DialDoc 2022 Shared Task:
Open-Book Document-grounded Dialogue Modeling

Song Feng∗
Amazon AWS AI
sofeng@amazon.com

Siva Sankalp Patel
IBM Research
siva.sankalp.patel@ibm.com

Hui Wan
IBM Research
hwan@us.ibm.com

Abstract

The paper presents the results of the Shared Task hosted by the Second DialDoc Workshop on Document-grounded Dialogue and Conversational Question Answering co-located at ACL 2022. The primary goal of this Shared Task is to build goal-oriented information-seeking conversation systems that are grounded in the domain documents, where each dialogue could correspond to multiple sub-goals that are based on different documents. The task is to generate agent responses in natural language given the dialogue and document contexts. There are two task settings and leaderboards based on (1) the same sets of domains (SEEN) and (2) one unseen domain (UNSEEN). There are over 20 teams participating in Dev Phase and 8 teams participating in both Dev and Test Phases. There are multiple submissions that significantly outperform the baseline. The best-performing system achieves 52.06 F1 and the total of 191.30 on the SEEN task; and 34.65 F1 and the total of 130.79 on the UNSEEN task.

1 Introduction

Goal-oriented document-grounded dialogue systems enable end users to interactively query about domain-specific information based on the given documents. The tasks of querying document knowledge via conversational systems continue to attract a lot of attention from both research and industrial communities for various applications such as OR-ConvQA (Qu et al., 2020), MultiDoc2Dial (Feng et al., 2021), QReCC (Anantha et al., 2021), Topi-OCQA (Adlakha et al., 2022) and Abg-CoQA (Guo et al., 2021). The previous Shared Task (Feng, 2021) by the First DialDoc Workshop addressed the task of goal-oriented information-seeking dialogue systems in the machine reading comprehension setting, where the dialogue is aiming at querying about the information provided in a given document (Feng et al., 2020). However, in real-life scenarios, for conversation in a given domain, the grounding document is often unknown, a dialogue turn could arbitrarily correspond to any document, hence each dialogue could be grounded in multiple documents. Thus, we propose to explore the open-book closed-domain setting for goal-oriented information-seeking dialogue systems that are grounded in the given domain documents.

We introduce the Shared Task at the Second DialDoc Workshop on Document-grounded Dialogue and Conversational Question Answering (DialDoc 2022 Shared Task). The Shared Task aims to deal with the information-seeking goal-oriented dialogues that have multiple sub-goals corresponding to different documents. The input includes the dialogue history, the current user turn, and a set of domain documents, the output is the agent’s utterance in natural language. It comprises two tasks that address two different evaluation settings: (1) the SEEN task where the test data shares the same sets of domains as the training data; and (2) the UNSEEN task where the test data is all in one unseen domain different from the training data. We host the leaderboards for Dev and Test Phases for the SEEN and UNSEEN tasks respectively on eval.ai.

There are over 20 teams participating in Dev Phase and 8 teams participating in both Dev and Test Phases. Multiple submissions significantly outperform the baseline. The best-performing system achieves 52.06 F1 and the total of 191.30 on the SEEN task comparing to 35.85 and 126.21 by the baseline; and 34.65 F1 and the total of 130.79 on the UNSEEN task comparing to 19.26 and 59.52 by the baseline.

In this report, we first describe the dataset and the two task settings. Then, we summarize the approaches and evaluation results of several top participating teams.

∗ Work done while at IBM Research

1https://eval.ai/
### 2 Dataset

In this Shared Task, the dataset is based on MultiDoc2Dial introduced by (Feng et al., 2021). It contains 4796 conversations with an average of 14 turns grounded in 488 documents from four domains including va.org and studentaid.org. For document data, each document includes a title, the body content with the span/section information as well as the HTML mark-ups such as list and title. For dialogue data, each turn in a dialogue contains: (1) the speaker role, (2) the dialogue act, (3) the grounding text span along with the title of the document, and (4) human generated utterance in natural language. Each dialogue contains one or multiple segments where each indicates that all turns within one segment are grounded in the same document. Table 1 shows the statistics of the dataset by domain, including the number of dialogues with two segments (two-seg), more than two segments (>two-seg), and no segmentations (single).

For model development, we provide the original split of training and validation data. For the leaderboard setup, we use a small portion (30%) of the test split based on the number of dialogues for Dev Phase and entire test split for the final Test Phase. For the UNSEEN task setting, the final test set includes the dialogue and document data all from an unseen domain cdccovid that is not in the original MultiDoc2Dial dataset. The dialogues from the unseen domain were collected in the same data collection process as MultiDoc2Dial dataset.

### 3 Task Description

Our Shares Task centers on building open-book goal-oriented dialogue systems, where an agent could provide an answer or ask follow-up questions for clarification or verification. The main goal is to generate grounded agent responses in natural language based on the dialogue context and domain knowledge in the documents. The provided training data is mainly based on MultiDoc2Dial dataset but the participants could utilize any public dataset without any additional human annotations on the MultiDoc2Dial dataset. It includes two task settings depending on whether the cases are from unseen domains (SEEN task) or one unseen domain (UNSEEN task) from training data. Here we only consider the cases where user queries are answerable. For test split, there is only one turn to predict per dialogue. Table 2 presents the number of dialogues (‘dials’) as well as the total turns for prediction (‘predicts’) in each data split, where the last column contains the numbers of examples for Test Phase evaluation for SEEN and UNSEEN, respectively.

### 4 Evaluation

The evaluation is focused on the groundedness and naturalness of the generated agent response. We consider the automatic metrics as intrinsic evaluation metrics, and human annotations for extrinsic evaluations.

#### 4.1 Intrinsic Evaluation

We use the following metrics: F1 (Rajpurkar et al., 2016), SacreBLEU (Post, 2018), METEOR (Banerjee and Lavie, 2005) and RougeL (Lin, 2004). The rankings on the leaderboards are based on the sum of all four scores. For each leaderboard, we select the three top-ranked teams for further human evaluation.

#### 4.2 Extrinsic Evaluation

We ask human annotators to rank three generated utterances, each from a different team, based on the relevance and fluency given the dialogue history and the grounding document passages as reference. relevance is used to measure how well the generated utterance is relevant to the grounding span as a response to the previous dialogue turn(s). fluency indicates whether the generated utterance is grammatically correct and generally fluent in English.
For the \textit{SEEN} task setting, we randomly select 100 generated turns where the normalized utterances are not all the same; for \textit{UNSEEN}, we randomly select 80. We have three experts as annotators, with 10% overlap for the annotations.

### 5 Shared Task Submissions

We hosted the leaderboards\footnote{https://eval.ai/web/challenges/challenge-page/1437/overview} for Dev and Test Phases for the two task settings \textit{SEEN} and \textit{UNSEEN} on eval.ai. The Dev Phase lasted for three and a half months and the Test Phase lasted for a week. There are over 500 submissions by over 20 teams that participated in Dev Phase. For the final Test Phase, 8 teams submitted to the \textit{SEEN} leaderboard, and 6 teams submitted to the \textit{UNSEEN} leaderboard. Next, we summarize the approaches adopted by the top teams who submitted their technical papers.

The baseline approach for the Shared Task is based on RAG (Lewis et al., 2020b), where the DPR (Karpukhin et al., 2020) passage retriever is fine-tuned on MultiDoc2Dial dataset, as described in (Feng et al., 2021). Several teams significantly improved the results over the baseline as shown in Table 3 and 4. Team CPII-NLP achieved the highest scores on both \textit{SEEN} and \textit{UNSEEN} leaderboard.

#### 5.1 CPII-NLP

The team presents a pipeline system of retriever, re-ranker, and generator. The retriever adopts DPR (Karpukhin et al., 2020). The re-ranker is an ensemble of three cross-encoder models using BERT (Devlin et al., 2019), RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019), and ELECTRA (Clark et al., 2020), respectively. The generator leverages the pre-trained sequence-to-sequence model BART\textsubscript{large} (Lewis et al., 2020a) jointly trained with a grounding span predictor. The three components are individually optimized, while passage dropout and regularization techniques are adopted to improve the response generation performance. CPII-NLP ranked 1st on both \textit{SEEN} and \textit{UNSEEN} leaderboards on F1, SacreBLEU, METEOR and RougeL scores.

#### 5.2 zsw_dyy_lgz

The team presents their system named Grounding-Guided Goal-oriented dialogues Generation(G4), a three-stage approach composed of a retriever adopting ANCE(Xiong et al., 2021), a reader predicting grounding spans restricted to whole phrases, and a generator adopting FiD (Izacard and Grave, 2021) which leverages explicitly markings of grounding spans together with the original passages. Experiment results show that this approach effectively generates responses better grounded to text spans and closer to correct responses. To alleviate the i-
sue of the reader accuracy being lower at inference than during training, they also present a data augmentation approach as regularization to account for more diverse groundings and improve the robustness.

5.3 CMU_QA
The team also follows the retriever-reader architecture and presents their system called Refined Retriever-Reader (R3). R3 includes several improvements over the baseline approach, including adopting a sparse retriever based on DistilSplade (Formal et al., 2021) instead of dense retriever, adding a RoBERTa-based cross-encoder passage reranker, using FiD (Izacard and Grave, 2021) as the generator, and a curriculum learning training paradigm. The experiment results show significant improvement over the baseline performance.

5.4 UGent-T2K
The team presents a cascade pipeline dialogue system for the task. The system consists of three modules: a document retriever, a passage retriever, and a response generator. The system uses DPR for the passage retrieval and FiD (Izacard and Grave, 2021) for the response generation. Then they use LambdaMART (Burges, 2010) for reranking. The experiment results show that document ranking could be helpful for passage retrieval and the multi-passage-fusing generator outperforms the RAG model.

5.5 Docalog
The team presents a three-stage pipeline consisting of (a) Document Retriever with Title Embedding and IDF on Texts (DR.TEIT); (2) a grounding span predictor; (3) an ultimate span picker. Their experiment results indicate that incorporating contextualized embedding information along with semantic similarity on the character level between the answer and question history can further improve the prediction of the ultimate answer.

5.6 JLP
The team explores various strategies for the dialogue task, including multi-task learning, tuning the generator BART (Lewis et al., 2020a) on additional QA datasets, data augmentation via synonym augmenter \(^3\), and contrastive learning based on extra-hard negative examples. The experiment results indicate that all techniques help further improve the performance comparing to the baseline approach.

5.7 LingJing
The team presents a framework that most different than the baseline among the teams. It proposes to enhance downstream evidence retrieval by generating evidence into model parameters through pre-training. More specifically, it uses Pegasus (Zhang et al., 2020) to store document knowledge into a language model and then Child-Tuning (Xu et al., 2021) approach for evidence generation. The results are marginally better the baseline performance.

6 Conclusion
We present the results of DialDoc 2022 Shared Task. World-wide researchers and practitioners brought their individual perspectives on the task through this data competition. We received over 500 submissions during the Dev Phase by over 20 teams for both SEEN and UNSEEN leaderboards. For the final Test Phase, there were officially 8 teams submitted to the SEEN leaderboard and 6 teams submitted to the UNSEEN leaderboard. Most of the submissions during Test Phase beat the baseline performance by large margins.

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank IBM Research AI for sponsoring the Shared Task and competition prizes. We thank eval.ai for their help and support on hosting the leaderboards on their platform.

| Team       | Affiliation                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| CMU_QA     | Carnegie Mellon University                      |
| CPII-NLP   | The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) & Centre for Perceptual and Interactive Intelligence (CPII) Limited |
| Docalog    | Sharif University of Technology & Volkswagen AG |
| JLP        | Seoul National University                        |
| UGent-T2K  | Ghent University                                |
| zsw_dyy_lgz| Tencent Cloud Xiaowei & Beihang University & Tianjin University |

Table 5: Teams and their affiliations.
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