# LLMs with Language Control

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#### Last Lecture



Slide by Chaudhuri, Sun Solar-Lezama

#### Last Lecture: Neural-Symbolic Programing in PP

- Treating neural networks as part of probabilistic programs' inputs
  - DeepProblog [Manhaeve et al., NeurIPS'18]
  - Scallop [Li et al., PLDI'23]

• Key Challenge: End-to-end training

#### This lecture

• Also some kind of neuralsymbolic programming

• Neural part being large language models (LLMs)

# Today's Way to Interact with LLMs

• Prompting with natural languages

- Problems
  - Natural languages are ambiguous
  - LLMs may not follow

#### Qwen 3

Mary didn't marry Bob because he was rich.Did she make the right choice?

Whether Mary made the right choice by not marrying Bob solely based on his wealth depends on many factors that aren't covered in your statement. Important aspects to consider include Mary's values, her feelings towards Bob, and the overall compatibility between them.

#### Deepseek V3 Mary didn't marry Bob because he was rich. Did she make the right choice?

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The sentence "Mary didn't marry Bob because he was rich" is ambiguous and can be interpreted in two different ways, which affects whether Mary's choice was "right" or not. Here's the breakdown:

Interpretation 1: Mary did not marry Bob, and the reason was that he was rich.

- Meaning: Mary chose not to marry Bob *due to* his wealth (perhaps she didn't want to marry someone for money or had other personal reasons).
- Did she make the right choice? This depends on Mary's values. If she prioritized love, compatibility, or independence over financial security, then her choice could be seen as "right" for her. If she later regretted missing out on a loving relationship with Bob, it might be seen as "wrong." Without more context, we can't definitively say.

Interpretation 2: Mary married Bob, but not because he was rich (i.e., his wealth was not the reason).



# LLM with Language Control

- Reduce ambiguity
- Enforce additional constraints
  - Correctness
- Key ideas
  - Use programming languages to interact with LLMs
  - Force LLMs to output structured sentences

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# LMQL

Luca Beurer-Kellner, Marc Fischer, Martin T. Vechev: Prompting Is Programming: A Query Language for Large Language Models. Proc. ACM Program. Lang. 7(PLDI): 1946-1969 (2023)

## Overview of LMQL

- Combining natural language prompts with SQL and python
  - Allows strict controls on LLM outputs
  - Enables building frontends for LLMs easily
- https://lmql.ai

"Say 'this is a test': [RESPONSE]" where len(TOKENS(RESPONSE)) < 10

sample(temperature=1.2)

"Say 'this is a test'[RESPONSE]" where len(TOKENS(RESPONSE)) < 25

"Good job"

```
# instructions + few-shot samples
111111
A list of good dad jokes. A indicates the punchline
Q: How does a penguin build its house?
A: Igloos it together.
Q: Which knight invented King Arthur's Round Table?
A: Sir Cumference.
11 11 11
# generate a joke
"Q:[JOKE]\n" where len(TOKENS(JOKE)) < 120 and STOPS_AT(JOKE, "?")
"A:[PUNCHLINE]" where STOPS_AT(PUNCHLINE, "\n") and len(TOKENS(PUNCHLINE)) > 1
```

# specify a decoding strategy for the query

```
sample(temperature=0.8)
```

"A list of things not to forget when going to the beach: \n"
# use a loop to generate a list

```
for i in range(4):
```

```
"- [THING] \n" where \
```

THING in set(["Volleyball", "Sunscreen", "Bathing Suit"])

```
.....
Write a summary of Bruno Mars, the singer:
{{
   "name": "[STRING_VALUE]",
    "age": [INT_VALUE],
    "top_songs": [[
   "[STRING_VALUE]",
 "[STRING_VALUE]"
]]
}}
    where STOPS_BEFORE(STRING_VALUE, ''') and \
11 11 11
          INT(INT_VALUE) and len(TOKENS(INT_VALUE)) < 2</pre>
```







A **decoding algorithm** chooses the next token from the full vocabulary at each timestep (e.g. sample, argmax).

- How to get the next words
  - Greedy decoding: taking the word with the highest probability
  - Sampling (next token)
  - Full encoding: taking the sentence with the highest probability
  - Beam search

#### Background: Beam Search



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beam\_search

# Background: Masked Decoding

• Rules out certain tokes at certain positions

#### a mask $m \in \{0, 1\}^{|\mathcal{V}|}$ , $m \odot \operatorname{softmax}(z)$

Then normalize

## Challenge 1: Interaction

#### (a) Manual Prompt

What is the circumference of the earth? I believe the best person to answer this question is \_\_\_\_\_\_. Indeed, \_\_\_\_\_\_addressed this question: Prompt 1 LM completion Prompt 2

#### Challenge 2: Constraints & Token Representation

(b) GPT-2 completions after Prompt 1 :

- a physicist
- an astronomer
- a geologist
- Neal deGrasse Tyson
- William O'Malley, who has a PhD in Geodesy and is a professor at Colorado State University.
- the person having the knowledge and answer will probably have to refer to the relevant geophysics book and equations derived from that theory.
- a physicist, like Thomas Kugler at UC Irvine or one of the other physicists working with NASA ...
- a man named David
- actually Mother Earth herself?

### LMQL Solution

#### (a) Manual Prompt What is the circumference of the earth? I believe the best person to answer this question is Indeed, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_addressed this question: Prompt 1 LM completion Prompt 2 (c) LMQL query

What is the circumference of the earth? I believe the best person to answer this question is [EXPERT] Indeed, {EXPERT} addressed this question: [ANSWER]

#### (d) LMQL constraint

len(words(EXPERT)) <= 3 and stop\_at(EXPERT, ".")</pre>

#### (b) GPT-2 completions after **Prompt 1**:

- a physicist
- an astronomer
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- Neal deGrasse Tyson
- William O'Malley, who has a PhD in Geodesy and is a professor at Colorado State University.
- the person having the knowledge and answer will probably have to refer to the relevant geophysics book and equations derived from that theory.
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# LMQL Syntax

LMQL Program (decoder) (query) from (model) [where (cond)] [distribute (dist)]

### The LMQL Runtime

Algorithm 1: Evaluation of a top-level string s

**Input:** string *s*, trace *u*, scope  $\sigma$ , language model *f* 1 **if** *s* contains [ $\langle \text{-varname} \rangle$ ] **then** 

 $s_{\text{pre}}$ , varname,  $s_{\text{post}} \leftarrow \text{unpack}(s)$ 2 // e.g. "a [b] c"  $\rightarrow$  "a ", "b", " c" // append to trace  $u \leftarrow us_{\rm pre}$ 3  $v \leftarrow decode(f, u)$  // use the LM for the hole 4  $\sigma$ [varname]  $\leftarrow v$ // updated scope 5 // append to trace  $u \leftarrow uv$ 6 7 else if s contains { $\langle varname \rangle$ } then varname  $\leftarrow$  unpack(s) // e.g. "{b}"  $\rightarrow$  "b" 8  $v \leftarrow \sigma[\text{varname}]$  // retrieve value from scope 9  $s \leftarrow subs(s, varname, v)$  // replace placeholder 10 with value // append to trace  $u \leftarrow us$ 11 12 **else** // append to trace 13  $u \leftarrow us$ 14 end

Algorithm 2: Decoding				
<b>Input:</b> trace $u$ , scope $\sigma$ , LM $f$				
<b>Output:</b> decoded sequence <i>v</i>				
1 $v \leftarrow \epsilon$				
2 while <i>True</i> do				
$m \leftarrow \text{compute}_{\max}(u, \sigma, v)$	3			
4 <b>if</b> $\bigwedge_i (m_i = 0)$ then break	4			
5 $z \leftarrow 1/z \cdot m \odot \operatorname{softmax}(f(uv))$	5			
$6  t \leftarrow \operatorname{pick}(z)$	6			
7 <b>if</b> $t = EOS$ <b>then break</b>	7			
$v \leftarrow vt$	8			
9 end				

#### The LMQL Runtime

1 argmax

- 2 "A list of things not to forget when "
- 3 "travelling:\n"
- 4 things = []
- 5 **for** i **in** range(2):
- 6 "- [THING]\n"
- 7 things.append(THING)
- 8 "The most important of these is [ITEM]."
- 9 from "EleutherAI/gpt-j-6B"

#### 10 where

- 11 THING in ["passport",
- 12 "phone",
- 13 "keys", ...] // a longer list
- 14 and len(words(THING)) <= 2</pre>

#### The LMQL Runtime

line	update	state after update
1		$u = \epsilon$ $g = \{\}$
2	$s \leftarrow "A\_list\_of\_things\_not\_to\_forget\_when"$ $u \leftarrow us$	$u = A_list_of_things_not_to_forget_when"$ $g = \{ \}$
3	$s \leftarrow "travelling:_\n"$ $u \leftarrow us$	$u = A_list_of_things_not_to_forget_when travelling_\n" g = \{\}$
4, <i>i</i> = 0	$s \leftarrow "-\_[THING] \n"$ $s_{pre}, varname, s_{post} \leftarrow "-\_", THING, \n$ $u \leftarrow us_{pre}$ $v \leftarrow "sun\_screen" = decode(f, u)$ $u \leftarrow uvs_{post}$ $g[varname] \leftarrow v$	<pre>u = "A_list_of_things_not_to_forget_when travelling_\n    sun_screen\n" g = {i = 0, THING = "sun_screen",     things = ["sun_screen"]}</pre>
4, <i>i</i> = 1	$s \leftarrow$ "[THING]\n" $s_{\text{pre}}$ , varname, $s_{\text{post}} \leftarrow$ "", THING, \n $u \leftarrow us_{\text{pre}}$ $v \leftarrow$ "beach_towel" = decode( $f$ , $u$ ) $u \leftarrow uvs_{\text{post}}$ $g[\text{varname}] \leftarrow v$	<pre>u = "A_list_of_things_not_to_forget_when travelling_\n    sun_screen\n    beach_towel\n" g = {i = 1, THING = "beach_towel",     things = ["sun_screen", "beach_towel"]}</pre>

#### Validation and Constraint Decoding

```
Algorithm 3: Naive Decoding with Constraints
   Input: trace u, scope \sigma, language model f
   Output: decoded sequence v
 1 Function decode\_step(f, u, v)
         z \leftarrow \operatorname{softmax}(f(uv))
 2
        m \leftarrow 1^{|\mathcal{V}|}
 3
         do
 4
              t \leftarrow \operatorname{pick}(1/z \cdot \boldsymbol{m} \odot \boldsymbol{z})
 5
              if t \neq EOS then decode_step(u, v, vt)
 6
              else if t = EOS \land check(u, vt) then
 7
               return v
              else m[t] \leftarrow 0
 8
         while \bigvee_i m_i = 1
 9
10 decode_step(f, u, \epsilon)
```

#### Follow Semantics: Look Ahead



Problem: What if a constraint is only momentarily violated? e.g., len(PUNCHLINE) > 10

#### **Follow and Final Semantics**



#### **Evaluation**

- Constraining maintains or improves LLM accuracy on benchmark tasks
- Early termination and logit masking yields a 20-80% cost savings compared to chunk-wise decoding with backtracking.



#### Conclusion

- One of the first works to use programming languages to control the interaction with LLMs
- Key idea is straightforward: Eagerly pruning outputs that do not satisfy the constraints
- More to see: https://lmql.ai/

# Grammar-Constrained Decoding (GCD)

Saibo Geng, Martin Josifoski, Maxime Peyrard, Robert West: Grammar-Constrained Decoding for Structured NLP Tasks without Finetuning. EMNLP 2023: 10932-10952 Kanghee Park, Jiayu Wang, Taylor Berg-Kirkpatrick, Nadia Polikarpova, Loris D'Antoni: Grammar-Aligned Decoding. NeurIPS 2024

#### Motivation

• Previously we saw LMQL can enforce relatively simple constraints on the output

• To describe more structured outputs, we can use grammars!

### **OpenAl Already Supports JSON Outputs**

#### **Structured Outputs**

🗇 Copy page

Ensure responses adhere to a JSON schema.

#### Try it out

Try it out in the Playground or generate a ready-to-use schema definition to experiment with structured outputs.

钵 Generate

#### Introduction

JSON is one of the most widely used formats in the world for applications to exchange data.

Structured Outputs is a feature that ensures the model will always generate responses that adhere to your supplied JSON Schema, so you don't need to worry about the model omitting a required key, or hallucinating an invalid enum value.

Some benefits of Structured Outputs include:

- 1 Reliable type-safety: No need to validate or retry incorrectly formatted responses
- 2 Explicit refusals: Safety-based model refusals are now programmatically detectable
- 3 Simpler prompting: No need for strongly worded prompts to achieve consistent formatting

In addition to supporting JSON Schema in the REST API, the OpenAI SDKs for Python and JavaScript also make it easy to define object schemas using Pydantic and Zod respectively. Below, you can see how to extract information from unstructured text that conforms to a schema defined in code.

### A More Complex Example



#### How to Implement GCD?

#### • Directly prompt LLMs?

code-davinci-002

Exhaustively express the information from the sentence in a form of {subject, relation, object} triplets. Triplets should cover all the information from the text, but no more.

Text:

Folk Songs for Far Out Folk is an album by Fred Katz originally released on Warner Bros.

#### Triplets:

{Fred Katz, album, Folk Songs for Far Out Folk} {Fred Katz, album, Folk Songs for Far Out Folk} {Fred Katz, album, Folk Songs for Far Out Folk} {Fred Katz, album, Folk Songs for Far Out Folk} {Fred Katz, album, Folk Songs for Far Out Folk} {Fred Katz, album, Folk Songs for Far Out Folk} {Fred Katz, album, Folk Songs for Far Out Folk}

#### GPT 3.5

Martin Josifoski, Marija Sakota, Maxime Peyrard, Robert West: Exploiting Asymmetry for Synthetic Training Data Generation: SynthIE and the Case of Information Extraction. EMNLP 2023: 1555-1574

### How to Implement GCD?

#### • Use in-context-learning?

code-davinci-002

Exhaustively express the information from the sentence in a form of {subject, relation, object} triplets. Triplets should cover all the information from the text, but no more.

Text: Aarhus airport serves the city of Aarhus.

Triplets:

{"subject": Aarhus\_Airport, "relation": place served by transport hub, "object": Aarhus}

Text:

Arsène Lupin, Gentleman Burglar is the first collection of stories by Maurice Leblanc recounting the adventures of Arsène Lupin.

Triplets:

{"subject": Arsène\_Lupin,\_Gentleman\_Burglar, "relation": author, "object": Maurice\_Leblanc} {"subject": Arsène\_Lupin, "relation": creator, "object": Maurice\_Leblanc}

Text: Folk Songs for Far Out Folk is an album by Fred Katz originally released on Warner Bros.

Triplets: {"subject": Folk\_Songs\_for\_Far\_Out\_Folk, "relation": artist, "object": Fred\_Katz} {"subject": Folk\_Songs\_for\_Far\_Out\_Folk, "relation": label, "object": Warner\_Bros.}

#### GPT 3.5

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#### How to Implement GCD?

• Training?

- Finetuning is possible (De Cao et al. 2021 and Josifoskiet al. 2022)
  - Training has a cost
  - Needs data

### The GCD Framework in EMNLP 2023

• Using a parser to judge whether the sentence is correct

• Using in-context learning to boost success rate by LLMs

### The GCD Framework in EMNLP 2023

#### Assume parsing works

Parsing let us know if a sentence is valid according to a grammar. It provides a IsSentenceValid function: str -> bool.

#### How GCD works

The high-level algorithm of GCD is:

- **1** Given an existing sentence(not necessarily complete) s
- **2** Get a probability distribution over the next token  $P(w_i|s)$

**\mathbf{8}** For each candidate token  $w_i$  in the distribution:

- 4 Check if the sentence  $s + w_i$  is valid according to the parser
- $\bigcirc$  If valid, add  $w_i$  to the whitelist

**6** sample from the whitelist

**7** Repeat until the sentence is complete

# GCD Supports a lot of NLP Tasks

(1) Closed information extraction: see Fig. 1

(2)\* Entity disambiguation:  $S \rightarrow \ell m [\alpha]r$ , where  $\ell$  is left context of mention m, r is right context, and  $\alpha$  is disjunction of candidate entities for mention m

(3)\* Constituency parsing:  $S \rightarrow B_{0,0}$ ;  $B_{i,j} \rightarrow [\alpha (B_{i,j+1} | C_{i,j})]$ 

);  $C_{i,j} \rightarrow x_i (C_{i+1,j} | E_{i+1,j})$ ;  $C_{n,j} \rightarrow E_{n,j}$ ;  $E_{i,j+1} \rightarrow [(E_{i,j} | B_{i,j}); E_{n,j+1} \rightarrow [E_{n,j}; E_{n,0} \rightarrow \varepsilon, where \alpha = (S|NP|VP|...)$ (4)\* Coreference resolution:  $S_j \rightarrow x_i [(x_1 | ... | x_n | \bot)] S_{i+1}$ ;  $S_n \rightarrow \varepsilon$ , where  $\bot$  means "no referent" (5)\* Part-of-speech tagging:  $S_j \rightarrow x_i [(NOUN | VERB | ADJ | ...)] S_{i+1}$ ;  $S_n \rightarrow \varepsilon$ (6)\* Dependency parsing:  $S_i \rightarrow x_i [(ROOT | NSUBJ | DOBJ | ...)] S_{i+1}; S_n \rightarrow \varepsilon$ , where  $\bot$  means "no head" (7)\* Word sense disambiguation:  $S_j \rightarrow x_i [\alpha_i] S_{i+1}; S_n \rightarrow \varepsilon$ , where  $\alpha_i$  is the disjunction of all WordNet glosses of word  $x_i$ 

(8)\* Phrase chunking:  $S \to B_0$ ;  $B_i \to [C_i; B_n \to \varepsilon; C_i \to x_i]$ ( $C_{i+1} \mid \alpha ] \mid B_{i+1}$ );  $C_n \to \alpha ]$ , where  $\alpha = (NP \mid VP \mid PP \mid ...)$  (9)\* Semantic role labeling: Same as phrase chunking, but with  $\alpha = (TARGET | ARGO | ARG1 | ...)$ 

(10)\* Entity linking: Same as phrase chunking, but with  $\alpha$  the disjunction of all KB entity names (or  $\perp$  for "no entity") (11)\* CCG parsing: Same as constituency parsing, but with syntactic types (e.g., (S\NP)/NP)) instead of constituent labels. Extra constraints ensure that nodes have at most two children and that syntactic types combine correctly. (12)\* Question answering:  $S \rightarrow [q] [A]; A \rightarrow (\varepsilon \mid \alpha A)$ , where q is the question and  $\alpha$  the disjunction of all vocabulary words

(13)\* Extractive summarization:  $S \rightarrow (\varepsilon | [\alpha] S)$ , where  $\alpha$  is the disjunction of all sentences from input *x* (14)\* Semantic parsing with  $\lambda$ -calculus: A logical form is a rooted tree, generated by a context-free grammar

#### **Experiment Results**

Method	Precision	Recall	F1	
Weakly supervised				
GenIE T5-base	$49.6 \pm 0.3$	$26.8 \pm 0.2$	$34.8 \pm 0.2$	
Few-shot unconstrained				
LLaMA-7B	$10.2 \pm 0.5$	$14.3 \pm 0.7$	$11.9 \pm 0.5$	
LLaMA-13B	$10.3 \pm 0.6$	$17.0 \pm 0.9$	$12.9 \pm 0.6$	
LLaMA-33B	$14.1 \pm 1.0$	$23.1 \pm 1.4$	$17.5 \pm 1.0$	
Vicuna-7B	$12.5 \pm 0.2$	$16.7 \pm 0.1$	$14.3 \pm 0.2$	
Vicuna-13B	$13.4 \pm 0.2$	$15.2 \pm 0.2$	$14.4{\scriptstyle\pm0.2}$	
Few-shot constrained				
LLaMA-7B	$27.9 \pm 0.6$	$20.2 \pm 0.5$	$23.5 \pm 0.5$	
LLaMA-13B	$36.2 \pm 0.7$	$26.5 \pm 0.5$	$30.6 \pm 0.5$	
LLaMA-33B	$39.3 \pm 0.9$	$33.2 \pm 0.8$	$36.0 \pm 0.7$	
Vicuna-7B	$25.4 \pm 0.5$	$15.8 \pm 0.3$	$19.5 \pm 0.3$	
Vicuna-13B	$38.7 \pm 1.0$	$19.8 \pm 0.8$	$26.1 \pm 0.8$	

# Compared to LMQL

• Uses grammars rather than SQL constraints to limit the outputs

- Uses an incremental parser
  - Can check partial sentence

### Problem with GCD: Probability Distortion



Assuming the LLM has an equal probability to generate 0 and 1, what is P(11111)?

#### Problem with GCD: Probability Distortion



#### Problem: Grammar-Aligned Decoding

W	P(w)		$P_{GAD}(w)$
AA	0.2 * 10-9		
00000	0.45 <sup>5</sup> * 10 <sup>-8</sup>		2.78 * 10 <sup>-8</sup>
00001	0.456		
***	***		
10000	0.45 <sup>5</sup> * 10 <sup>-8</sup>	$\infty$	2.78 * 10 <sup>-8</sup>
11111	0.456		0.125
***	***		

### Problem: Grammar-Aligned Decoding

Given a model distribution *P* and a context-free grammar  $\mathcal{G}$ , grammar-aligned decoding (GAD) is the task of sampling from the distribution  $P_{GAD}$  that is proportional to *P*, but restricted in a grammar.

$$Q^{P,\mathcal{G}}(w) = \frac{\mathbb{1}[w \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{G})] \cdot P(w)}{\sum_{w'} \mathbb{1}[w' \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{G})] \cdot P(w')}$$

#### Next-token Conditional with Expected Future Grammaticality (EFG)



In GAD, next-token conditionals are adjusted by the total probabilities of all possible continuations, called *expected future grammaticality (EFG)*.

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In GAD, next-token conditionals are adjusted by the total probabilities of all possible continuations, called *expected future grammaticality (EFG)*.

### Algorithm: Adaptive Sampling with Approximate Expected Futures (ASAp)



Learned expected future grammaticality after sampling the sentence 00000

### Algorithm: Adaptive Sampling with Approximate Expected Futures (ASAp)



Learned expected future grammaticality after sampling the sentence 11111

#### **Evaluations**





Synthesize a program in the grammar that satisfies the specification

#### **Evaluations**



#### **Evaluations**



#### **Final Notes**

• LLMs are becoming smarter, but it is unrealistic to trust it to generate fully-structured outputs without mistakes

• LLMs with language control is still an active and relatively undeveloped field.