System Demo: Tool and Infrastructure for Offensive Language Error Analysis (OLEA) in English

Marie Grace∗, Xajavion “Jay” Seabrum; Dananjay Srinivas; Alexis Palmer
University of Colorado Boulder
first.last@colorado.edu; olea.ask@gmail.com†

Abstract

The automatic detection of offensive language is a pressing societal need. Many systems perform well on explicit offensive language but struggle to detect more complex, nuanced, or implicit cases of offensive and hateful language. OLEA is an open-source Python library that provides easy-to-use tools for error analysis in the context of detecting offensive language in English. OLEA also provides an infrastructure for re-distribution of new datasets and analysis methods requiring very little coding.

1 Introduction

Offensive language detection models have become integral to online platforms’ moderation systems. Such systems excel at detecting and filtering out messages with explicit keywords and mentions; however, these systems are known (1) to perform poorly on messages that are implicitly offensive and that have negation (Röttger et al., 2020; Palmer et al., 2020); (2) to have annotator biases affecting the detection of offensive language (Sap et al., 2021); (3) not to be robust to diachronic language and its usage (Florio et al., 2020); and (4) to be insensitive to and overdetect AAE as offensive language (Sap et al., 2021; Blodgett et al., 2016). These issues and gaps are important to recognize, as failing to address them can cause marginalized groups to be further dehumanized or attacked (Mathew et al., 2021; Kennedy et al., 2020).

All of these complexities underscore the importance of having a detailed and nuanced understanding of the true capabilities of models for automatic detection of offensive language. We need to move away from viewing the task primarily as a binary classification problem (Kennedy et al., 2020), and we need to consider more than a single F1 score when evaluating our models. We also need a cohesive and common framework for error analysis, a tool to help researchers more easily understand why their systems fail to detect certain types of offensive speech (Poletto et al., 2021). We need a better understanding of model performance on out-of-domain data if we are to achieve robust models that are quickly deployable on new domains. Finally, we need to address some of the practical hurdles that prevent more widespread adoption of some datasets, taking advantage of recent improvements in NLP research infrastructure.

With these issues in mind, we introduce OLEA2,3, an open-source Offensive Language Error Analysis tool and infrastructure, providing:

1. easy-to-use methods for error analysis and evaluation of new models on existing diagnostic datasets, including model comparison;
2. interfaces to two diagnostic datasets focused on nuanced linguistic analysis; and
3. scaffolding to support easy distribution of new datasets and associated analysis methods.

The error analysis and evaluation tools provide insights into where and how models can be improved. The infrastructure provided by OLEA helps researchers distribute datasets to the broader research community, together with dataset-specific analysis methods, all with very low overhead.

2 Background and Related Work

Offensive language is complex, and systems for detecting it automatically need to be able to handle both explicit and implicit cases (Schmidt and Wiegand, 2017; Waseem et al., 2017). Detecting explicit offensive language often relies on keyword

∗ These authors contributed equally.
† Please direct inquiries about the library to this email.
1We use the term “offensive language” to encompass offensive language and hate speech. This paper contains censored offensive language examples.

2https://pypi.org/project/olea/
3https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=730MZktD5q4
detection (Wiegand et al., 2019), but keyword-driven systems can lead to messages being falsely flagged, causing unchecked or unnoticed racial biases to propagate in the system’s decisions (Sap et al., 2021; Blodgett et al., 2016). Implicit offensive language is generally more difficult to detect than its explicit counterpart (ElSherief et al., 2021; Caselli et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is more likely to change over time given real world circumstances and coinages of new phrases and terms to implicitly refer to minority groups (Florio et al., 2020).

Datasets for this task take varied approaches. For example, HateXplain (Mathew et al., 2021) and CAD (Vidgen et al., 2021) both provide rationales indicating where annotators see offensive content.OLID (Zampieri et al., 2019a) identifies offensive text and the specific targeted minority group in a three-tiered labeling structure. HateCheck (Röttger et al., 2020) and COLD (Palmer et al., 2020) are described more in Section 3.1. Because many of these datasets address different (often overlapping) concerns, direct comparison is difficult.

Additionally, linguistic explainability of the prediction failures of NLP models has lagged behind their performance as measured against benchmark datasets (Hovy, 2022). To address part of this concern, McMillan-Major et al. (2022) provide an interactive system mostly for end users of offensive language detection systems. Their system helps users explore datasets and understand how individual text inputs are scored and classified by different models. OLEA has complementary functionality, focusing on fine-grained analysis of model performance (especially misclassifications) across existing evaluation datasets. We focus on model developers rather than end users, providing streamlined error analysis and interpretation of system outputs relative to linguistically-grounded categorizations.

### 3 Library Tour and Design

Figure 1 shows an overview of OLEA’s core functionalities. Users submit their model’s predictions (3.2) on OLEA’s preloaded datasets (3.1) and then call error analysis and evaluation functions (3.3). Users may also extend OLEA with new datasets and may write new analysis functions, adding to the library’s capabilities (3.4).

OLEA can be installed using pip (`pip install olea`). Most of OLEA’s modules expect a Pandas dataframe with the text of the instance to be classified, one or more labels indicating offensiveness, and a predicted label for the instance. Dataframes may include columns with additional information related to the instance and/or its annotation.

#### 3.1 Preloaded diagnostic datasets

The primary function of OLEA is to make it easy for users to evaluate the capabilities of their models in a fine-grained way. We provide interfaces (via HuggingFace’s datasets library and the HuggingFace Hub) to two datasets designed specifically for diagnostic evaluation of offensive language detection systems. Both datasets include fine-grained annotations and binary offensiveness labels and were curated to compare model performance with linguistic phenomena. Appendices C and D list the features available for analysis.

**HateCheck** (Röttger et al., 2020) provides a test suite that includes labels reflecting some of the specific linguistic constructions often seen in online hate speech, such as use of spelling changes to obscure hateful language and presence of threatening language. HateCheck also includes annotations of the specific identities targeted in each instance of hate speech. **COLD** (Palmer et al., 2020) provides fine-grained labels, from multiple annotators, of some linguistic phenomena relevant for implicit hate speech and offensive language. Some examples are presence/absence of slur terms and presence/absence of adjectival nominalizations.

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4https://pandas.pydata.org/docs/
5https://huggingface.co/docs/datasets/index
3.2 Submitting predictions

Before using the analysis functions described below, the user needs to submit their model’s predictions on the selected dataset, as well as a mapping between the model’s predicted labels (e.g., 1, 0) and the labels in the selected dataset (e.g., hateful, non-hateful). The code snippet below illustrates the process and assumes that the user’s data has been stored as a Pandas dataframe named user_data. In this example, the model predictions are found in a column called predictions. The user has selected three features for potential analysis: Text, is_slur and text_length.

```python
from olea.data import Dataset
setup = Dataset(
data = user_data,
features = ['Text', 'is_slur', 'text_length'],
gold_column = 'gold_labels',
text_column = 'Text')
predictions = user_data['predictions']
mapping = {'hateful': 1, 'non-hateful': 0}
data_submit = setup.submit(
batch = user_data,
predictions = predictions,
map = mapping)
```

The submit method passes the relevant parameters to the analysis module.

3.3 Error analysis functions

The heart of our library is a collection of functions for detailed evaluation and error analysis. Throughout, we evaluate the model’s coarse-grained classification performance (e.g., offensive vs. not offensive) for subsets of instances grouped according to a particular feature. The features generally correspond to dataframe columns. For example, we may compare performance for instances containing a slur term to performance for instances with no slur term. Plots are produced using Matplotlib (Hunter, 2007), and we include the option to save plots to files. Section 4 shows concrete examples of the analysis outputs, and code examples appear in Appendix A.

**analyze_on.** In its most general version, this function evaluates model performance for a categorical column specified by the user. OLEA includes versions of analyze_on customized to the two preloaded datasets. The COLD-specific version evaluates performance for features constructed from combinations of four binary features: offensiveness, presence of slur term, presence of adjectival nominalization, and presence of linguistic distancing. The HateCheck-specific version includes linguistic features (e.g., negation, derogation, or profanity) and features related to the identity of the targeted individual or class (e.g., trans people, Muslims, or disabled people).

**check_anno_agreement.** This function is intended for datasets which include labels from multiple annotators, such as COLD. The function compares performance on instances with full annotator agreement for the label of offensiveness to performance on instances with partial agreement. Full annotator agreement is taken as a proxy for instances that are “easy” to classify, and partial agreement indicates more complex cases.

**aave.** This function evaluates performance for instances (likely) written using African American English. The scores are calculated using the TwitterAAE model (Blodgett et al., 2016). These scores represent an inference of the proportion of words in the instance that come from a demographically-associated language/dialect.

**check_substring.** Given a user-specified text string, this function compares performance on instances with the substring to instances without.

**str_len_analysis.** This function outputs a histogram showing model performance on instances of different lengths (character or word count).

3.4 Adding datasets and analyses

Extensibility is a key principle guiding the design of OLEA, with the goal of providing an easy-to-use, uniform platform for error analysis in the context of offensive language detection. In addition to the two preloaded datasets, users can submit their own datasets using the process described in 4.2. Modifying a single Python class enables a built-in suite of analysis functions.

OLEA has a helper function for preprocessing English text to remove user names and URLs and convert emoji to their textual descriptions.

```python
from olea.utils.preprocess_text import PreprocessText as pt
processed_text = pt.execute(user_data['raw_text'])
user_data['preprocessed_text'] = processed_text
```
For example, the text preprocessor will convert "@username_1 Have you seen the video that @another_user made? :eyes: :fire: :hundred-points: https://fakelink.io" to "USER have you seen the video that USER made? eyes fire hundred points HTML".

Finally, users can write and share their own analysis functions, focusing on user-specified dimensions, as in 4.2.2. OLEA’s code is modularized such that adding a new analysis requires enough Python knowledge to write the function, but not a detailed understanding of the entire codebase.

4 Use Case Demonstrations

The three main use cases envisioned are: a) analysis on preloaded datasets (4.1), including model comparison (4.1.4), b) analysis on custom data (4.2), and c) sharing datasets and analysis functions (4.2).

4.1 User model performance evaluation using preloaded datasets

This section demonstrates how to use OLEA for detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing offensive language detection models. For this demo, we use roBERTa-offensive (Barbieri et al., 2020), a pre-trained generic language model, fine-tuned on the SemEval2019 OffensEval dataset (Zampieri et al., 2019b). We use this model to make top-level predictions (offensive or not) for both COLD and HateCheck.

Each individual error analysis function shows the model’s performance with respect to a particular feature (i.e. an existing dataframe column, or a new one added by the function). Each function returns two dataframes. The metrics dataframe contains a classification report for the analysis. This dataframe uses OLEA’s built in Metrics function, which is built upon and uses Scikit-learn’s (Pedregosa et al., 2011) metrics library.

The plot_info dataframe contains details of the analysis for the selected dimension, plus computed accuracy and the option to show textual examples. If show_examples = True, the function returns one randomly-selected incorrectly-classified instance for each value of the dimension being analyzed. If the plot option is selected, the plots are built from the plot_info dataframe.

|                | N   | Y   | macro avg | weighted avg |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----------|--------------|
| precision      | 0.743 | 0.587 | 0.665     | 0.670        |
| recall         | 0.502 | 0.803 | 0.652     | 0.643        |
| f1-score       | 0.599 | 0.678 | 0.639     | 0.636        |
| support        | 1072 | 944  | 2016      | 2016         |

Table 1: Metrics classification report for roBERTa-offensive on COLD, using analyze_on on the dimension of offensiveness. N=not offensive, Y=offensive.

| Annotator Agreement | Full | Partial |
|---------------------|------|---------|
| Total               | 1431 | 385     |
| Total Correct       | 1094 | 292     |
| Accuracy            | 0.702 | 0.499    |

Table 2: plot_info report for roBERTa-offensive on COLD, using check_anno_agreement (full vs. partial), with randomly-selected examples.

4.1.1 Generic analysis functions

Table 1 shows the classification report for roBERTa-offensive on COLD. Here, the classification report provides F1, precision, and recall for the two categories of offensive and non-offensive, as well as the macros and weighted averages. This model performs better overall on offensive instances, with high recall, but shows much better precision for non-offensive instances. These reports can be easily modified to analyze subsets of the data.

The next analysis (Fig. 2) is on the fine-grained COLD categories. roBERTa performs well on offensive tweets containing slurs and poorly on the re-claimed category (non-offensive tweets containing slurs). The model also performs poorly on offen-
Figure 2: Results for roBERTa-offensive on COLD, focusing on fine-grained categories. Percent value above a bar shows percent accuracy for that category.

Figure 3: Results for roBERTa-offensive on HateCheck, focusing on identity of the target.

HateCheck analysis

HateCheck includes a column identifying the targeted group of the offensive language. This analysis can help identify which groups a model is more or less sensitive to. Figure 3 shows that the model does a better job of recognizing hateful speech when an identity is targeted than when one is not.

Figure 4a analyzes the performance of roBERTa-offensive on the fine-grained HateCheck categories; complete table is in Appendix B. Most instances of counter-speech (when hate speech is quoted or is referred to with a non-hateful effect) are incorrectly classified. An example of counter-speech is "I lost all respect for you when you said women are pathetic". Instances belonging to the categories of derogation, identity, threats, pronoun references, and phrasing are mostly correctly classified.

4.1.4 Model comparison

So far we have compared one model’s performance on two different datasets. Next, we compare two different models on the same dataset. The second model is HateXplain (Mathew et al., 2021). Both models of course suffer when classifying data sourced from outside their training domain. But we get a much truer sense of the models’ out-of-domain capabilities when we look at the side-by-side analysis of the two models for the fine-grained HateCheck categories (Figures 4a and 4b). While roBERTa-offensive does not perform well on counter-speech, HateXplain correctly classifies most counter-speech instances. And while HateXplain struggles to recognize hateful expressions with spelling changes, roBERTa does much better.

4.2 OLEA as infrastructure: Extending functionality

OLEA is open-source and has been designed to be extensible with new datasets and new analyses.

4.2.1 Analysis on custom data

The analysis methods described above can be easily applied to new corpora. The code below shows the process of loading the OLID dataset (Zampieri et al., 2019a) as a pandas dataframe. The user only needs to specify a path to the data and the relevant column headings. The Dataset class acts as a wrapper for the data loaded from disk and allows the user to access class utilities such as generator(), which in turn is helpful for accessing data in batches.

```python
olid = pd.read_csv('data/olid/olid_levela.csv')
olid_dataset = Dataset(data=olid, features='Text', gold_column='label', text_column='Text')
data_gen = olid_dataset.generator(batch_size=64)
data = next(data_gen)
```

roBERTa-offensive reports an F1 of 0.78 on OLID but drops to 0.62 on HateCheck. HateXplain reports F1 of 0.69 on the HateXplain dataset, and drops to 0.37 on HateCheck.

We map HateXplain’s “offensive” and “hate speech” labels both to HateCheck’s “hateful”.

https://github.com/alexispalmer/olea, Licensed under MIT License
Figure 4: Comparison of HateXplain and roBERTa models on the fine-grained HateCheck categories. The category labels are followed by either (h) to denote that it is comprised of only hateful instances, (nh) for only non-hateful instances, or nothing to denote a mix of hateful and non-hateful instances.

(a) Results for roBERTa-offensive on HateCheck, focusing on fine-grained categories.

(b) Results for HateXplain on HateCheck, focusing on fine-grained categories.

We can now submit model predictions, returning a DatasetSubmissionObject which can be used to conduct the generic analyses previously described; code in Appendix A.

4.2.2 Sharing datasets and analysis patterns

With just a bit of coding, interfaces new datasets can be added to the OLEA library more permanently, and for the benefit of all users.13 We demonstrate again using OLID,14 establishing the new OLIDDataset class which inherits from Dataset.

```python
class OLIDDataset(Dataset):
    text_column = 'Text'
    gold_column = 'label'
    features = ['Text', 'label_id']

    def __init__(self, olid_csv_path: str):
        self.olid_csv_path = olid_csv_path
        self.data = self._load_data()

    def _load_data(self) -> pd.DataFrame:
        return pd.read_csv(self.olid_csv_path)
```

To accommodate the properties of the new dataset, we need to override some attributes of the Dataset class and to modify the method for loading data.

OLEA’s scaffolding minimizes the amount of new code needed to add a new dataset, as well as automatically handling helper utilities such as mapping model predictions to the custom Dataset object. The library also runs sanity checks on submitted predictions before returning a DatasetSubmissionObject.

The advantage of using a native DatasetSubmissionObject is that users may run Generic analyses on it. However, if authors have a unique analysis that they wish to couple with their dataset, they may specify a special Analysis class that can operate on submissions. The class methods can be modified to accommodate patterns or properties specific to the dataset.

```python
class OLIDAnalysis(object):
    @classmethod
    def analyze_on(cls, submission: DatasetSubmissionObject, on: str):
        Unique OLID analysis goes here!

        return get_metrics(submission, on)
```

5 Conclusion and Future Directions

This paper introduces OLEA, a tool for easy, in-depth error analysis and an infrastructure for sharing new datasets and analysis methods. OLEA helps researchers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their offensive language detection models. In the near term, we will continue to add new analysis methods and datasets, including methods for corpus exploration. Mid term, we plan to extend OLEA to additional languages, and eventually we would like to expand OLEA into a general error analysis library for a range of language clas-
sification tasks. Because OLEA is a convenient way for authors to share datasets and analyses, it is our hope that a community will develop around the library, and that models ultimately will improve as we learn more about what they can and cannot do.

**Limitations**

OLEA is restricted in the languages that it can be used on. Currently, it assumes for some of the analyses on substrings that the language is delimited by spaces. Additionally, the library is primarily focused on providing error analyses for offensive language applications. Its use outside of this domain is not known or well defined. Though we focus on error analysis for offensive language identification, the system makes no binding assumptions as to the proper definitions of offensive language and hate speech, nor does it assert (or assume) any difference between these two categories. This lack of distinction complicates cross-model comparison. Furthermore, this tool is just an analysis tool; it does not address concerns regarding language drift and other sociolinguistic biases that may be present within a user’s dataset, nor does it address any annotator biases present in original datasets. OLEA is not a fully independent package as it relies on the external site HuggingFace for dataset hosting.

**Ethics Statement**

This work provides important insights on hate speech and offensive language models for users, but we acknowledge the ethical implications of releasing a tool that encourages accessing hate speech datasets where tweet author anonymity may not be ensured. We attempt to take steps to minimize user exposure to hateful or offensive language when possible, by defaulting show_examples to False during analysis. This tool is intended to help researchers understand their model performance, and should not be used for any task that promotes or spreads the usage of hate speech or unnecessarily exposes people to hate speech.

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### A Code Examples

In this appendix, we provide code snippets corresponding to Section 4.

#### A.1 Preliminaries

**Import Statements**

```python
import pandas as pd
from olea.data.cold import COLD, COLDSubmissionObject
from olea.data.hatecheck import HateCheck
from olea.analysis.cold import COLDAnalysis
from olea.analysis.generic import Generic
from olea.analysis.hatecheck import HateCheckAnalysis
from olea.utils import preprocess_text
```

#### A.2 Code examples for Section 4.1

**Download and Preprocess COLD text:**

```python
cold = COLD()  
pt = preprocess_text.PreprocessText()  
processed_text = pt.execute(cold.data()['Text'])  
cold.data()['Text'] = processed_text
```

**Create predictions using roBERTa-offensive:**

```python
from transformers import AutoTokenizer, AutoModelForSequenceClassification  
tokenizer = AutoTokenizer.from_pretrained("cardiffnlp/twitter-roberta-base-offensive")  
model = AutoModelForSequenceClassification.from_pretrained(link)  
pipe = TextClassificationPipeline(model=model, tokenizer=tokenizer)  
preds = pd.DataFrame(pipe(list(cold.data()['Text'])))["label"]
```

**Create Submission Objects:**

```python
cold_so = cold.submit(batch=cold.data(), predictions=preds, map={"LABEL_0": 'N', 'LABEL_1': 'Y"})
```
hc_so = hc.submit(
    batch = hc.data(),
    predictions = preds,
    map = {'LABEL_0': 'non-hateful', 'LABEL_1': 'hateful'}
)

Generate Table 1:
plot_info, metrics = Generic.analyze_on(
    cold_so,
    'Cat',
    show_examples = False,
    plot = False)

Generate Table 1 and Save plot to file:
plot_info, metrics = Generic.analyze_on(
    cold_so,
    'Cat',
    show_examples = False,
    plot = False,
    savePlotToFile= "cold_cats.png")

Generate Table 2:
plot_info, metrics = Generic.check_anno_agreement(cold_so, ['Off1', 'Off2', 'Off3'], show_examples = True, plot = False)

Generate Figure 2:
plot_info, metrics = COLDAnalysis.analyze_on(
    cold_so,
    'Cat',
    show_examples = False,
    plot = True)

Generate Figure 3:
plot_info, metrics = Generic.analyze_on(
    hc_so,
    'target_ident')

Generate Figure 4a, Figure 4b, and Table 3:
plot_info, metrics = HateCheckAnalysis.analyze_on(
    hc_so,
    'category')

A.3 Code examples for Section 4.2

Run analysis functions on local custom data:
predictions = model.predict(data)
submission = olid_dataset.submit(
    batch = data,
    predictions = predictions,
    map = {'OFF': 1.0, 'NOT': 0.0})
# performance on AAVE
Generic.aave(submission)
# performance on texts containing substring 'female'
Generic.check_substring(submission, "female")

Submit predictions for newly-established dataset class OLIDDataset:
olid = OLIDDataset('data/olid.csv')
datagen = olid.generator(64)
data = next(datagen)
preds = model.predict(data)
map = {'OFF': 1.0, 'NOT': 0.0}
submission = olid.submit(batch = data,
    predictions = preds,
    map = map)
### B Full Results Table for Figure 4a

| category                | Metrics       | precision | recall  | f1-score | support |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|
| non-hateful             | hateful       | 0.000     | 0.000   | 0.000    | 0       |
|                          | weighted avg  | 0.000     | 0.000   | 0.000    | 0       |
| hateful                 | weighted avg  | 0.000     | 0.000   | 0.000    | 0       |
|                         | macro avg     | 0.000     | 0.000   | 0.000    | 0       |
|                         |               | 0.000     | 0.000   | 0.000    | 0       |

### C COLD: Features available for analysis

| Feature          | Description                                                                 |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ID               | The unique ID for the text case.                                            |
| Text             | The text containing social media messages (some containing offensive language) |
| Cat              | The gold label category of the text (Offensive or not?)                     |
| Off              | Majority Vote                                                               |
| Slur             | Contains a slur? (Y/N)                                                     |
| Nom              | Majority Vote                                                               |
| Dist             | Contains linguistic distancing? (Y/N)                                      |

### D HateCheck: Features available for analysis

| Feature          | Description                                                                 |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| functionality    | The shorthand for the functionality tested by the test case.                |
| case_id          | The unique ID of the test case (assigned to each of the 3,901 cases initially generated) |
| test_case        | The text of the test case.                                                 |
| label_gold       | The gold standard label (hateful/non-hateful) of the test case. All test cases within a given functionality have the same gold standard label. |
| target_ident     | Where applicable, the protected group targeted or referenced by the test case. We cover seven protected groups in the test suite: women, trans people, gay people, black people, disabled people, Muslims and immigrants. |
| direction        | For hateful cases, the binary secondary label indicating whether they are directed at an individual as part of a protected group or aimed at the group in general. |
| focus_words      | Where applicable, the key word or phrase in a given test case (e.g., 'cut their throats'). |
| focus_lemma      | Where applicable, the corresponding lemma (e.g., 'cut sh. throats'). |
| ref_case_id      | For hateful cases, where applicable, the ID of the simpler hateful case which was perturbed to generate them. For non-hateful cases, where applicable, the ID of the hateful case which is contrasted. |
| ref_templ_id     | The equivalent, but for template IDs.                                        |
| templ_id         | The unique ID of the template from which the test case was generated (assigned to each of the 866 cases and templates from which we generated the 3,901 initial cases). |

Table 3: The Metrics classification report for roBERTa-offensive on HateCheck

Table 4: Features available as part of the COLD dataset. The feature names and descriptions come from Palmer et al. (2020).

Table 5: Features available as part of the HateCheck dataset. Feature names and descriptions come from Röttger et al. (2020).