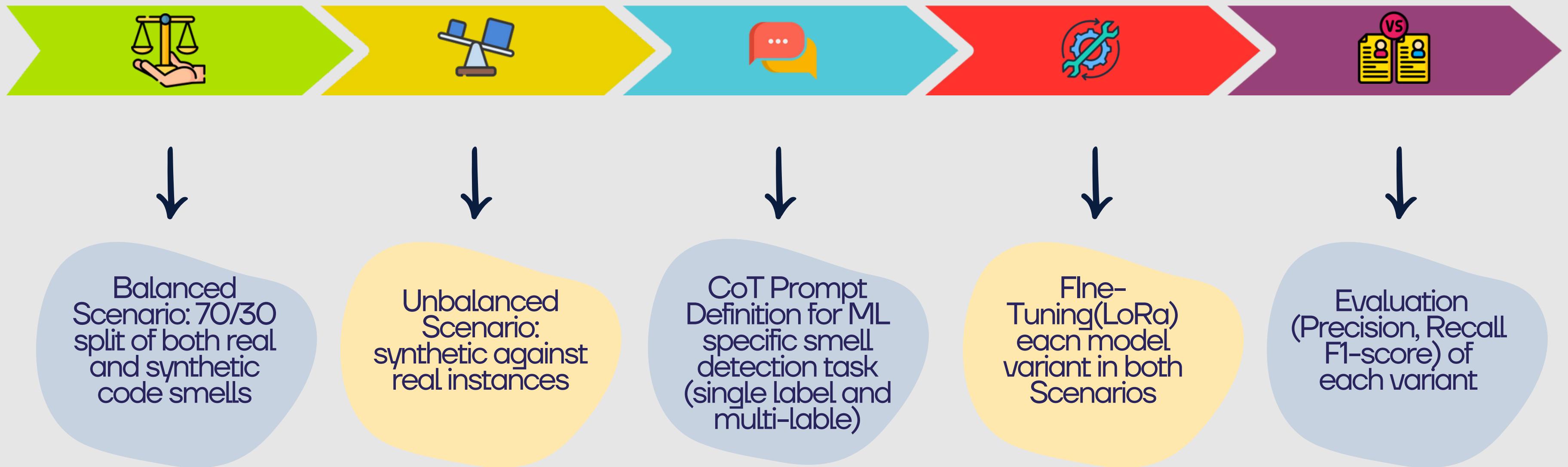
RQ1

Qwen2.5-Coder 14B



RQ2A/B

Qwen2.5-Coder XB

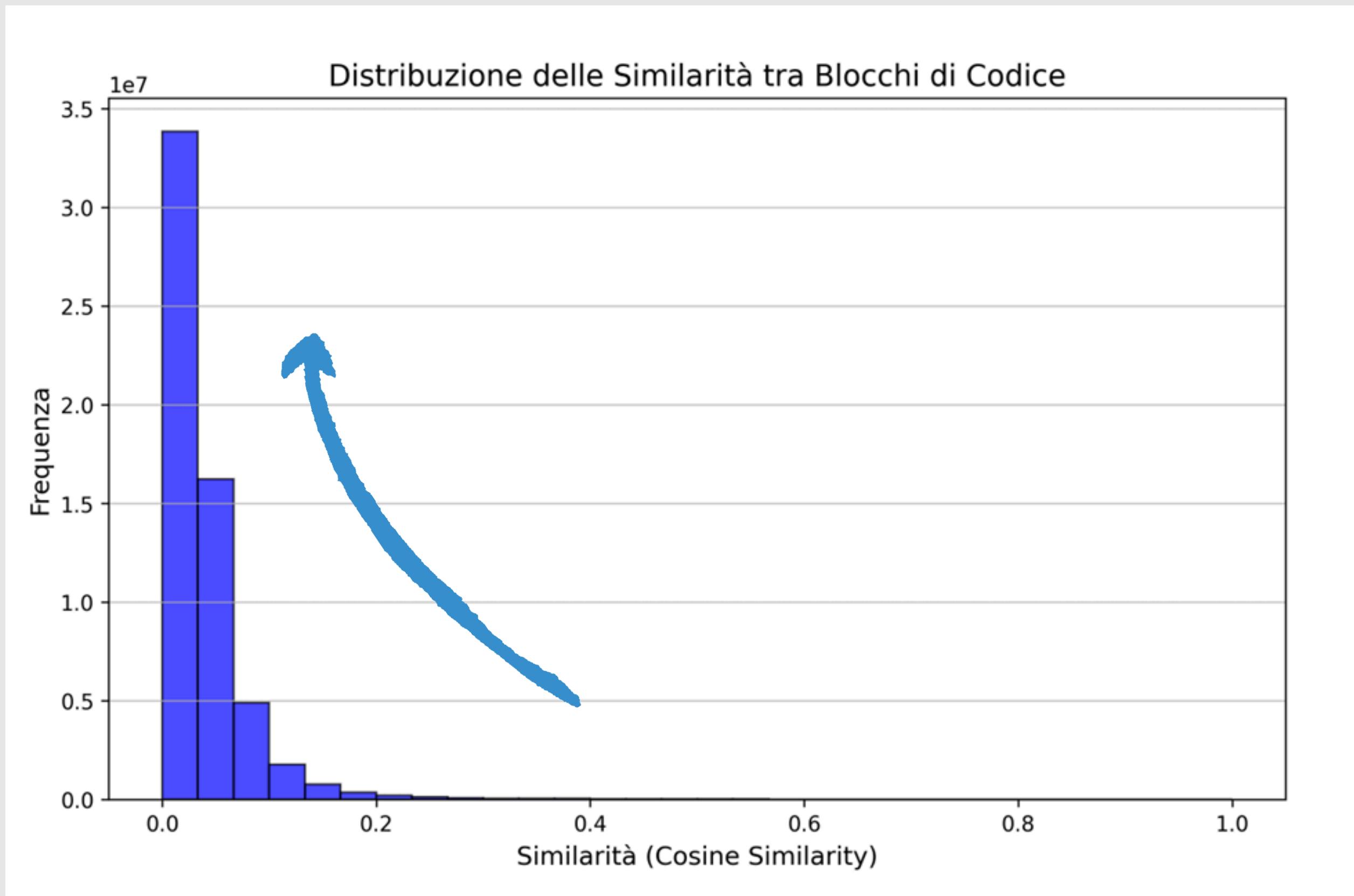


Results



RQ1

97 ✓
Syntax Validation



RQ2A

Balanced Split Synthetic & Real

Classe	Precision	Recall	F1-score
Unnecessary Iteration	0.80	0.93	0.86
Hyperparameter Not Explicitly Set	0.84	0.88	0.86
NaN Equivalence Comparison Misused	0.98	0.97	0.98
Empty Column Misinitialization	0.98	0.96	0.97
Gradients Not Cleared Before Backward Propagation	0.82	0.87	0.85
TensorArray Not Used	0.94	0.93	0.94
Dataframe Conversion API Misused	0.90	0.88	0.89
Deterministic Algorithm Option Not Used	0.99	0.99	0.99
Chain Indexing	0.88	0.76	0.81
No Smell	0.98	0.98	0.98
Matrix Multiplication API Misused	0.97	0.91	0.94
Merge API Parameter Not Explicitly Set	0.93	0.93	0.93
Memory Not Freed	0.93	0.90	0.92
Broadcasting Feature Not Used	0.98	0.97	0.98
In-Place APIs Misused	0.83	0.74	0.78
Columns and DataType Not Explicitly Set	0.89	0.94	0.92
PyTorch Call Method Misused	0.94	0.92	0.93
Micro avg	0.95	0.95	0.95
Macro avg	0.92	0.91	0.91
Weighted avg	0.95	0.95	0.95
Samples avg	0.95	0.95	0.95

RQ2A

Unbalanced Synthetic Vs Real

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-score
Deterministic Algorithm Option Not Used	1.00	0.10	0.18
Chain Indexing	0.00	0.00	0.00
Empty Column Misinitialization	0.00	0.00	0.00
Matrix Multiplication API Misused	0.25	0.09	0.12
In-Place APIs Misused	0.00	0.00	0.00
Columns and DataType Not Explicitly Set	0.93	0.09	0.17
Merge API Parameter Not Explicitly Set	0.00	0.00	0.00
Dataframe Conversion API Misused	0.09	0.06	0.07
PyTorch Call Method Misused	0.00	0.00	0.00
NaN Equivalence Comparison Misused	0.00	0.00	0.00
Memory Not Freed	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gradients Not Cleared Before Backward Propagation	0.48	0.08	0.13
Hyperparameter Not Explicitly Set	0.50	0.03	0.06
Unnecessary Iteration	0.00	0.00	0.00
Micro avg	0.47	0.03	0.03
Macro avg	0.27	0.02	0.03
Weighted avg	0.54	0.03	0.04
Samples avg	0.04	0.04	0.04

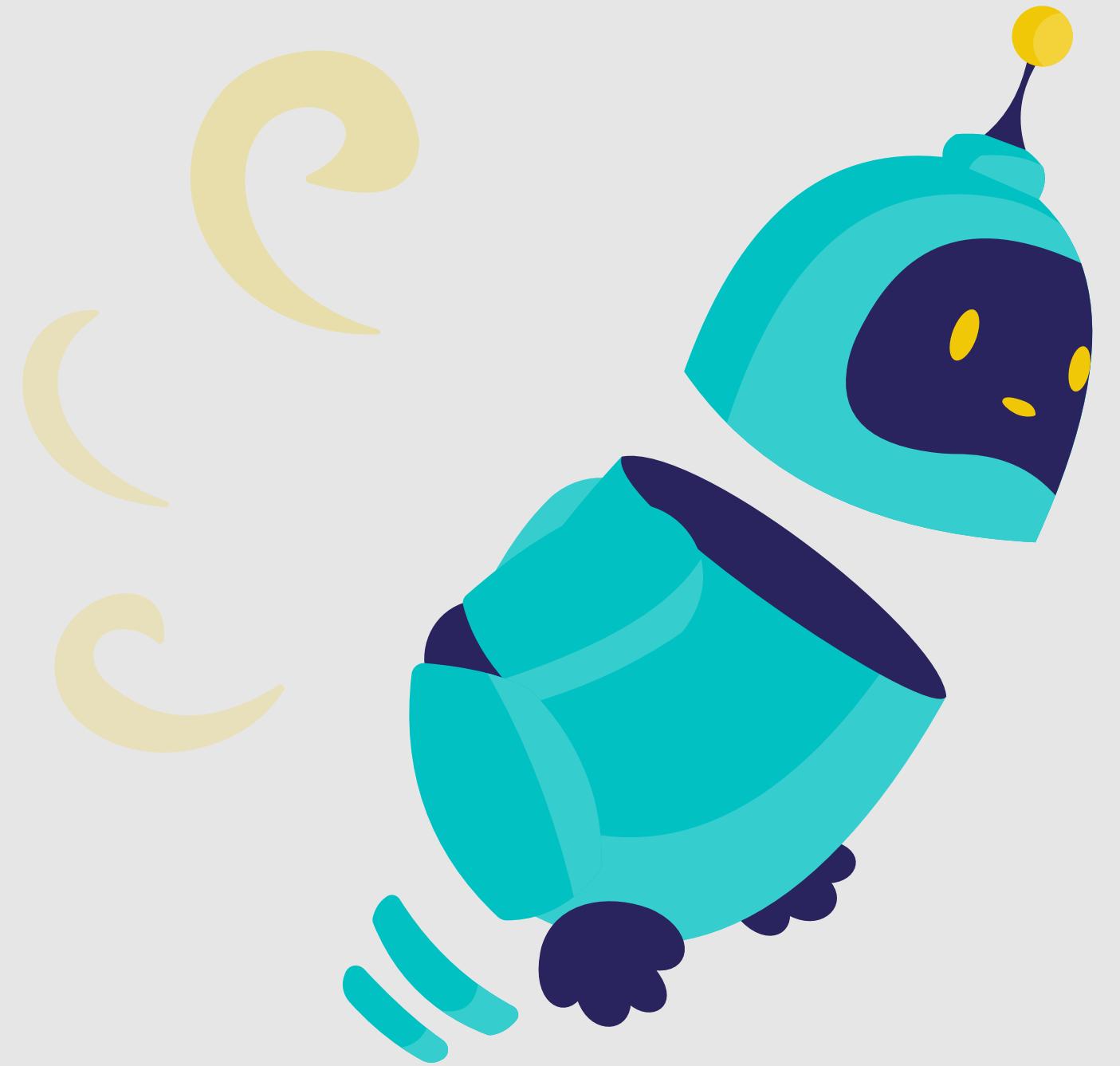
RQ2B



Given our limited hardware resources, even the most complex model we could afford to use (14B) was unable to properly inject multiple smells in a single code snippet, often resulting in malformed data

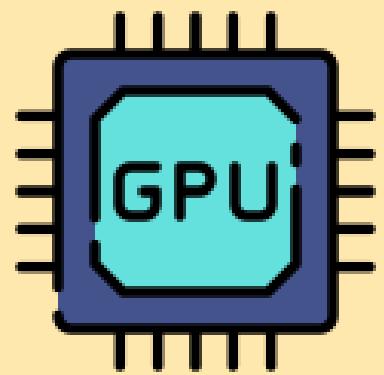


The lack of multi-labeled code snippets meant obviously that we could not possibly train any model variant for detecting multiple smells instances in a given code snippet



Challenges and Limitations

Hardware Issues



Limited Available
Hardware meant we could
not use more complex
models



A narrow context window
meant we could not
instruct to perform
harder tasks

Domain Issues



There is a very limited amount of available scientific literature in the domain of ML-specific code smells



There is not a public available dataset which contains manually labeled and validated ML-specific code smells

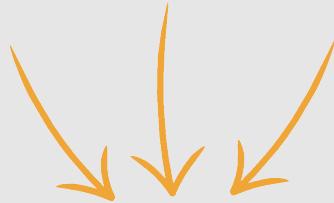
Implications & Future Work



Dataset



Synthetic dataset showed high diversity
and an excellent degree of syntax validity

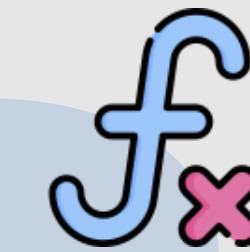


Need for even larger datasets for improved generalization if
researchers aim to leverage models with higher complexity



Functionalities

Enhancing prompt engineering could further extend model functionalities



Multi-label detection and multiple code smells injection both require more resources and further study.



SALFORD & CO.



Thank You!



[HTTPS://GITHUB.COM/XDARYAMO/SMELL_AI](https://github.com/xdaryamo/smell_ai)



SOURCE CODE



DOCS



SE4AI & IGES

CodeSmile

ML-specific code smells detection



SOURCE CODE



DOCS



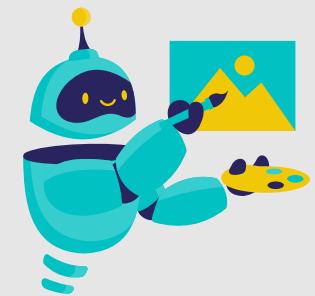


Table of Contents

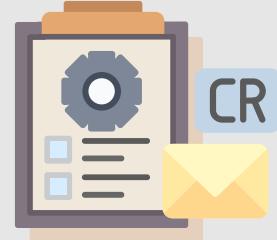
1

Introduzione



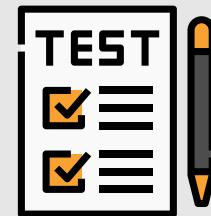
3

Change Requests



5

Testing



2

Attività pre-modifiche



4

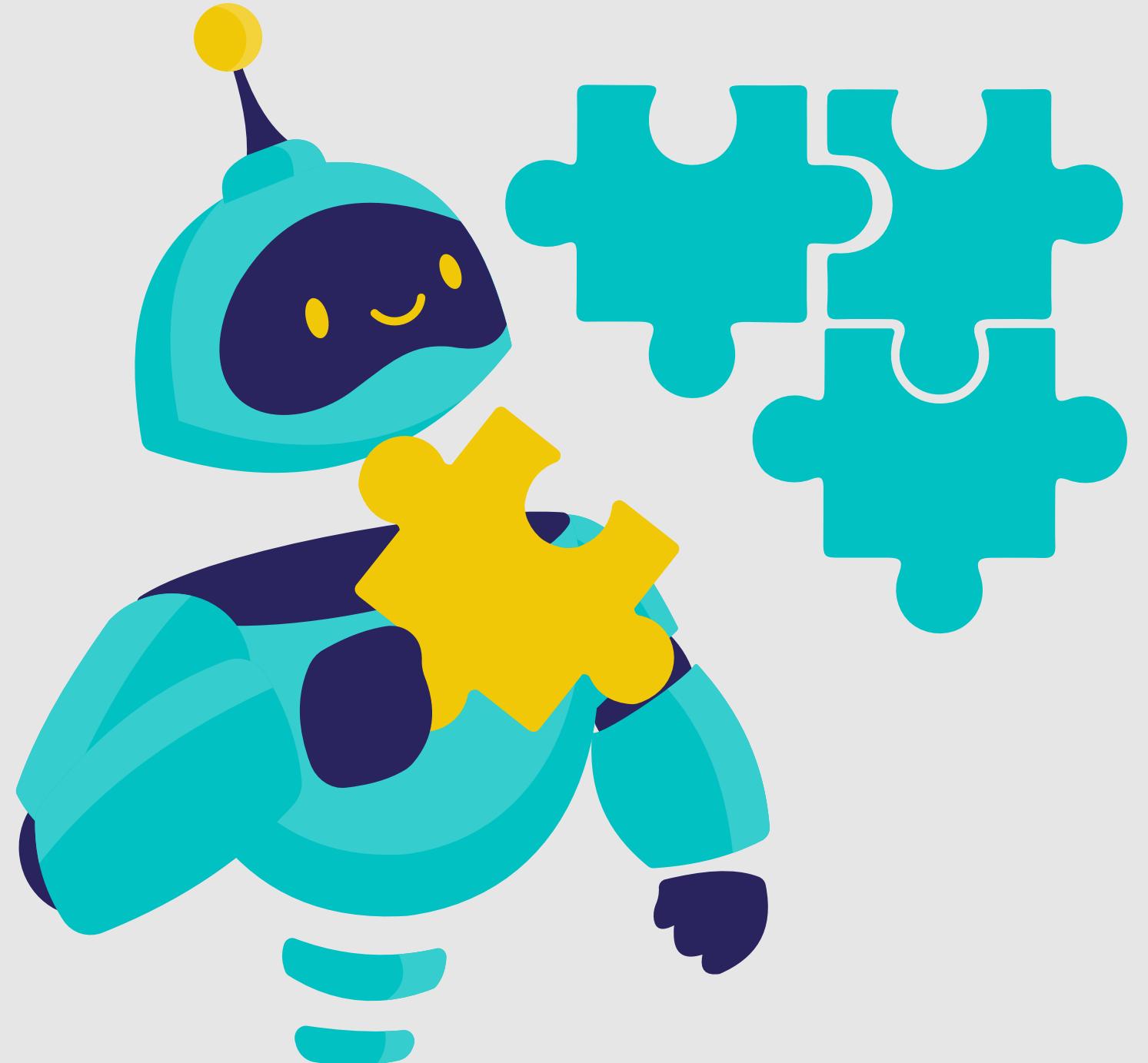
Impact Analysis



6

Esito





Introduzione



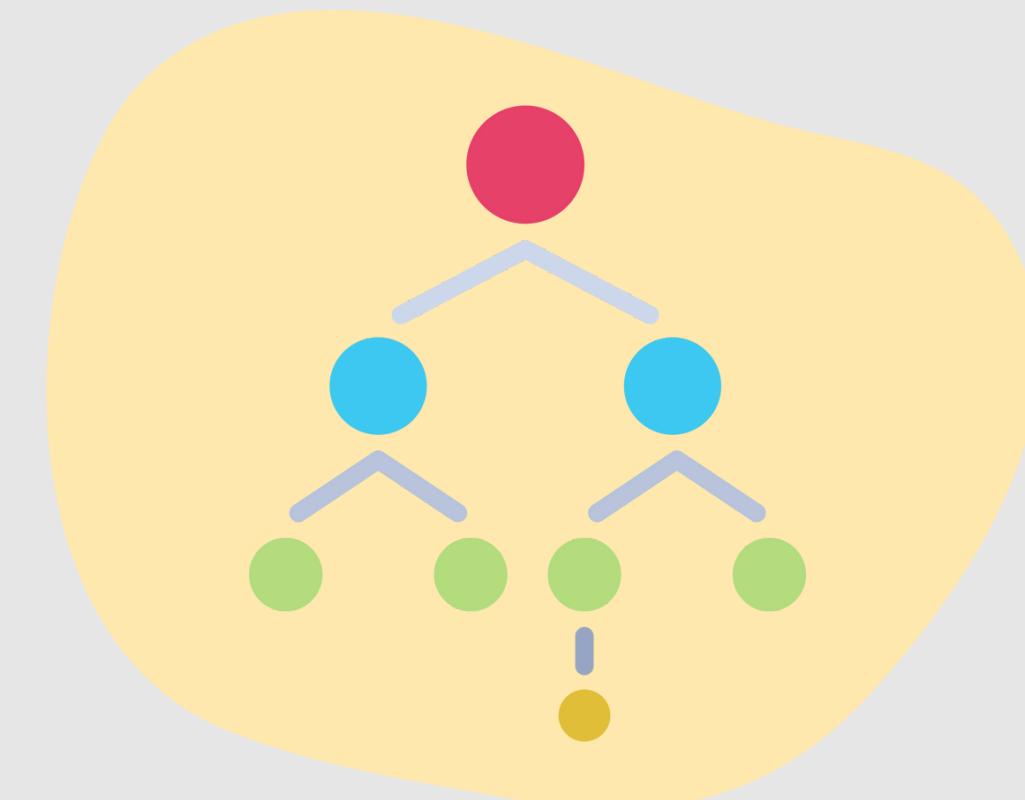
Contesto

Contesto

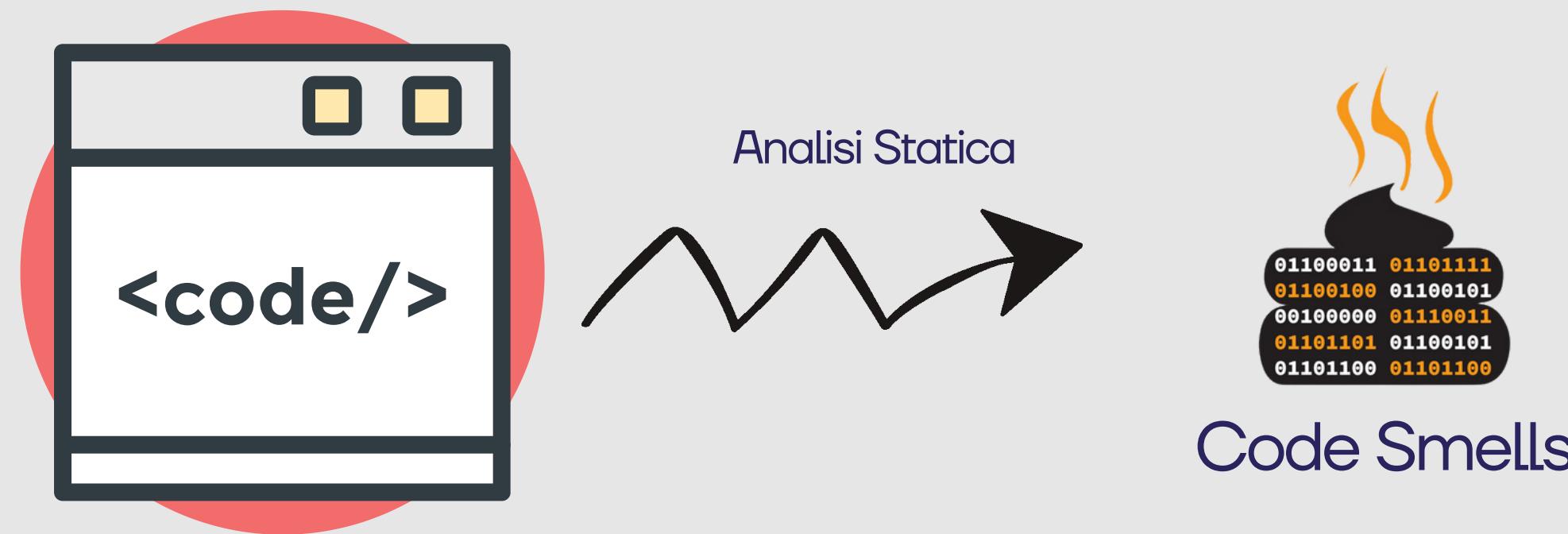


CodeSmile si inquadra all'interno del contesto del **Technical Debt** e, in particolare, tratta della problematica dell' **AI-Specific Technical Debt**.

Attraverso l'analisi **statica** di code snippets scritti in Python, il tool mira ad individuare pattern sub-ottimali (**ML-specific Code Smells**), che potrebbero compromettere la manutenibilità, la leggibilità o la robustezza del codice analizzato.

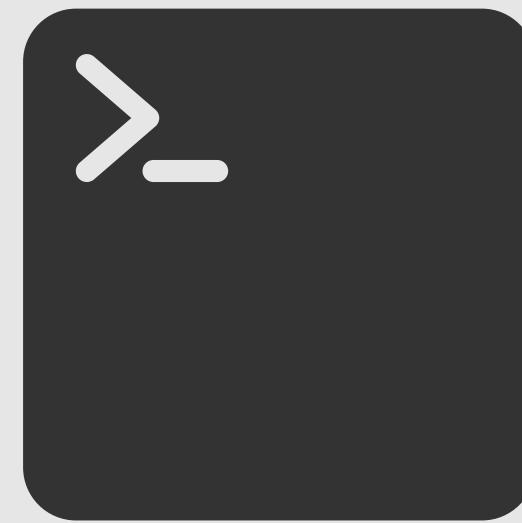


CodeSmile in Sintesi



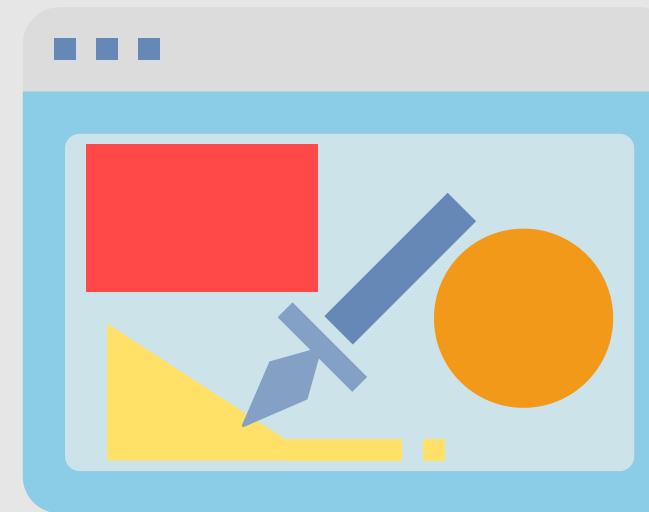
CodeSmile effettua un'**analisi statica** del codice dei moduli Python di un progetto, utilizzando Abstract Syntax Trees (AST) e regole specifiche per il rilevamento dei code smells (attualmente è in grado di identificare 16 tipologie distinte).

CodeSmile in Sintesi



CLI

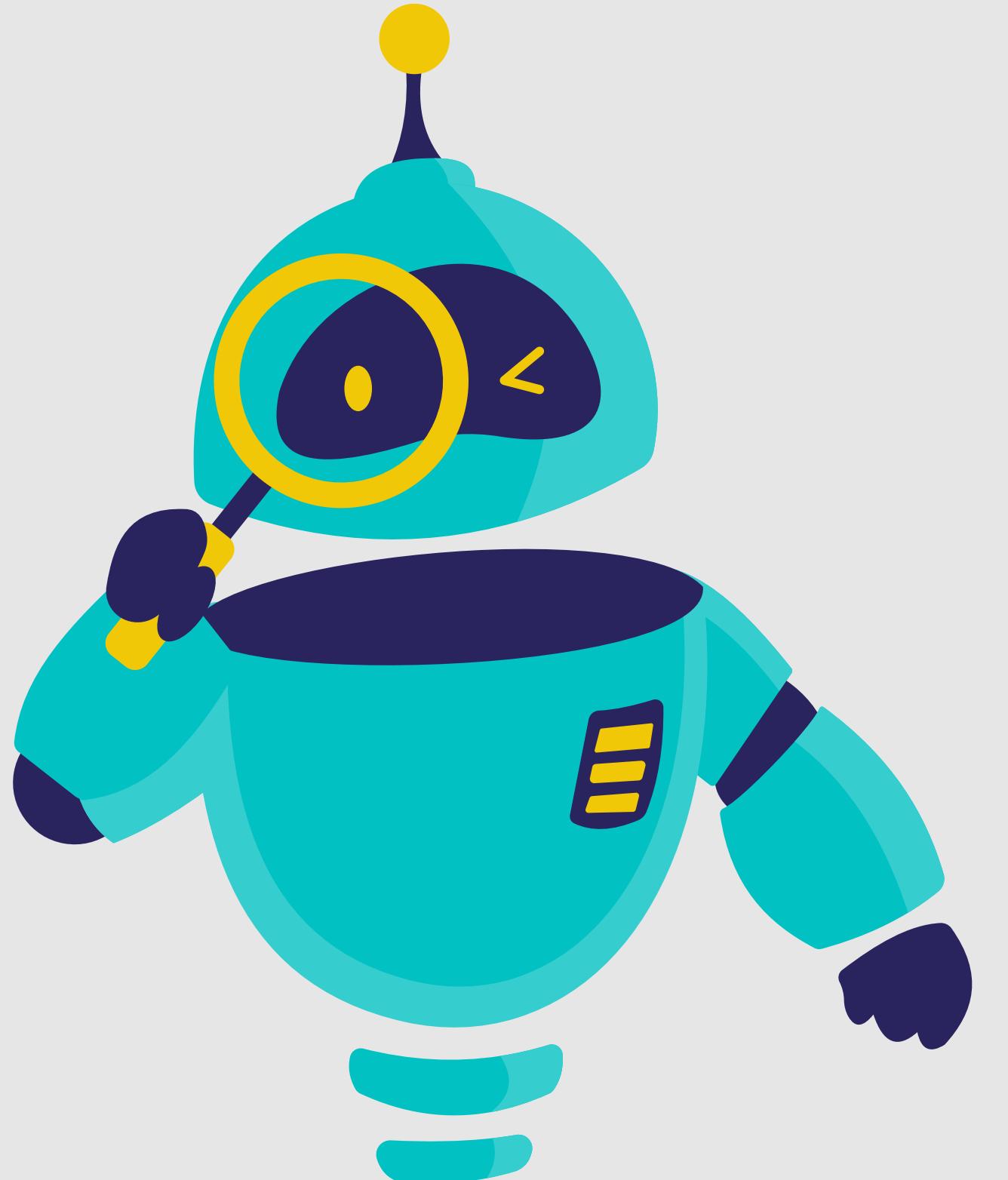
or



GUI

Il tool può essere eseguito da CLI o tramite una semplice GUI e permette di specificare una serie di parametri che ne influenzano l'esecuzione.

I risultati, salvati come file .csv, possono essere usati di seguito per generare dei report con la stessa estensione.



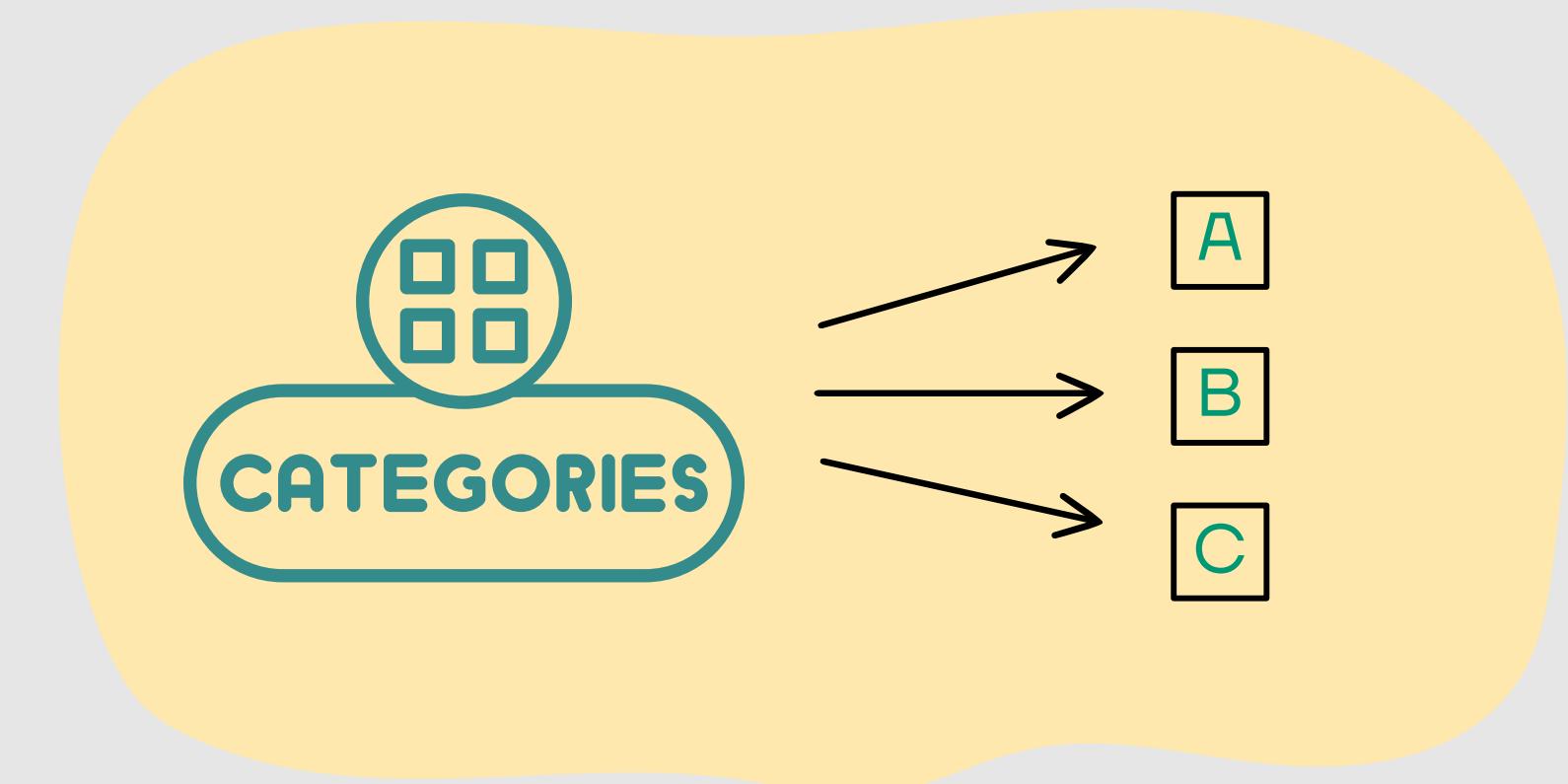
Attività
pre-modifica

System Testing



I relativi test sono stati definiti in modalità **black-box**, facendo uso della tecnica del **category partitioning**.

Le funzionalità principali del sistema sono due: quella di **analisi** e quella di **reporting**. In assenza di una test suite pre-esistente, è stato deciso di svilupparne una che ne valutasse il comportamento globale.



Parametri

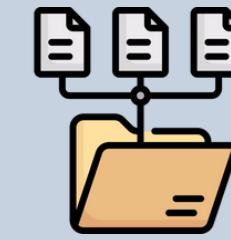
I **parametri** definiti durante il testing di sistema sono i seguenti:



File:
numero & estensione



Smell:
Generico o Api-specific



Struttura:
numero proj e relativa
struttura



Configurazione del
tool

Incidents

#1

Descrizione

Tutti i test case falliscono quando si esegue il tool dalla root del progetto. Viene cercato un file di log in un percorso errato. E' necessario eseguirlo dalla directory **controller**.



Soluzione

Modificare il modulo **controller** per supportare esecuzioni sia dalla root che dalla directory specifica

Incidents

#2

Descrizione

Deterministic Algorithm Option
Not Used non viene rilevato e non è incluso nell'output. Manca un controllo completo su gli usi di **use_deterministic_algorithms** del modulo torch



Soluzione

Modificare la funzione
deterministic_algorithm_option_not_used
in modo da riconoscere gli usi di
use_deterministic_algorithms

Incidents

#3

Descrizione

Nonostante il tool analizzi dei progetti vuoti (o che contengono file non Python) o privi di smells, vengono creati dei file `to_save.csv` **vuoti**. Nell'esecuzione da CLI, la console stampa un **Error** non specificato



Soluzione

Aggiungere un controllo per verificare se la variabile `to_save` sia vuoto o meno. In caso, **evitare** di restituire la variabile `to_save`. **Cambiare** il messaggio stampato per evitare fraintendimenti sul significato.

Change Requests



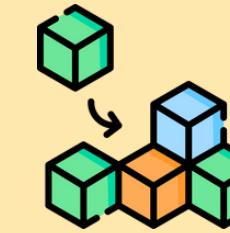
CR 1

Priorità Alta



Rifattorizzare il codice
(attualmente procedurale) in
logica OO, definendo classi e
relativi metodi

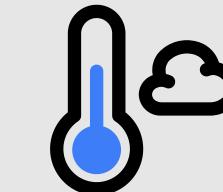
FOR
=>



Migliorare la modularità, la
manutenibilità del codice e il
testing grazie a funzionalità
incapsulate



Priorità Media



Implementare una Web-App
per consentire l'interazione con il
tool via web



Migliorare l'esperienza utente e
l'accessibilità. Consentire agli
utenti di eseguire analisi senza
conoscenze specifiche della CLI

CR3

Priorità Alta



Utilizzare Modelli di Linguaggio di Grandi Dimensioni (LLM) per creare dataset di code snippets con smells iniettati

FOR
=>



Generare dati di addestramento per IA in assenza di dataset etichettati nel mondo reale

CR 4

Priorità Alta



Addestrare un modello di IA per il rilevamento degli smells, usando il dataset generato dagli LLM e valutarne le prestazioni con metriche appropriate (accuratezza, precisione, richiamo e F1 score)

FOR
=>



Studiare la fattibilità e le prestazioni degli LLM rispetto ai task di identificazione e di classificazione di ML-specific code smells

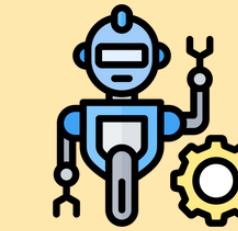


Priorità Bassa



Eseguire il refactoring automatico del codice al fine di correggere gli smells rilevati

FOR
=>



Migliorare la qualità del codice rimuovendo gli smells in modo proattivo. Ottimizzare tempo e risorse degli sviluppatori



Impact Analysis

CR1

SIS

components

controller

cs_detector

general_output

CIS

components

controller

cs_detector

general_output

AIS

components

controller

cs_detector

general_output

FPIS



DIS



$$\text{Precision} = 4/4 = 1$$

$$\text{Recall} = 4/4 = 1$$



CR 2 & 3 & 4

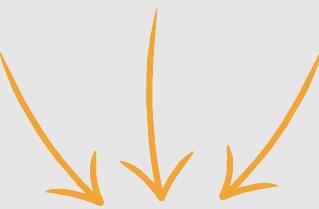
SIS

CIS

AIS

FPIS

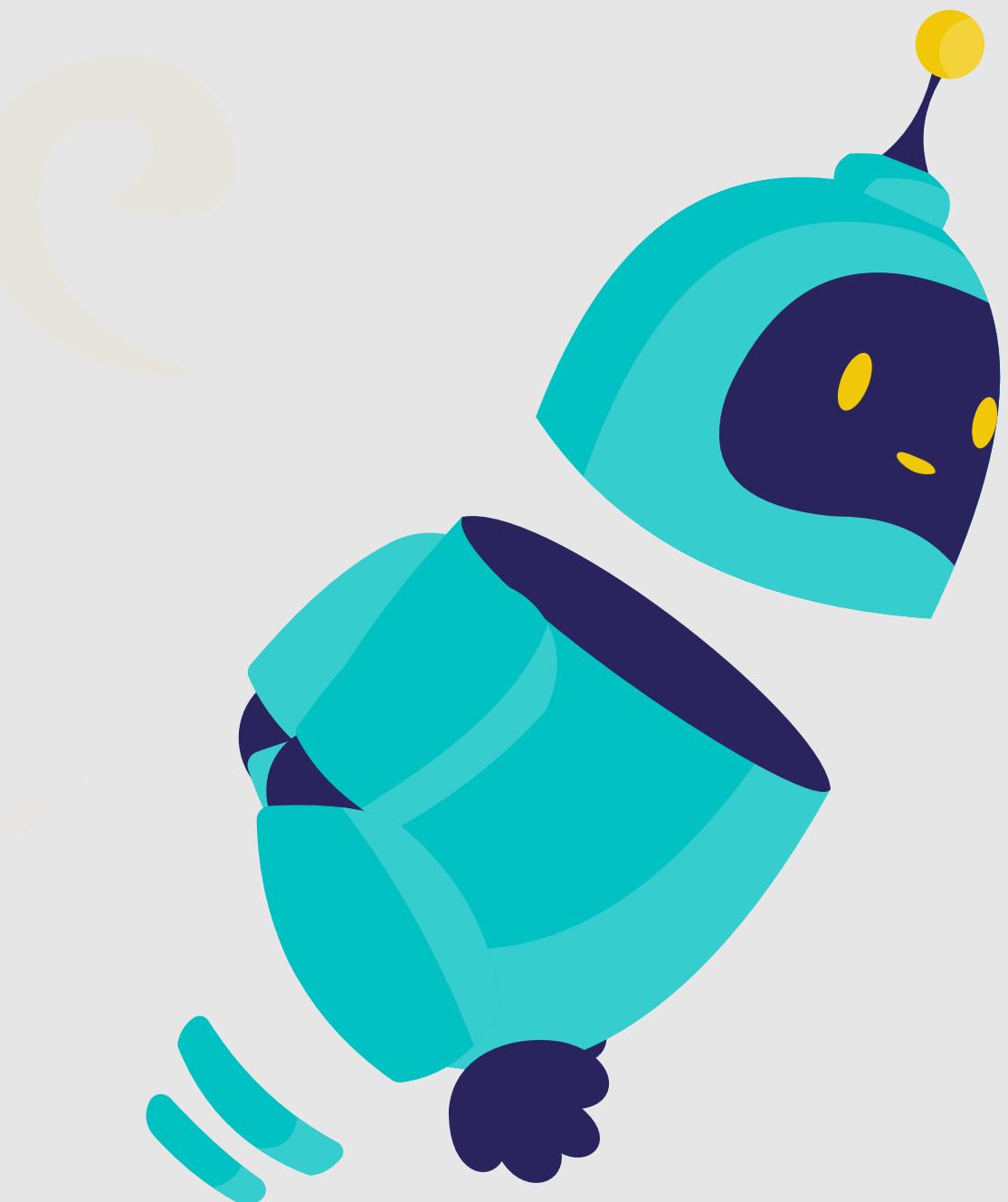
DIS



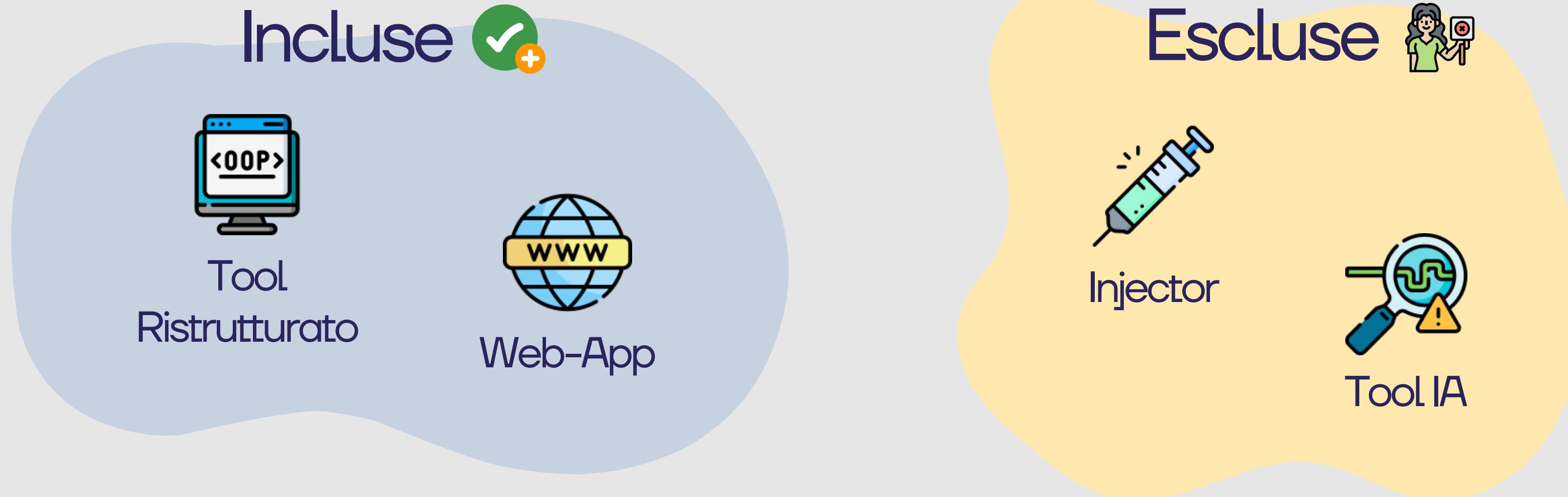
Precision = 0 / 0
Recall = 0 / 0



Testing



Componenti



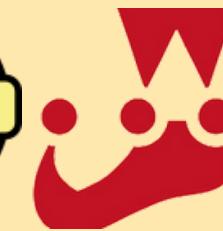
Unità

CR 1



Per ogni classe definita in fase di ristrutturazione, sono stati definiti dei TC che verificassero il corretto funzionamento dei metodi rispetto a **input validi** e input **non validi**. Il framework utilizzato è quello di **pytest**.

CR 2



Per ogni **componente tsx** realizzata, sono stati definiti dei TC che ne verificassero il corretto funzionamento rispetto all'interazione con l'utente. Il framework utilizzato è quello di **jest**.

Integrazione

CR 1



Sono stati coperti diversi scenari, come il flusso di dati tra l' analyzer e l' inspector, tra CLI e analyzer , l'integrazione completa con CLI e GUI.

Inoltre, viene testata l'interazione tra GUI e analyzer, tra inspector e rule checker. Il framework utilizzato è quello di **pytest**.

CR 2



Per ogni **microservizio** realizzato con FastApi, sono stati definiti dei TC che verificassero il corretto funzionamento tra il **gateway** e il **servizio specifico** (reporting, static analysis, ai analysis) Il framework utilizzato è quello di **pytest**.

Sistema & E2E

CR 1



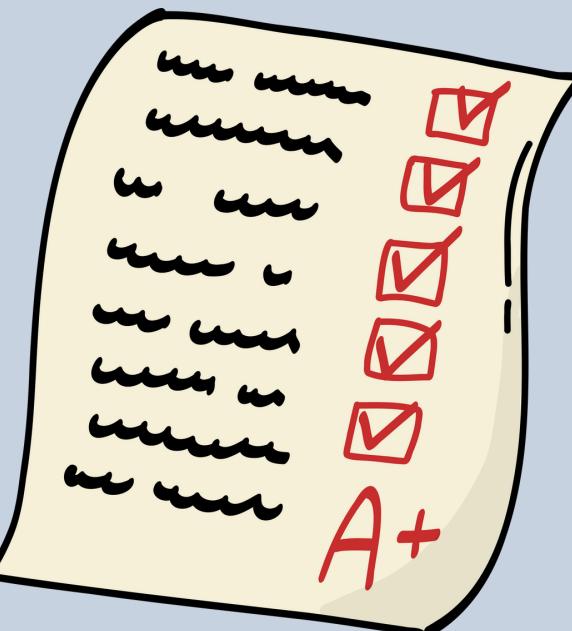
Per questa attività è stata adottata la tecnica di black box. In particolare si è fatto uso del tool ristrutturato e sono stati rieseguiti i test case definiti durante le attività precedenti all' implementazione delle modifiche

CR 2



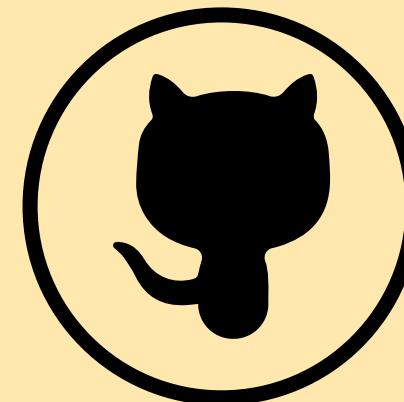
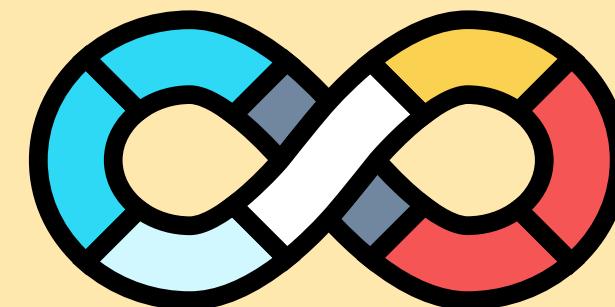
Finalizzato a verificare il corretto funzionamento dei principali flussi utente.
Utilizzando il framework **cypress**, è stata definita una suite (specs) per ogni pagina che compone la web-app

Regressione



I test case di ogni tipologia (d' unità, d' integrazione e di sistema) definiti al termine della CR1 hanno costituito una suite di test robusta che è stata rieseguita al completamento di ogni CR.

In particolare i test d' unità e d'integrazione sono stati automatizzati tramite **GitHub Workflow**. I test di sistema sono stati verificati con le stesse modalità delle attività pre-modifiche



Regressione



I risultati del testing di regressione per ogni CR hanno mostrato, che il sistema **non** ha risentito di anomalie o regredimenti a fronte delle modifiche. Gli **Incidents** sono stati risolti con successo.

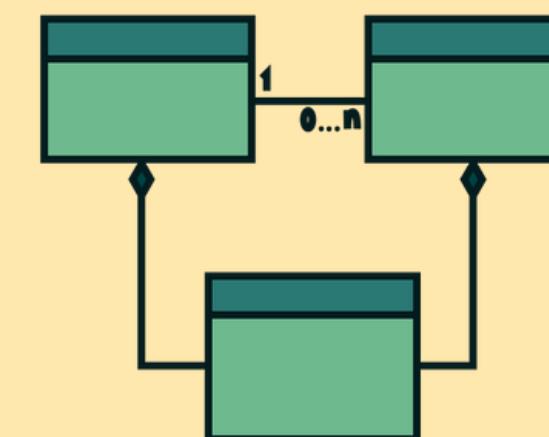


Esito

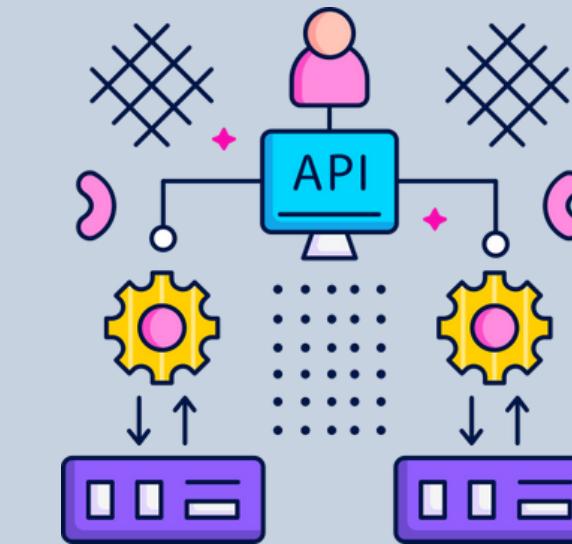


E' stato aggiunto il **diagramma delle classi** che rispecchia la nuova architettura del tool

La transizione da un'architettura procedurale a una orientata agli oggetti ha portato a una struttura più **modulare e manutenibile**, migliorando l'organizzazione del codice. Il risultato finale risulta più scalabile e comprensibile rispetto alla versione precedente



L'architettura dell'applicazione web è stata progettata seguendo un approccio **orientato ai servizi**, utilizzando FastAPI. Questo ha permesso di definire servizi modulari e di facile integrazione.



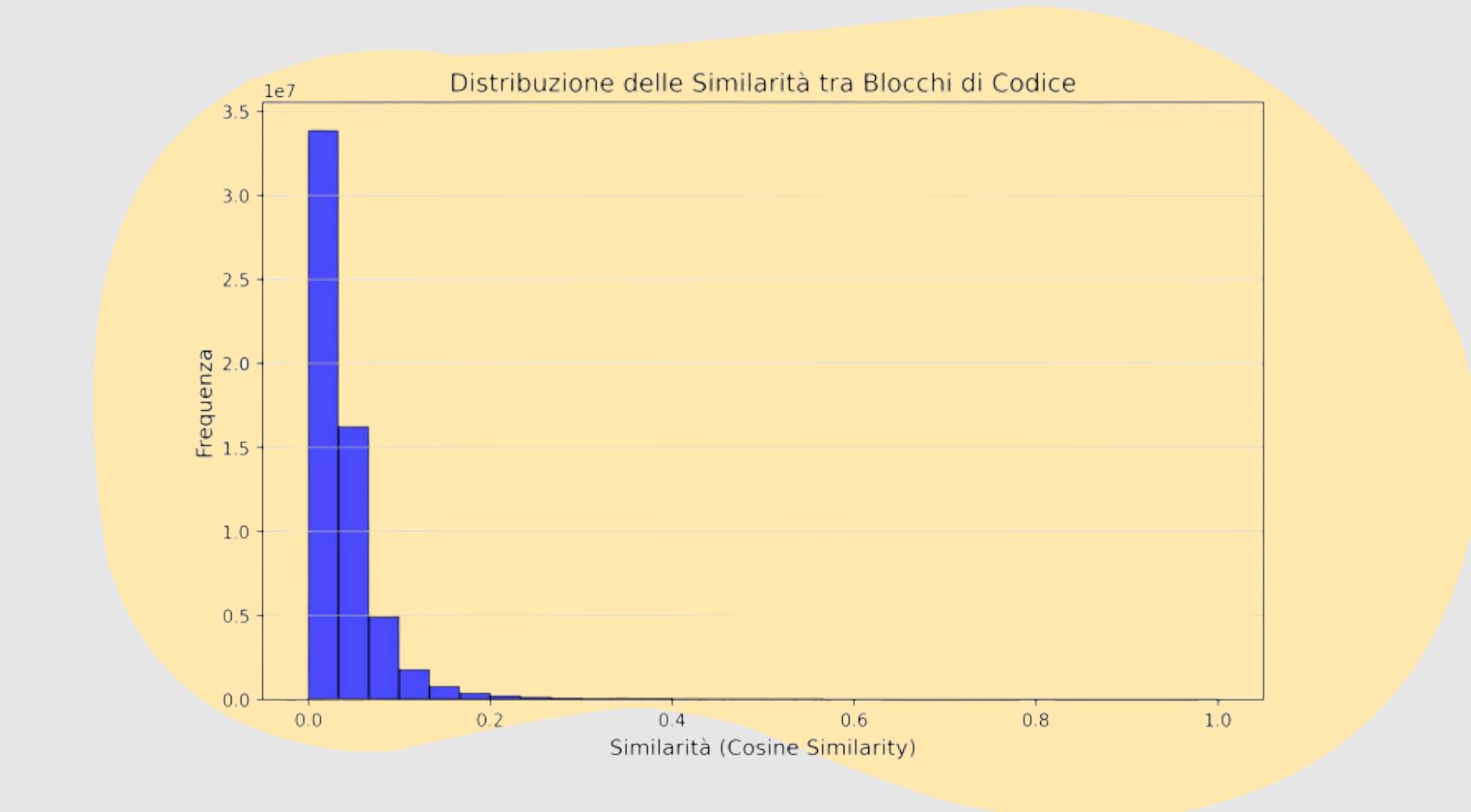
Per il frontend, è stato utilizzato il framework **Next.js**, che ha consentito di realizzare un'interfaccia utente fluida e intuitiva.

CR 3

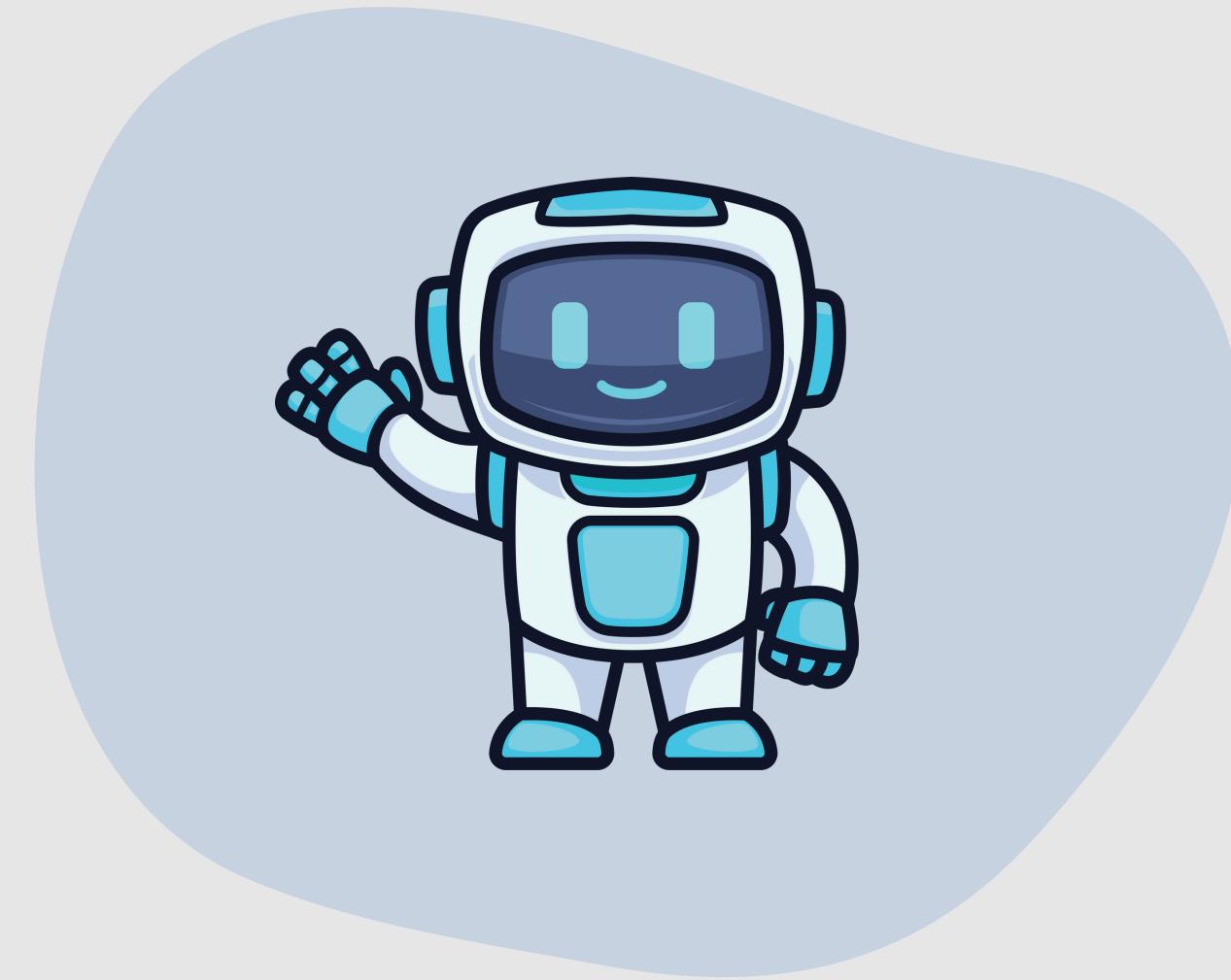
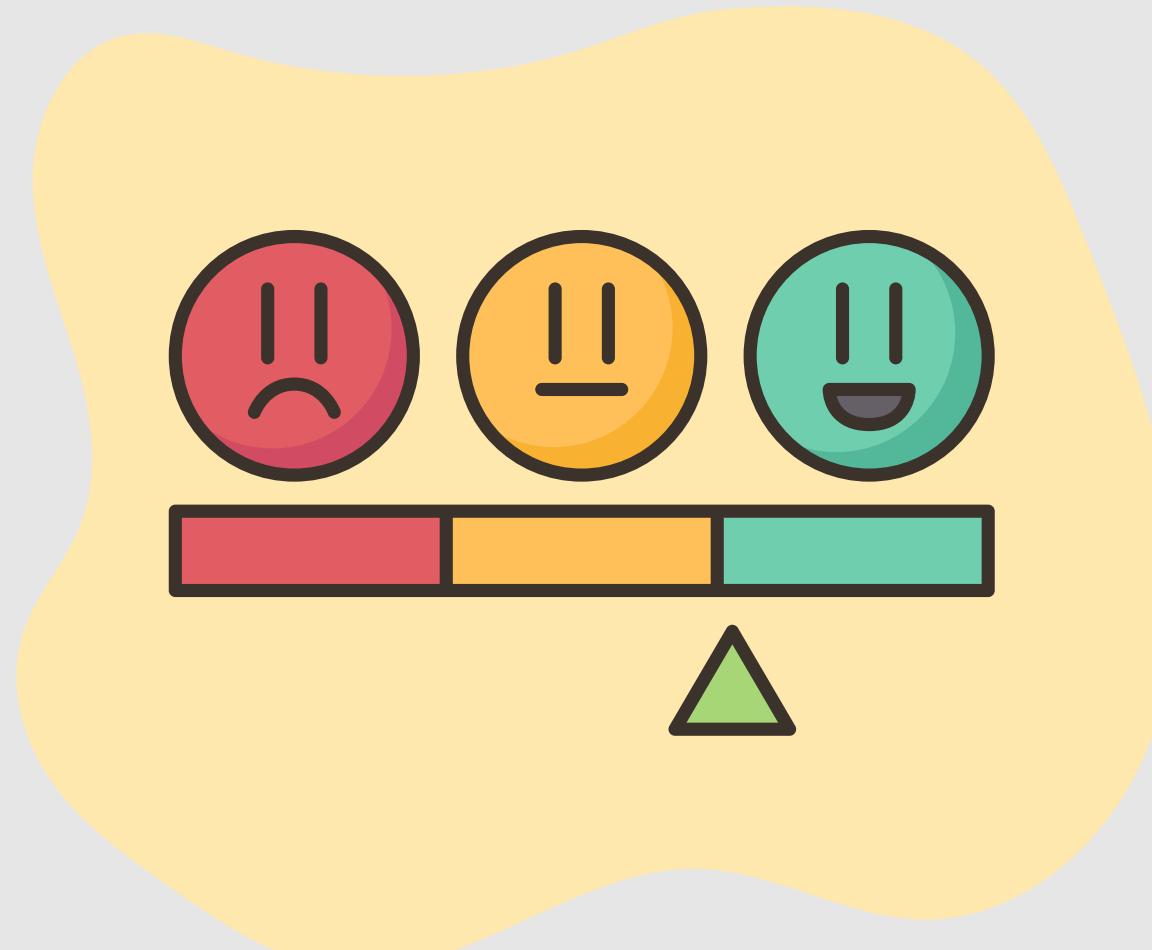


Assenza di errori sintattici nel 97.38% di tutti gli snippet di codice generati e **varietà del contenuto** dei code snippets

L'integrazione del modello **Qwen2.5-Coder-14B** ha permesso di creare code snippets con smells in maniera efficiente rispetto ai vincoli hardware.

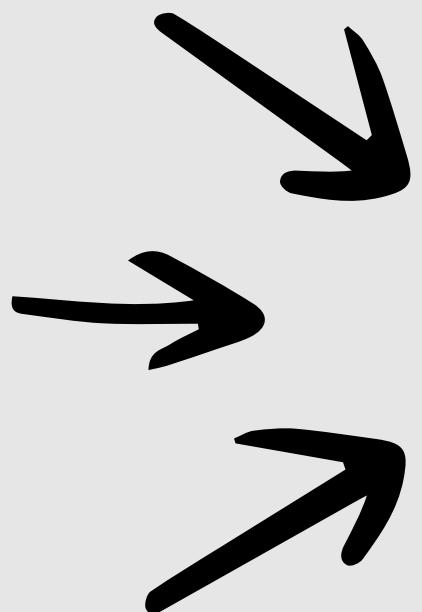


E' stato sviluppato un modello di IA per il rilevamento degli ML-specific code smells, sfruttando i **dataset generati nella CR3**



Il modello è stato realizzato mettendo a confronto le varianti 0.5B, 1.5B e 3B di Qwen2.5-Coder-Instruct.

In fase di valutazione, **il modello 3B**
è risultato essere il più performante



Classe	Precision	Recall	F1-score
Unnecessary Iteration	0.80	0.93	0.86
Hyperparameter Not Explicitly Set	0.84	0.88	0.86
NaN Equivalence Comparison Misused	0.98	0.97	0.98
Empty Column Misinitialization	0.98	0.96	0.97
Gradients Not Cleared Before Backward Propagation	0.82	0.87	0.85
TensorArray Not Used	0.94	0.93	0.94
Dataframe Conversion API Misused	0.90	0.88	0.89
Deterministic Algorithm Option Not Used	0.99	0.99	0.99
Chain Indexing	0.88	0.76	0.81
No Smell	0.98	0.98	0.98
Matrix Multiplication API Misused	0.97	0.91	0.94
Merge API Parameter Not Explicitly Set	0.93	0.93	0.93
Memory Not Freed	0.93	0.90	0.92
Broadcasting Feature Not Used	0.98	0.97	0.98
In-Place APIs Misused	0.83	0.74	0.78
Columns and DataType Not Explicitly Set	0.89	0.94	0.92
PyTorch Call Method Misused	0.94	0.92	0.93
Micro avg	0.95	0.95	0.95
Macro avg	0.92	0.91	0.91
Weighted avg	0.95	0.95	0.95
Samples avg	0.95	0.95	0.95

Tabella 1: Metriche di valutazione del modello più performante.

Deviazioni

Le limitazioni hardware hanno impedito **l'iniezione di code smells multipli** all'interno di un singolo snippet e la realizzazione della detection con più etichette (multi-label classification)



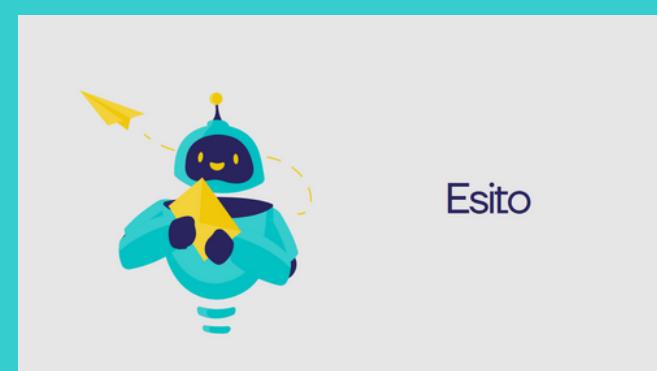
Il tool statico fornisce la **riga specifica** in cui si manifesta il code smell e offre **suggerimenti** su come correggerlo.



Il tool AI **non dispone** di queste funzionalità a causa della **dimensione del contesto** gestibile dai modelli utilizzati



SALFORD & CO.



Grazie!



[HTTPS://GITHUB.COM/XDARYAMO/SMELL_AI](https://github.com/xdaryamo/smell_ai)



SOURCE CODE



DOCS

