
Debiased and Denoised Entity Recognition from Distant Supervision (Appendix)

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1 A Dataset-Task Taxonomy

2 A.1 Dataset Taxonomy

3 We provide Figure 5 to show the dataset taxonomy in the overall training workflow. We first split
4 the initial dataset \mathcal{D} into two sub-datasets \mathcal{D}_b and \mathcal{D}_e through decoupled learning to mitigate the
5 distributional bias (first level split). Next, to process respective noise in \mathcal{D}_b and \mathcal{D}_e , we conduct a
6 selection and self-training framework. We divide the two parts into the clean set and noisy set by
7 clean token selection (second level split), then perform a standard classification on each clean set. As
8 for noisy token sets, we adopt debiased self-training to yield pseudo-labels for further training.

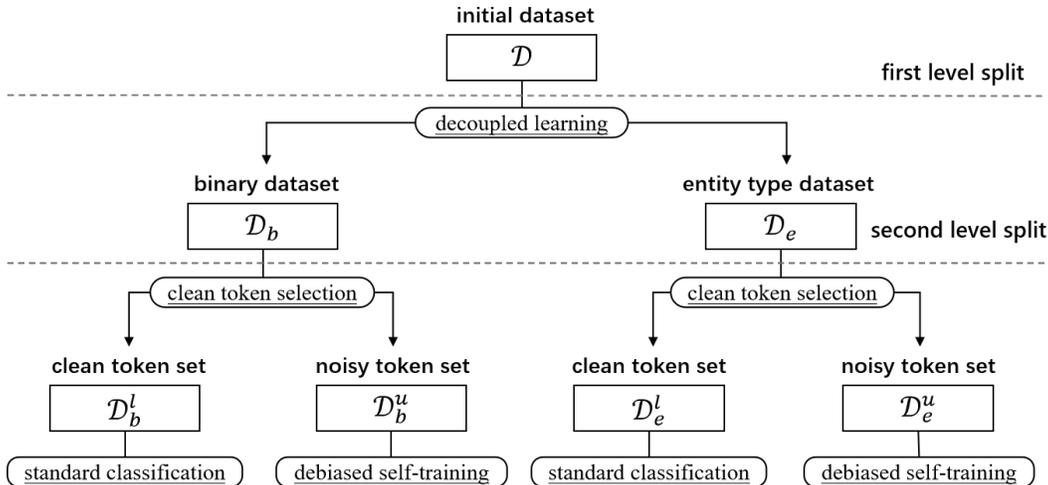


Figure 5: Illustration of dataset taxonomy.

9 A.2 Task Taxonomy and Model architecture

10 DesERT modifies the basic NER model architecture with the double-head pathway, yet reserves a
11 shared pre-trained language model encoder such as RoBERTa-base denoted by ϕ . Given any sentence
12 \mathbf{x} with its binarized labels \mathbf{y}^b and entity type labels \mathbf{y}^e , $(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}^b) \in \mathcal{D}^b$ and $(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}^e) \in \mathcal{D}^e$. \mathbf{x} is first fed
13 to the PLM encoder ϕ and we take the last hidden layer output of ϕ as finally embeddings $\phi(\mathbf{x})$. Then
14 the double-head pathway h_b and h_e take $\phi(\mathbf{x})$ as input to yield respective predictions. The binary
15 pathway h_b generates the probability of being entity tokens, $\mathbf{p}^b = \text{sigmoid}(h_b \circ \phi(\mathbf{x})) = [p_1^b, \dots, p_n^b]$,
16 then take $\mathbf{p}^b > 0.5$ as predicted binary labels $\hat{\mathbf{y}}^b$. While the entity pathway h_e offers fine-grained

17 entity type probabilities $\mathbf{p}^e = \text{softmax}(h_e \circ \phi(\mathbf{x})) = [\mathbf{p}_1^e, \dots, \mathbf{p}_n^e]$, where each \mathbf{p}_i^e has K entries. We
 18 take $\arg \max(\mathbf{p}^e)$ as predicted entity type labels $\hat{\mathbf{y}}^e$, and note that non-entity tokens are tagged with
 19 invalid labels. Finally, any standard classification loss can be calculated on the double-head pathway.
 20 We also refer the reader to Figure 1 for visualized illustration.

21 B Theoretical Insights of Debiased Semi-supervised Learning

22 Though there is no available theory on why the worst cross-entropy (WCE) [1] works, we would like
 23 to provide the following (relatively) theoretical insights that may help the readers to perceive our
 24 approach better.

25 Notably, the self-training bias is mainly caused by noisy tokens approaching the decision boundaries,
 26 whose pseudo-labels keep changing. To this end, we optimize WCE to learn compact token clusters
 27 for reducing wrong pseudo-label assignments. To see this, we start from the following simplified
 28 example to show that WCE does indeed concentrates the token representation.

29 **Assumption.** Consider a binary classification problem, as the simplest form of DSNER. Denote the
 30 input variable by X and the output variable by Y from binary labels $\{+1, -1\}$. The labeled data \mathcal{D}^l
 31 are sampled from $X|Y = +1 \sim U(\mathcal{B}(u, r))$ and $X|Y = -1 \sim U(\mathcal{B}(v, r))$. Here $\mathcal{B}(u, r)$ denotes a
 32 spherical ball with center u and radius r . U denotes uniform distributions. The unlabeled sample
 33 \mathcal{D}^u are all from $Y = +1$ but uniformly distributed inside the $\mathcal{B}((u+v)/2, r')$. Three balls have no
 34 intersection. Finally, we assume the maximum margin classifier is used, which is a hard proxy of the
 35 cross-entropy loss.

36 **Derivation Sketch.** At first glance, it is obvious that the optimal classifier on \mathcal{D}^l is $f = (u+v)/2$
 37 which misclassifies half of the examples in \mathcal{D}^u . The worst classifier, however, amounts to be
 38 $f^w = (u+v)/2 - r'$ which perfectly classifies \mathcal{D}^l but possesses the most side-way decision
 39 boundary. Next, we optimize the feature extractor ϕ to match the worst decision boundary by
 40 $\min_{\phi} L_U(y, f^w)$. This is to say, with ideally known labels, the unlabeled ball $\mathcal{B}((u+v)/2, r')$
 41 converges to $\mathcal{B}(f = (u+v)/2 - r', r')$. With full samples $X|Y = +1$ getting closer, the classifier
 42 achieves better generalization with *compact clusters* and low-entropy decision boundaries.

43 In practice, since the true labels are unknown, we use pseudo-labels as a proxy since most unlabeled
 44 data are assigned true labels. So, the representation will be partially concentrated.

45 **Empirical Covariance.** We conduct experiments on CoNLL03 to show the covariance of data
 46 to their class centers and the quality of pseudo labels as follows. When DeSERT is run without
 47 WCE, the average covariance amongst classes is 0.0085. With WCE, the average covariance amongst
 48 classes becomes 0.0056. Thereafter, we can conclude that WCE indeed concentrates the tokens and
 49 mitigates the self-training bias.

50 C Additional Experimental Setups and Results

51 In what follows, we show more experimental details and results. In section C.1, we report more
 52 empirical results, including an interesting series of experiments where *additional distant supervision*
 53 comes from large language models like ChatGPT. In section C.2, we provide more details on our
 54 experiments and implementation.

55 C.1 Results with Additional Distant Supervision from ChatGPT

56 Recently, large language models (LLMs), including GPT-3 [2], ChatGPT, and GPT-4¹, have largely
 57 revolutionized the NLP landscape. Thanks to their emerging abilities like in-context learning (ICL)
 58 [3] and chain-of-thought [4], LLMs demonstrate remarkable zero-shot learning performance in a
 59 wide range of downstream NLP tasks. Despite the promise, some recent studies [5] have shown that
 60 LLMs are still legs behind the fine-tuned small language models in many NLP applications.

61 Motivated by this, we conduct experiments to show the zero-shot performance of ChatGPT on the
 62 NER problem. In Table 3, we observe that ChatGPT does indeed demonstrates inferior results even

¹<https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt>

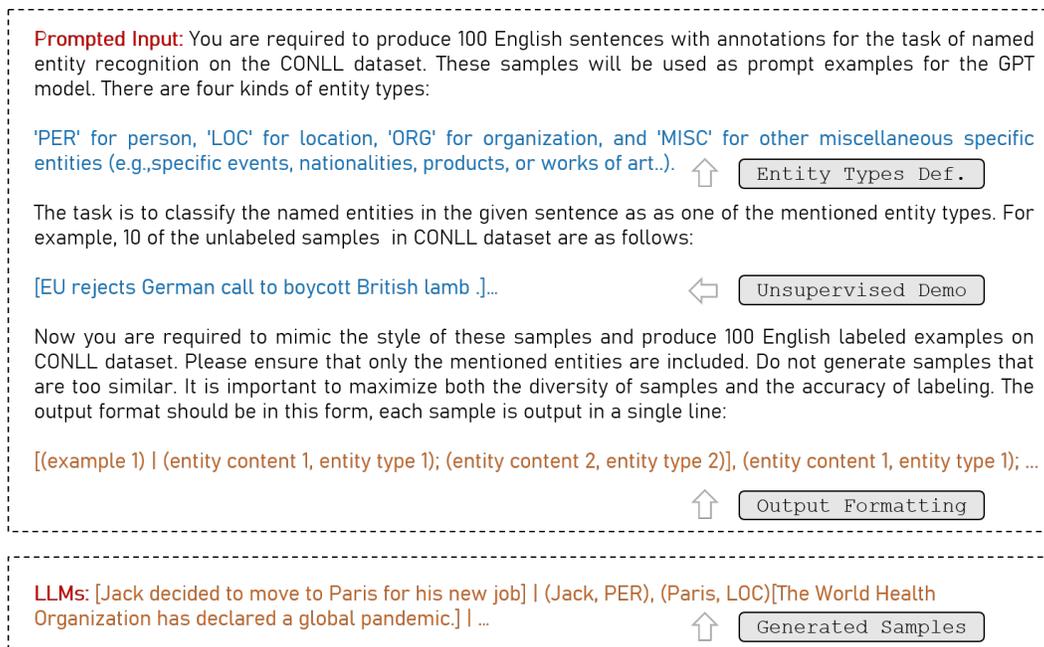


Figure 6: An example prompt for automatic demonstration data generation.

63 compared with distantly-supervised SLMs. Therefore, a question arises: *how can LLMs better*
 64 *support NER with minimal human annotation?* Among the numerous potential solutions, we propose
 65 a natural extension of the conventional distantly-supervised NER problem. This extension considers
 66 LLM’s predictions on the training set as additional distant supervision. To achieve this, we present a
 67 new tagging scheme for NER and modified our algorithm to accommodate multiple sources of distant
 68 supervision. Subsequently, we provide a detailed elaboration on the aforementioned aspects.

69 C.1.1 Tagging by Auto-Demonstration

70 Instead of directly performing zero-shot testing, we introduce a new DSNER paradigm that generates
 71 distant labels by LLMs for *unsupervised training data* to improve the SLMs’ performance. To
 72 generate distant labels, a straightforward solution is to send the raw training texts to the LLMs and
 73 ask them to output all the entities along with their types. However, we find such a naive strategy fails
 74 to achieve satisfactory NER performance. To mitigate this problem, we design a novel in-context
 75 learning algorithm that exploits self-generated text-tag pairs to guide the tagging process.

76 **Automatic Text-Tag Pair Generation.** Our ultimate goal is to perform few-shot in-context
 77 learning that better guides the LLMs to locate the entities and output their types. To achieve this,
 78 we may assume a set of demonstration text-tag pair samples are available. Besides, this set ought to
 79 be diverse and representative enough to guide in-context learning. However, the training samples
 80 are unsupervised and cannot be utilized directly. To address this problem, we propose to generate
 81 sentences by ChatGPT itself, while ensuring the diversity of the generated results to cover all entity
 82 types. Additionally, we randomly retrieve unlabeled samples from the training set and employ
 83 ChatGPT to automatically generate a comprehensive set of sentences, including their corresponding
 84 entity tags. An example prompt is shown in Figure 6.

85 **Few-Shot In-Context Learning for NER Tagging.** After that, we ask the ChatGPT to tag the
 86 whole training set by using its self-generated demonstrations. However, directly feeding all the
 87 generated samples for ICL may exceed contextual limits and incur high computational costs. To
 88 remedy this problem, before feeding the true query sentence, we retrieve the top-*k* demo samples by
 89 the cosine similarity. Empirically, we exploit the BERT embedding for similarity calculation, which
 90 performs generally better than ChatGPT embedding. Finally, we instruct ChatGPT to output the NER
 91 tags for the entire unsupervised training set. An example prompt is shown in Figure 7.

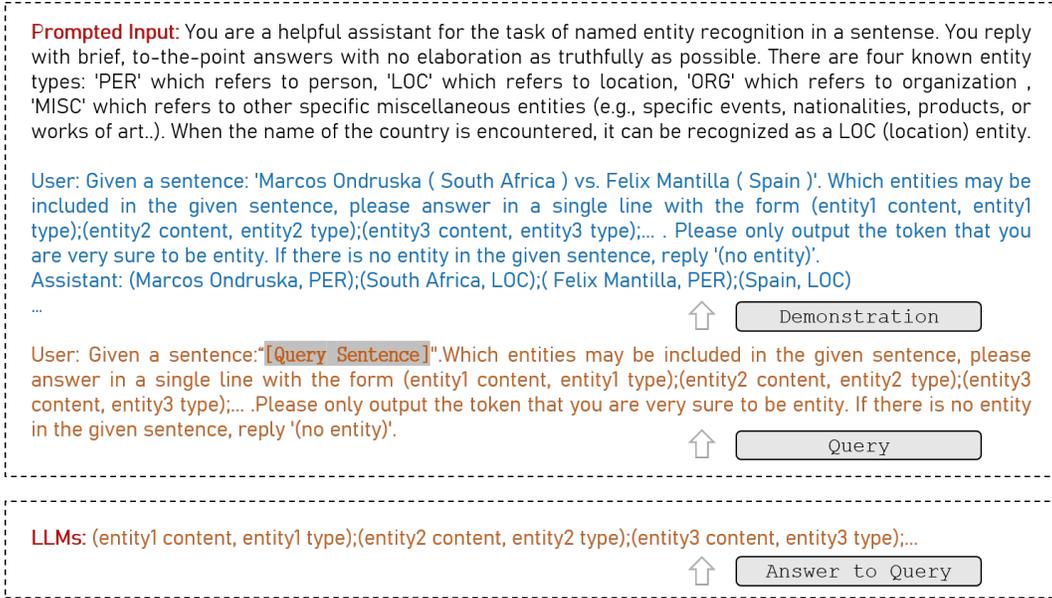


Figure 7: An example prompt for few-shot in-context tagging for a *query sentence*. The demonstrations are automatically generated and selected.

92 C.1.2 Modification of DesERT for Multi-Source Distant Labels

93 One may directly use the ChatGPT labels to train the DSNER models. However, the original knowl-
 94 edge base-driven distant supervision is also free lunch for DSNER. and can be further incorporated.
 95 Notably, such a hybrid distant label from multiple sources problem has never been touched in the
 96 NER community. Fortunately, our DesERT algorithm can well address such hybrid labels with only a
 97 few modifications. Assume we are given knowledge base-driven labels y_{kb} (KB Labels) and ChatGPT
 98 Labels y_{cg} for a token x , where we slightly abuse the subscript to distinguish these two labels. To
 99 warm up the model, we calculate a mean soft label by,

$$\hat{y}^{mean} = (\text{OneHot}(y^{kb}) + \text{OneHot}(y^{cg}))/2$$

100 Therefore, the model fits equal confidence on these two labels when a token receives two disagreed
 101 labels. After that, we develop a modified selection protocol. Take the binary head as an example, we
 102 receive a set of transformed distant labels $\tilde{Y}^b = \{\tilde{y}_{kb}^b, \tilde{y}_{cg}^b\}$ for each token and then perform the token
 103 selection by,

$$\mathcal{D}_b^l = \{(x, \tilde{Y}^b) | \mathbb{I}(\hat{y}^b \in \tilde{Y}^b) \wedge (\max(p^b, 1 - p^b) > \tau)\}$$

104 In other words, we regard either distant label as a candidate of the ground truth. Once there is one
 105 label in this label set that exhibits high confidence, we regard it as a clean token. Finally, we run the
 106 DesERT algorithm without any further modification. Notably, these can be easily extended to more
 107 sources of distant supervision, e.g., when there is more than one LLM available.

108 C.1.3 Experimental Results with ChatGPT Supervision

109 Our experiments are conducted on the CoNLL03 dataset. In specific, we generate a total of 100
 110 automatically generated samples with the help of 10 demonstration training samples. When tagging
 111 training data, we select the 10 most similar generated samples for ICL. In Figure 8, we plot the
 112 confusion matrix of the ChatGPT labels. It can be observed that ChatGPT supervision demonstrates
 113 similar trends to KB labels and is still biased. Nevertheless, ChatGPT labels have three main
 114 characteristics: (1) it classifies far more non-entity tokens as an entity; (2) it produces more balanced
 115 clean tokens; (3) the confusion patterns on fine-grained entity types are different than KB labels.

116 In Table 3, we report the results of DesERT when it faces different sources of distant supervision
 117 signals. In particular, we compare three types of baselines: (1) **ChatGPT**: we employ the ChatGPT
 118 model to produce zero-shot tagging on testing data; (2) **ChatGPT-A**: we employ ChatGPT to generate

Table 3: Performance of DesERT with different sources of distant labels.

Supervision	Unsupervised		ChatGPT Labels		KB Labels		Hybrid Labels	
Model	ChatGPT	ChatGPT-A	SCDL	DesERT	SCDL	DesERT	SCDL*	DesERT*
Precision	68.95	79.11	68.39	81.91	87.96	86.23	83.87	87.24
Recall	64.16	63.13	72.74	77.38	79.82	87.28	85.50	88.93
F1	66.47	70.22	70.50	79.58	83.69	86.75	84.67	88.08

119 a set of text-tag pairs and use it for few-shot ICL on testing data; (3) **SCDL**: the most competitive
 120 baseline in our main Table. From Table 3, we have the following observation:

- 121 • ChatGPT-A is much better than vanilla ChatGPT, verifying the superiority of our automatic
 122 demonstration process. But, ChatGPT and ChatGPT-A underperform other DSNER algo-
 123 rithms on the testing set. Though ChatGPT is a wonderful general-purpose LLM, we may
 124 draw the same conclusion as [5] that fine-tuned SLMs still play an important role in NLP.
- 125 • Given ChatGPT labels, both SCDL and DesERT underperform their counterparts when
 126 supervised by KB labels. We postulate that current DSNER algorithms are particularly
 127 designed for KB-based supervision and thus can not fully handle such new sources of labels.
- 128 • Our proposed DesERT algorithm consistently outperforms baselines on different supervised
 129 signals. In particular, when trained with hybrid labels, the modified DesERT (DesERT*)
 130 improves the KB label-trained counterpart by **+1.32** F1 score. It suggests that distant
 131 supervision from LLMs does indeed brings helpful information for the DSNER task.

132 In summary, our work makes the first at-
 133 tempt to employ LLMs to generate distant
 134 supervision. Moreover, our DesERT algo-
 135 rithm can be easily extended to learn from
 136 multi-source distant labels and demon-
 137 strates improved performance.

138 C.2 More Experimental Details

139 In this section, we provide more experi-
 140 mental details for a better understanding of
 141 our training process and also to ensure the
 142 reproducibility.

143 C.2.1 Computation Resources

144 All experiments are conducted on a workstation with 8 NVIDIA RTX A6000 GPUs. It takes about
 145 {8, 72, 0.5, 1, 2} hours for training on five benchmarking datasets (ordered as in Table 1) with one
 146 single GPU. We adopt the Huggingface Transformer library for the RoBERTa-base (125M parameters)
 147 and DistilRoBERTa-base (66M parameters) models: <https://huggingface.co/transformers/>. We run all
 148 the experiments three times and report the mean results.

149 C.2.2 Datasets Details

150 The data statistics of five benchmarking NER datasets are shown in Table 4.

151 C.3 More Implementation Details

152 **Tagging scheme for NER** As for tagging scheme, we follow the classic BIO format. To be specific,
 153 the first token of an entity mentioned with type X is tagged as B-X while the remaining tokens inside
 154 that entity are labeled as I-X, and the non-entity tokens are annotated as O. Such a scheme is more
 155 difficult than a simple IO format, especially for distant supervision.

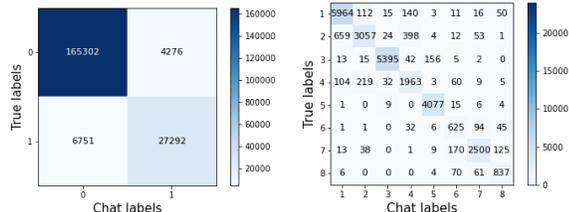


Figure 8: **Left**: Confusion matrix of true labels and ChatGPT labels on CoNLL03. **Right**: The confusion matrix displays noise among true entity-type labels in ChatGPT labels.

Table 4: The statistics of five datasets, shows the number of entity types and the number of sentences in the Train/Dev/Test set.

Dataset	Types	Train	Dev	Test
CoNLL03	4	14,041	3,250	3,453
OntoNotes5.0	18	115,812	15,680	12,217
Webpage	4	385	99	135
Wikigold	4	1,142	280	274
Twitter	10	2,393	999	3,844

156 **Clean token selection for the binary pathway** In general, the precision of entity labels is relatively
 157 high, e.g., about 97.96%(23,649/24,141) in the CoNLL03 dataset. That indicates us most distantly-
 158 labeled entity tokens are real entities if omit fine-grained entity types. Therefore, when performing
 159 clean token selection on the binary pathway, it only selects non-entity tokens by the matched and
 160 high-confidence strategy while including all tokens labeled as entities.

161 **Soft label for the entity pathway** When training on the selected clean token set, the binary pathway
 162 regards distant labels as true labels. However, we discard the distant hard labels but adopt the teacher
 163 model’s output logits to derive soft labels [6] for the entity pathway, given by:

$$\hat{y}_{i,j}^s = \frac{\mathbf{p}_{i,j}^2 / \sum_i \mathbf{p}_{i,j}}{\sum_{j'} (\mathbf{p}_{i,j'}^2 / \sum_i \mathbf{p}_{i,j'})}$$

164 where $\mathbf{p}_{i,j} = \text{softmax}(f_{i,j}(\mathbf{x}; \theta_t))$, is the probability of i -th token belonging to class j in sentence
 165 \mathbf{x} , then calculate a Kullback-Leibler divergence loss. Because soft labels usually preserve sufficient
 166 information and encourage a more balanced assignment of target labels.

167 **The implementation of teacher-student newtork** When splitting the clean token set and the
 168 noisy token set, we let the teacher model select respective clean tokens to train the student model.
 169 Specifically, the teacher model’s double-head pathway filters reliable clean tokens independently
 170 following the previous criterion. Then the double-head of the student model is trained with selected
 171 clean tokens and corresponding labels. The teacher model parameters are periodically updated by the
 172 student model with EMA, given by:

$$\theta_t = \alpha \theta_t + (1 - \alpha) \theta_s$$

173 where α is a positive constant and is empirically fixed as 0.99 for Webpage/Wikigold and 0.995 for
 174 the remaining datasets. Finally, to train the entity pathway, we adopt a KL divergence loss on the
 175 student model’s output logits and corresponding soft labels from the teacher model’s prediction. The
 176 formulation is:

$$\mathcal{L}_{e_cls}(\hat{\mathbf{y}}^s, f(\mathbf{x}; \theta_s)) = \sum_i \sum_j -\hat{y}_{ij}^s \log f_{ij}(\mathbf{x}; \theta_s) + f_{ij}(\mathbf{x}; \theta_s) \log(f_{ij}(\mathbf{x}; \theta_s))$$

177 Then, the student model’s entity pathway is trained to approximate the soft labels. While for the
 178 binary pathway, we calculate a standard binary cross-entropy loss, which is given by:

$$\mathcal{L}_{b_cls}(\tilde{y}^b, \hat{y}^b) = -\tilde{y}^b \log \hat{y}^b - (1 - \tilde{y}^b) \log(1 - \hat{y}^b)$$

179 where \tilde{y}^b is the given distant label and \hat{y}^b is generated by student model’s binary pathway.

180 D Pseudo-Code of DesERT

181 We describe the overall training pipeline of DesERT in Algorithm 1.

182 E Limitations

183 While DesERT has been proven to be effective for distant supervision, it is still subject to certain
 184 limitations. First, in our debiased self-training procedure, our WCE loss is estimated from pseudo-
 185 labels instead of the real ones. While we empirically find our WCE loss works well, its performance

Algorithm 1 Training workflow of DesERT

Input: Training data $\mathcal{D} = \{(\mathbf{x}_i, \tilde{\mathbf{y}}_i)\}_{i=1}^M$ with distant labels; two sets of teacher-student networks, θ_{t1}, θ_{s1} and θ_{t2}, θ_{s2} ;

- 1: $t \leftarrow 0$
- /* Selection and self-training */*
- 2: **while** $t < T_1$ **do**
- 3: Get a batch $\mathcal{B} = \{(\mathbf{x}_i, \tilde{\mathbf{y}}_i)\}_{i=1}^B \subset \mathcal{D}$;
- 4: **if** $t < k$ **then**
- 5: $\mathcal{B}_b \cup \mathcal{B}_e \leftarrow \mathcal{B}$; //decoupled datasets
- 6: $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_b^1 = \{\mathcal{B}_b^{l,1}, \mathcal{B}_b^{u,1}\} \leftarrow \text{Sel}(f(\theta_{t1}), \mathcal{B}_b)$;
- 7: $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^1 = \{\mathcal{B}_e^{l,1}, \mathcal{B}_e^{u,1}\} \leftarrow \text{Sel}(f(\theta_{t1}), \mathcal{B}_b)$;
- 8: $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_b^2 = \{\mathcal{B}_b^{l,2}, \mathcal{B}_b^{u,2}\} \leftarrow \text{Sel}(f(\theta_{t2}), \mathcal{B}_b)$;
- 9: $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^2 = \{\mathcal{B}_e^{l,2}, \mathcal{B}_e^{u,2}\} \leftarrow \text{Sel}(f(\theta_{t2}), \mathcal{B}_b)$;
- 10: Update θ_{s1} with $\{\bar{\mathcal{B}}_b^1, \bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^1\}$ by minimizing \mathcal{L} ;
- 11: Update θ_{s2} with $\{\bar{\mathcal{B}}_b^2, \bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^2\}$ by minimizing \mathcal{L} ;
- 12: **else**
- 13: $\mathcal{X}_B \leftarrow \{(\mathbf{x}_i)\}_{i=1}^B$
- 14: $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_b \cup \bar{\mathcal{B}}_e \leftarrow \text{Guess}(f(\theta_{t1}), f(\theta_{t2}), \mathcal{X}_B)$;
- 15: Update θ_{s1}, θ_{s2} with $\{\bar{\mathcal{B}}_b, \bar{\mathcal{B}}_e\}$ by minimizing \mathcal{L}
- 16: **end if**
- 17: $\theta_{t1} \leftarrow \text{EMA}(\alpha, \theta_{t1}), \theta_{t2} \leftarrow \text{EMA}(\alpha, \theta_{t2})$
- 18: $t \leftarrow t + 1$
- 19: **end while**
- /* Post-hoc entity pathway finetuning */*
- 20: **while** $t < T_1 + T_2$ **do**
- 21: Get a batch $\mathcal{B} = \{(\mathbf{x}_i, \tilde{\mathbf{y}}_i)\}_{i=1}^B \subset \mathcal{D}$;
- 22: $\mathcal{X}_B \leftarrow \{(\mathbf{x}_i)\}_{i=1}^B, \tilde{\mathcal{Y}}_B \leftarrow \{(\tilde{\mathbf{y}}_i)\}_{i=1}^B$
- 23: $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^1 \leftarrow \text{EntitySel}(f(\theta_{t1}), \mathcal{X}_B, \tilde{\mathcal{Y}}_B)$;
- 24: $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^2 \leftarrow \text{EntitySel}(f(\theta_{t2}), \mathcal{X}_B, \tilde{\mathcal{Y}}_B)$;
- 25: Finetuning θ_{s1} with $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^1$
- 26: Finetuning θ_{s2} with $\bar{\mathcal{B}}_e^2$
- 27: $\theta_{t1} \leftarrow \text{EMA}(\alpha, \theta_{t1}), \theta_{t2} \leftarrow \text{EMA}(\alpha, \theta_{t2})$
- 28: $t \leftarrow t + 1$
- 29: **end while**

186 is theoretically restricted. One potential solution is to estimate a small validation set to remedy this
187 problem, but we leave it as our future work. Second, while the imbalance between entity labels is
188 located in Figure 1, our framework does not particularly integrate special components to explicitly
189 overcome this problem. We believe it is not hard to draw inspiration from the recent achievement in
190 long-tailed learning to further improve the NER performance. Lastly, since DesERT ensembles two
191 sets of teacher-student networks as previous works did [7, 8], we should train peer-student models
192 simultaneously and utilize the predictions from dual-teacher models iteratively, thus resulting in
193 relatively higher training costs. We hope future efforts are made in alleviating the cost of network
194 ensembling.

195 F Ethics Statement

196 While distant supervision is deemed a cheap way to collect and curated training data, the off-the-shelf
197 and external knowledge bases steering the autonomous annotation procedure may include bias and
198 unfairness. Indeed, if one trains the model by these biased labels, it may unpleasantly yield unfair
199 and biased predictions on the basis of characteristics like race, gender, disabilities, LGBTQ, or
200 political orientation. Therefore, when deploying our DesERT framework, it is recommended to equip
201 it with some auxiliary tools for labeling censorship so as to improve overall fairness and ethical

202 standard. Grounded on this, we would suggest regarding our DesERT framework as an auxiliary
203 weakly-supervised annotation tool for assisting human annotations.

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