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Carnegie Mellon University

Training with Synthetic Data

Large Language Models: Methods and Applications

Daphne Ippolito and Chenyan Xiong

Learning Objectives

Learn the basics of training with synthetic data

Learn various ways to curate synthetic data

Learn recent advancements on synthetic data generation

Understand the benefits and limitations of training with synthetic data

Outline

Why Synthetic Data

Synthetizing Labels/Rewards

Synthetizing Training Data

What is Good Synthetic Data?

Recent Methodologies

Limitations



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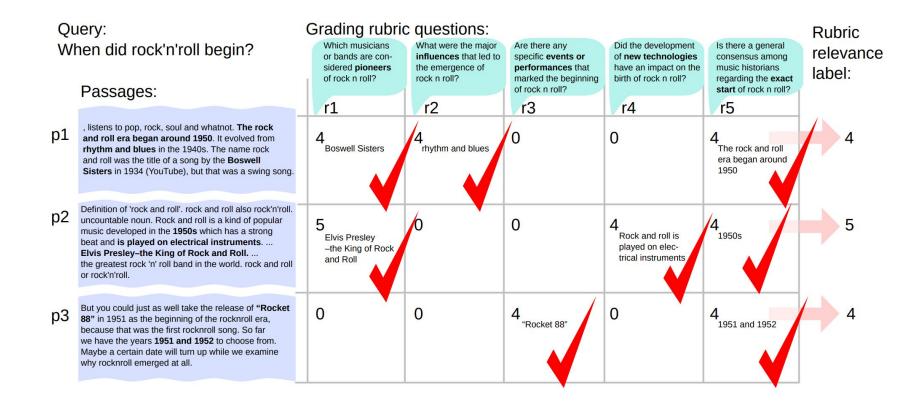


Why people use synthetic training data?

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A cheap and fast way to obtain supervised labels

• A typical manual label, on simple tasks, costs nearly \$1, and lots of time and effort



Ask LLMs to Label Search Relevance [1]

To distill from large language models

• Closed LLMs are trained with lots of extra signals and \$\$\$

Data	Rationale	Label
Premise: A person on a horse jumps over a broken down airplane. Hypothesis: A person is training his horse for a competition.	The person could be training his horse for a competition, but it is not necessarily the case.	neutral
Question: A gentleman is carrying equipment for golf, what is he likely to have? Answers: (a) club (b) assembly hall (c) meditation center (d) meeting, (e) church	LLM The answer must be something that is used for golf. Of the above choices, only clubs are used for golf. So the answer is (a) club	club
Luke scored 84 points after playing 2 rounds of a trivia game. If he gained the same number of points each round. How many points did he score per round?		(84 / 2)

Distillation Step-by-Step [2]

To distill from large language models

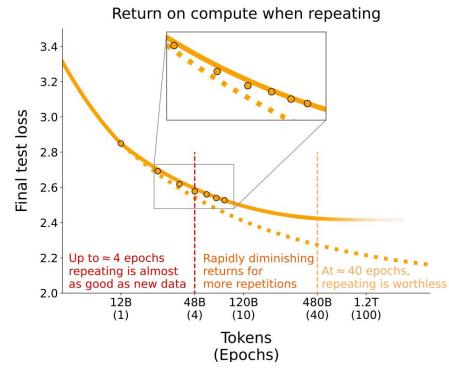
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Luke scored 84 points after playing 2 rounds of a trivia game. If he gained the same number of points each round. How many points did he score per round?	Luke scored 84 points after 2 rounds. So he scored 84 points in 2 rounds. 84 / 2 = 42. The answer is (84 / 2)	(84 / 2)
[label] + Premise: A person on a horse jumps over a broken down ai Hypothesis: A person is training his horse for a competition	n. Smaller Model	
[rationale] + Premise: A person on a horse jumps over a broken down ai Hypothesis: A person is training his horse for a competition	irplane The person could be training his horse for a	

Distillation Step-by-Step [2]

Create extra pretraining data

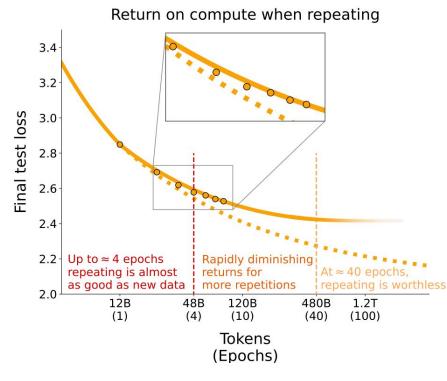
• For data limited scenarios (tail language, special domain, etc.)



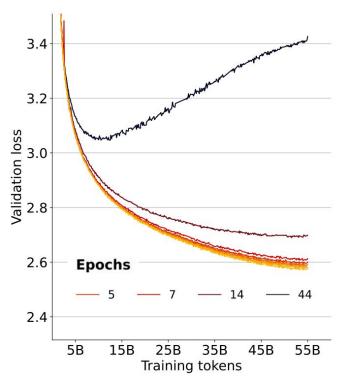
Pretraining Loss with Repeating Data (Epochs) [3]

Create extra pretraining data

• For data limited scenarios (tail language, special domain, etc.)



Pretraining Loss with Repeating Data (Epochs) [3]



Overfitting with Too Many Repetitions [3]

Create extra pretraining data

• To overcome the upper bound of available web data [4]

Hitting a Data Wall

One reason for the GPT slowdown is a dwindling supply of high-quality text and other data that LLMs can process during pretraining to make sense of the world and the relationships between different concepts so they can solve problems such as drafting blog posts or solving coding bugs, OpenAI employees and researchers said.

In the past few years, LLMs used publicly available text and other data from websites, books and other sources for the pretraining process, but developers of the models have largely squeezed as much out of that type of data as they can, these people said.

Create extra pretraining data

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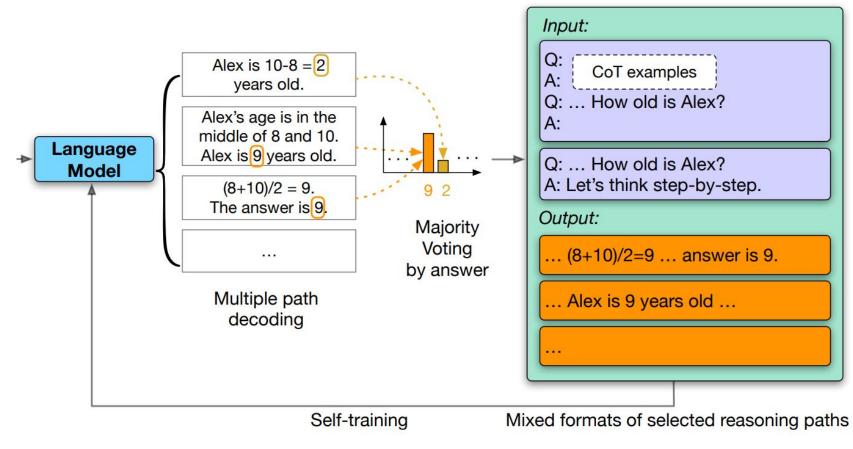
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• To overcome the upper bound of available web data [4]

In response, OpenAI has created a foundations team, led by Nick Ryder, who previously ran pretraining, to figure out how to deal with the dearth of training data and how long the scaling law will continue to apply, they said.

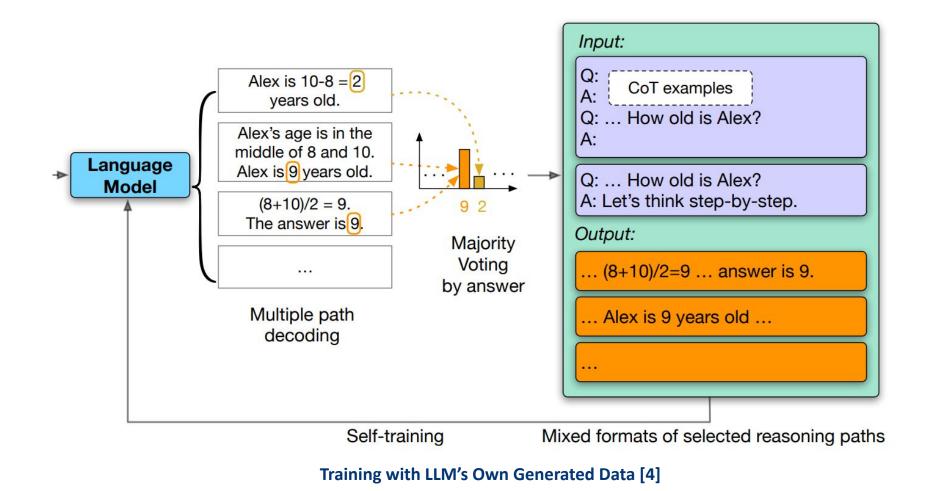
Orion was trained in part on AI-generated data, produced by other OpenAI models, including GPT-4 and recently released reasoning models, according to an OpenAI employee. However, such synthetic data, as it is known, is leading to a new problem in which Orion may end up resembling those older models in certain aspects, the employee said.

Self-Play Towards AGI



Training with LLM's Own Generated Data [4]

Self-Play Towards AGI





Self-Play Towards AGI

• Alpha-Go is trained heavily by self-play



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Synthetizing Labels/Rewards

LLM-as-a-Judge:

- Prompt LLMs to label data
- Often pairwise labeling

Question: If the FED buys bonds in the secondary market

(A) the money supply will increase. (B) the money supply will decrease. (C) the money supply will not be affected. (D) the discount rate would be affected. Output the answer only.

(A) the money supply will increase.

Assistant A:

Assistant B:

The Federal Reserve buys bonds in the secondary market to increase the money supply.

Follow-up Question: How does it affect my daily life? Give 3 examples.

Assistant A:

The Federal Reserve buys bonds in the secondary market to increase the money supply. This affects your daily life by: 1. Increasing the money supply. 2. Increasing the money supply and lowering the discount rate. 3. Increasing the money supply and lowering the discount rate and increasing the money

Assistant B:

When the Federal Reserve buys bonds in the secondary market, it can have several effects on the economy that can impact your daily life. Here are three examples:

1. Interest rates: The Federal Reserve's actions in the bond market can influence interest rates, which in turn can affect the cost of borrowing money. For example, if the Federal Reserve buys bonds and drives up demand for them, interest rates on things like mortgages, car loans, and credit cards may go up, making it more expensive to borrow money.

2. Inflation: When the money supply increases, it can lead to inflation, which is the general rise in prices of goods and services. This can impact your daily life by making it more expensive to buy things like groceries, gas, and other necessities.

3. Employment: The Federal Reserve's actions in the bond market can also have an impact on employment. For example, if the Federal Reserve's actions lead to economic growth and increased demand for goods and services, it can create more job opportunities and boost employment.

GPT-4 Judgment:

supply.

Assistant A provided an incorrect response to the user's question about how the Federal Reserve buying bonds in the secondary market affects daily life. The answer given is repetitive and lacks clear examples of how the action impacts daily life.

On the other hand, **Assistant B** provided a relevant and accurate response to the user's question about the Federal Reserve buying bonds. The answer includes three clear examples of how the action impacts daily life, such as interest rates, inflation, and employment.

Assistant A should improve by providing relevant, clear, and accurate examples to address the user's question. Assistant B's response is more helpful, relevant, and detailed.

Synthetizing Labels/Rewards

LLM-as-a-Judge:

- Prompt LLMs to label data
- Often pairwise labeling

Data to Label: Compare two data points, easier to label

Prompt GPT-4 to judge which one is better, with rationales for consistency

	(A) the money supply will in	bonds in the secondary market crease. (B) the money supply will decrease. (C) the money supply will not be te would be affected. Output the answer only.			
	Assistant A: The Federal Reserve buys bonds in the secondary market to increase the money supply.	Assistant B: (A) the money supply will increase.			
	Follow-up Question: How does it affect my daily life? Give 3 examples.				
	Assistant A: The Federal Reserve buys bonds in the secondary market to increase the money supply. This affects your daily life by: 1. Increasing the money supply. 2. Increasing the money supply and lowering the discount rate. 3. Increasing the money supply and lowering the discount rate and increasing the money supply.	<pre>Assistant B: When the Federal Reserve buys bonds in the secondary market, it can have several effects on the economy that can impact your daily life. Here are three examples: 1. Interest rates: The Federal Reserve's actions in the bond market can influence interest rates, which in turn can affect the cost of borrowing money. For example, if the Federal Reserve buys bonds and drives up deman for them, interest rates on things like mortgages, car loans, and credit cards may go up, making it more expensive to borrow money. 2. Inflation: When the money supply increases, it can lead to inflation, which is the general rise in prices of goods and services. This can impac your daily life by making it more expensive to buy things like groceries, gas, and other necessities. 3. Employment: The Federal Reserve's actions in the bond market can also have an impact on employment. For example, if the Federal Reserve's actions lead to economic growth and increased demand for goods and services, it can create more job opportunities and boost employment.</pre>			
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		. he was didne welcome slow and seconds successive to address the usual			

Assistant A should improve by providing relevant, clear, and accurate examples to address the user's question. Assistant B's response is more helpful, relevant, and detailed.

Synthetizing Labels/Rewards: How does it work?

Human preferences collected from Chatbot Arena

Chatbot Arena

An Open Platform for Human Preference Evals

Copilot Arena Ŧ. Chatbot Arena Categories Ŧ Copilot Arena's Initial Leaderboard, Insights, a ... Definitions, Methods, and Insights 11 min read · 🛱 2024 24 min read · 🛱 2024 Preference Proxy Evaluations Chatbot Arena ¥ I A New Benchmark for Evaluating Reward Models and ... Benchmarking LLMs in the Wild with Elo Ratings 17 min read · 📋 2024 11 min read · 📋 2023

Synthetizing Labels/Rewards: How does it work?

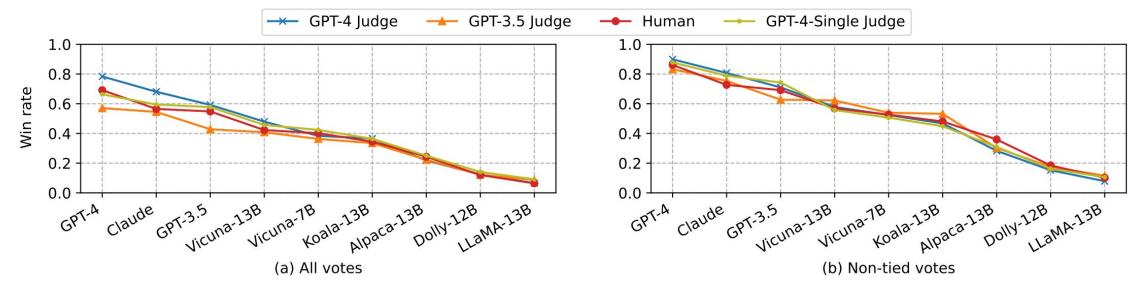
Human preferences collected from Chatbot Arena

For research purposes, we log user prompts and images, and may release this data to the public in the future. Please do not upload any confidential or personal information.

🗑 Choose two models to compare Section 2 Content of the section of chatgpt-4o-latest-20241120 ministral-8b-2410 🗊 Model A 🗊 Model B can you write this homework for me can you write this homework for me 6 Of course, I'd be happy to help! Could you provide more details Of course, I'd be happy to help you with your homework! about the homework assignment? Let me know the topic, Please provide the details of the task, and I'll assist you as subject, or any specific instructions you have, and I'll help you much as possible. craft a well-written response. A is better → B is better 💛 Tie P Both are bad Enter your prompt and press ENTER Send

Synthetizing Labels/Rewards: How does it work?

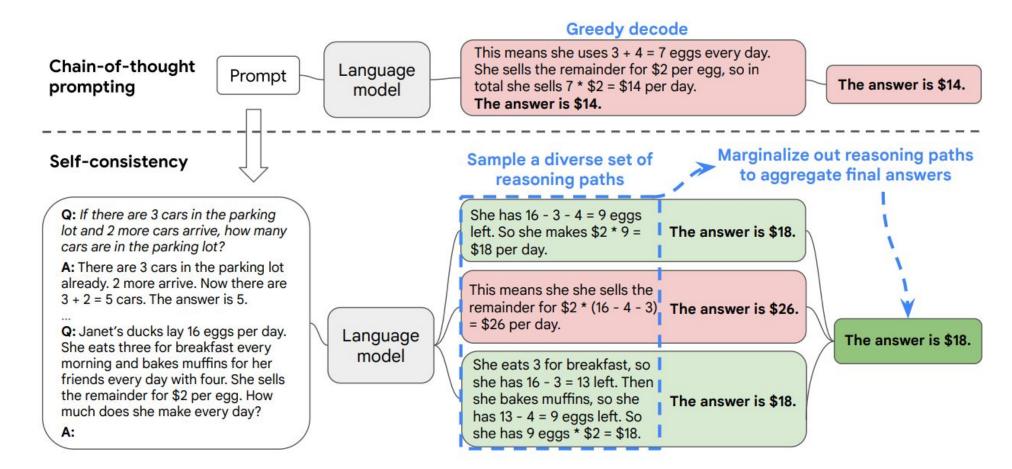
Correlation of LLM labels and human labels



Average Win Rates of Models from Different Judges [6]

[6] Zheng et al. 2023. Judging LLM-as-a-Judge with MT-Bench and Chatbot Arena

Self-Consistency: Sampling multiple answers and aggregating to the top one



Self-Consistency: Sampling multiple answers and aggregating to the top one

	GSM8K	MultiArith	AQuA	SVAMP	CSQA	ARC-c
Greedy decode	56.5	94.7	35.8	79.0	79.0	85.2
Weighted avg (unnormalized) Weighted avg (normalized)	$\begin{array}{c} 56.3\pm0.0\\22.1\pm0.0\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 90.5 \pm 0.0 \\ 59.7 \pm 0.0 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 35.8\pm0.0\\ 15.7\pm0.0\end{array}$		$\begin{array}{c} 74.8 \pm 0.0 \\ 52.1 \pm 0.0 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 82.3 \pm 0.0 \\ 51.7 \pm 0.0 \end{array}$
Weighted sum (unnormalized) Weighted sum (normalized)	$\begin{array}{c} 59.9\pm0.0\\74.1\pm0.0\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c}92.2\pm0.0\\99.3\pm0.0\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 38.2\pm0.0\\ 48.0\pm0.0\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 76.2\pm0.0\\ 86.8\pm0.0\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 76.2\pm0.0\\ 80.7\pm0.0\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 83.5 \pm 0.0 \\ 88.7 \pm 0.0 \end{array}$
Unweighted sum (majority vote)	74.4 ± 0.1	99.3 ± 0.0	48.3 ± 0.5	86.6 ± 0.1	80.7 ± 0.1	88.7 ± 0.1

Performance of PaLM-540B with Different Aggregation [8]

Generative Verifiers: Verify/label step-by-step [9]

Problem: Tim decides to cancel his cable subscription and get streaming services. He gets Netflix for \$10 a month. Hulu and Disney Plus normally cost \$10 a month <u>each</u> but he saves 20% for bundling. How much money does he save by cancelling his \$60 cable package?

Solution: Tim pays \$60 for cable. He gets Netflix for 10 and the bundle of Hulu and Disney Plus costs $10 \times 80\% = 8$. So he pays 10 + 8 = 18 for the bundle. Now he saves 60 - 18 = 42. The answer is 42.

Discriminative RM correctness score: 0.999

GenRM-CoT: Let's verify step by step. ···

Step 3. **The bundle of Hulu and Disney Plus costs \$10 * 80% = \$8.** (Incorrect)

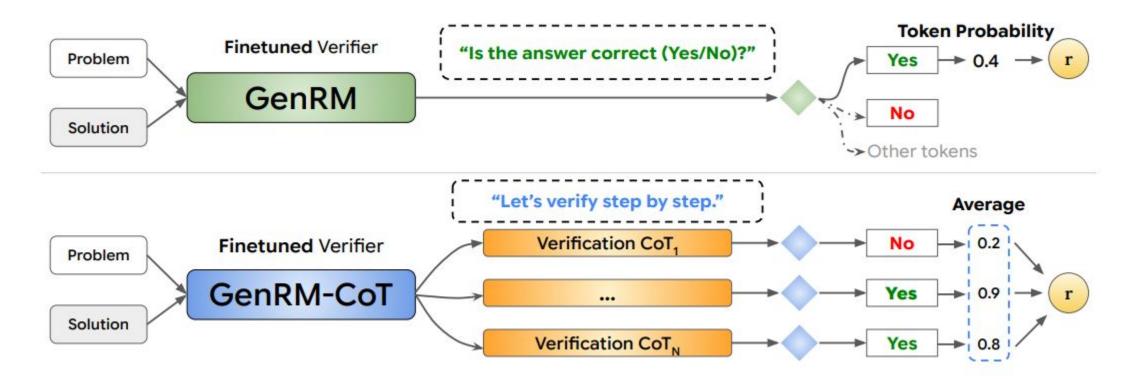
- Expected Answer: The bundle of Hulu and Disney Plus costs 10 + 10 = 20. With the 20% discount, the total cost is 20 * 0.8 = 16. ...

Verification: Is the answer correct (Yes/No)? No

GenRM-CoT (Majority Voting) score: 0.0015

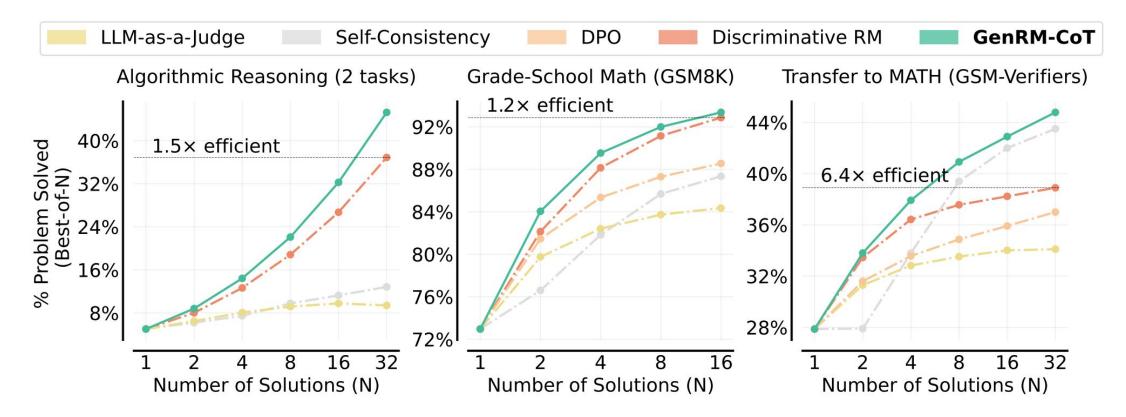
Bring in CoT into LLM reward models

Generative Verifiers: Verify/label step-by-step [9]



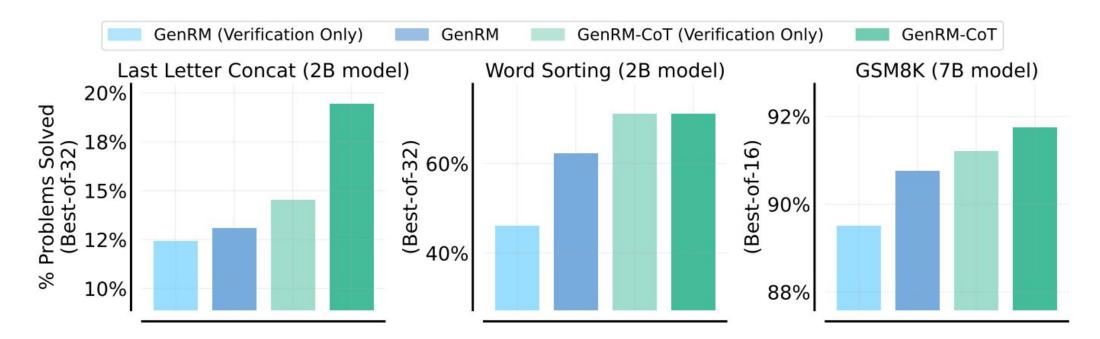
Bring in CoT into LLM reward models

Generative Verifiers: Verify/label step-by-step [9]



Significantly Improved Data Efficiency on Reasoning Tasks

Generative Verifiers: Unifying Reward/Verification and Generation [9]



Potential to Unite Reward Model and Generation Model

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Synthesizing Training Data

Many scenarios not only limited in labels, but also data.

• E.g., instructions: there was no publicly available instructions from real LLM production

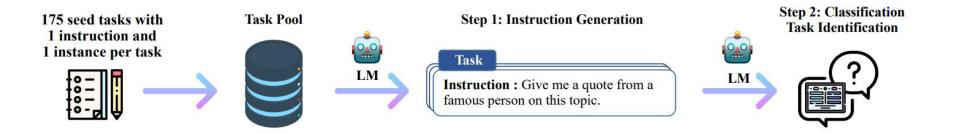
Generating data for certain part of the task maybe easier than learning the task

- Generating a question for a given answer versus answering it
- Generating a caption for a video versus generation a video

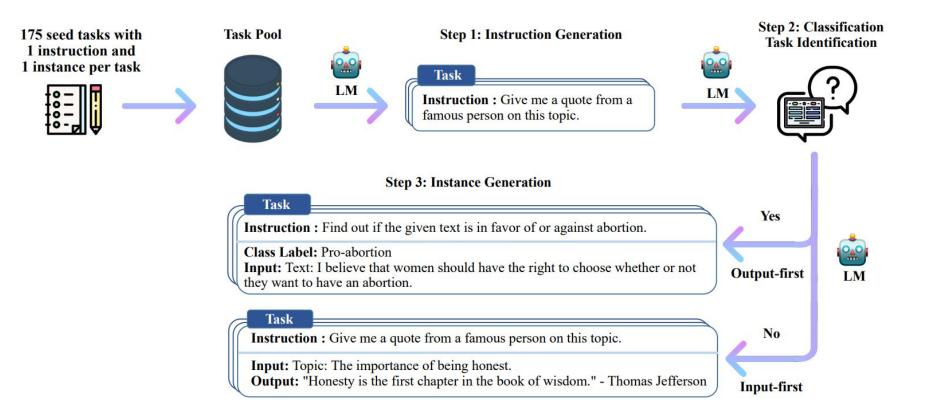
Generating Instruction Tuning Data using LLMs



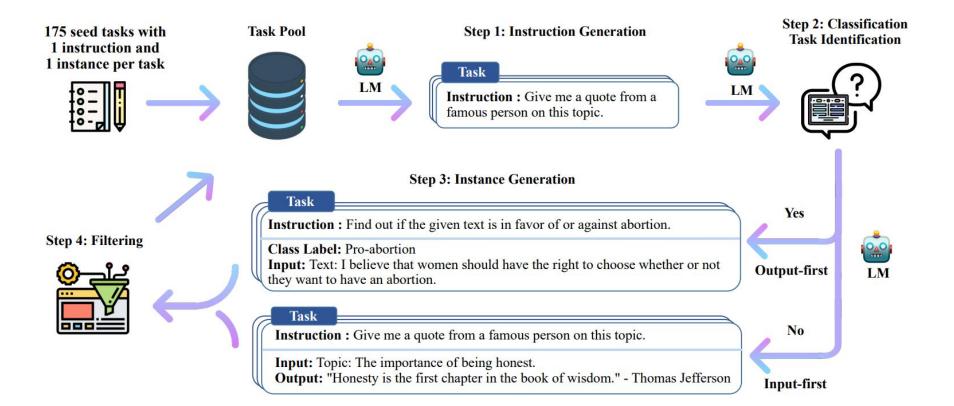
Generating Instruction Tuning Data using LLMs



Generating Instruction Tuning Data using LLMs



Generating Instruction Tuning Data using LLMs



Improved performance when fine-tuned upon

		Model	# Params	ROUGE-L	
		Vanilla LMs			
		T5-LM	11 B	25.7	
		7 GPT3	175B	6.8	
Significantly Improved Instruction Following of		Instruction-tuned w/o SUPERNI			
Vanilla GPT3		TO	11B	33.1	
		GPT3 + T0 Training	175B	37.9	
Distilled Most of	2	GPT3 _{SELF-INST} (Ours)	175B	39.9	
InstructGPT out		InstructGPT ₀₀₁	175B	40.8	
		Instruction-tuned w/ SUPERNI			
		Tk-Instruct	11 B	46.0	
	3		175B	49.5	
	(3)	GPT3 _{SELF-INST} + SUPERNI Training (Ours)	175B	51.6	

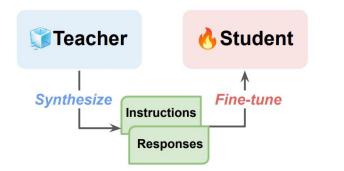
[10] Wang et al. 2023. SELF-INSTRUCT: Aligning Language Models with Self-Generated Instructions

Improved performance when fine-tuned upon

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		Vanilla LMs		
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Distilled Most of	0	GPT3 _{SELF-INST} (Ours)	175B	39.9
InstructGPT out	(2)	InstructGPT ₀₀₁	175B	40.8
		Instruction-tuned w/ SUPERNI		
		Tk-Instruct	11 B	46.0
Still Useful with	(3)		175B	49.5
Supervised Labels	9	GPT3 _{SELF-INST} + SUPERNI Training (Ours)	175B	51.6

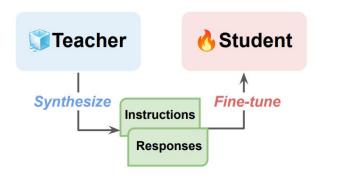
Combine self-instruct and LLM-as-a-Judge [11]

From Self-Instruct

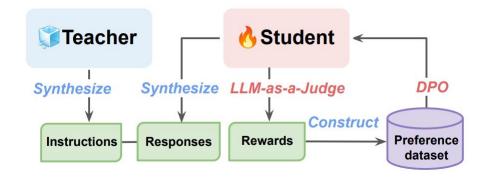


Combine self-instruct and LLM-as-a-Judge [11]

From Self-Instruct



To Self-Reward

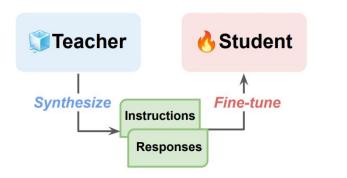


11] Yuan et al. 2024. Self-Rewarding Language Models.

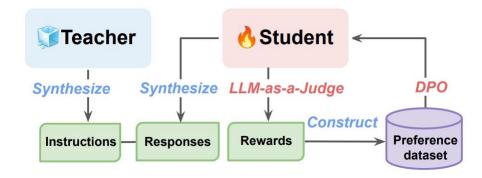
CMU 11-667 Fall 2024

Combine self-instruct and LLM-as-a-Judge [11]

From Self-Instruct



To Self-Reward



Use the student itself as a reward model

CMU 11-667 Fall 2024

Combine self-instruct and LLM-as-a-Judge [11]

	Overall Score	Math, Code & Reasoning	Humanities, Extraction, STEM, Roleplay & Writing
SFT Baseline	6.85	3.93	8.60
M_1	6.78	3.83	8.55
M_2	7.01	4.05	8.79
M_3	7.25	4.17	9.10

Improvement Through Iterations 1-3



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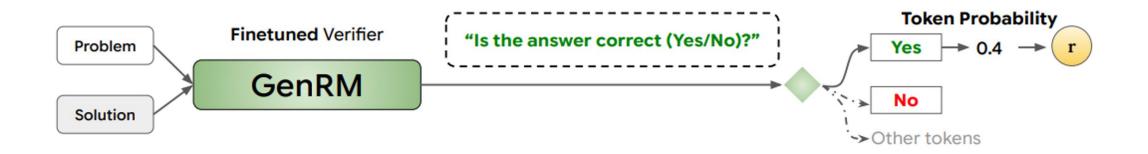


What the reward signal from the model itself can improve its training?

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Task difference: evaluating a generation is easier than generating it

• Instruction are still from the teacher



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High-Quality: Correctness

• Various filters and checkers

Diverse: not duplicate with each other

• Similarity based filters

High-Quality: Correctness

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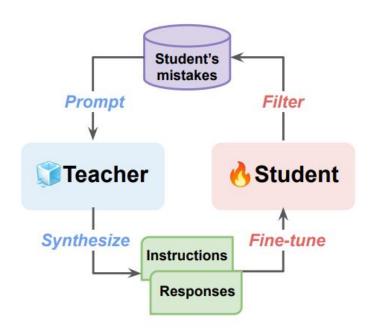
• Similarity based filters

Effective for training?

Synthetic Training Data Curation: Active Learning

Active Learning Assumption: training data that the model performs worse on are more valuable

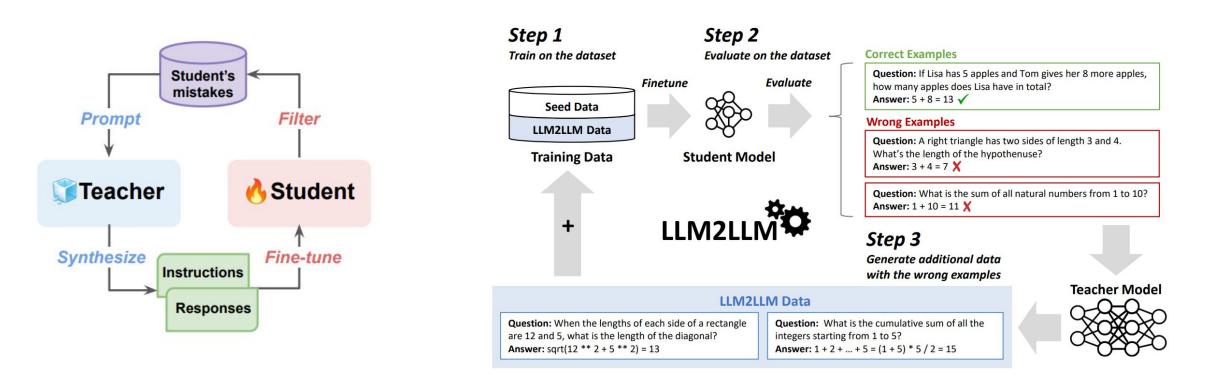
- Learn from mistakes
- Emphasize on data points hard for the model



Synthetic Training Data Curation: Active Learning

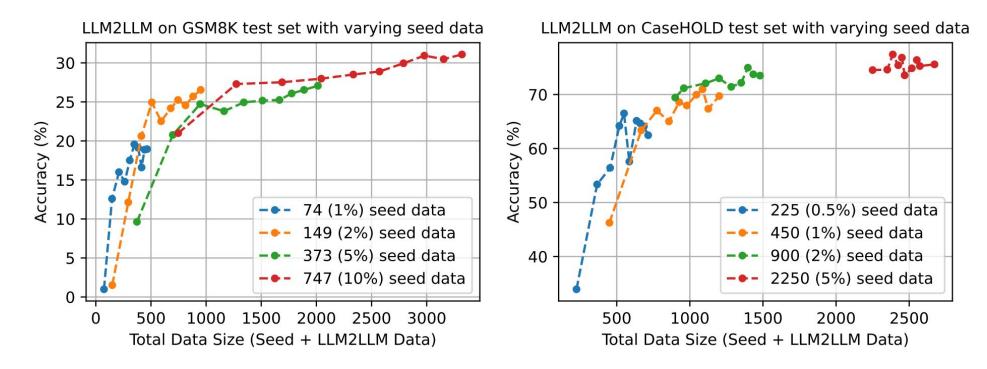
Active Learning Assumption: training data that the model performs worse on are more valuable

- Learn from mistakes
- Emphasize on data points hard for the model



LLM2LLM [12]

Synthetic Training Data Curation: Active Learning



Performance Starting from Different Number of Seed Data [12]

Data Influence: The improvement of the model when trained on this data point z_m [13]

 $\theta^* = \operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_i L(D, \theta)$

Model with Training data D

 $\theta^*(\epsilon) = \operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_i L(D, \theta) + \epsilon L(z_m, \theta)$

Model with Training data $D \cup z_m$

Data Influence: The improvement of the model when trained on this data point z_m [13]

 $\theta^* = \operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_i L(D, \theta)$ $\theta^*(\epsilon) = \operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_i L(D, \theta) + \epsilon L(z_m, \theta)$ $v(z_m) = L_{\operatorname{ref}}(D_{\operatorname{ref}}, \theta^*) - L_{\operatorname{ref}}(D_{\operatorname{ref}}, \theta^*(\epsilon))$

Model with Training data D

Model with Training data $D \cup z_m$

Improvement on target reference metric

Data Influence: The improvement of the model when trained on this data point z_m [13]

 $\theta^* = \operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_i L(D, \theta)$

Model with Training data D

 $\theta^*(\epsilon) = \operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_i L(D, \theta) + \epsilon L(z_m, \theta)$

 $v(z_m) = L_{\text{ref}}(D_{\text{ref}}, \theta^*) - L_{\text{ref}}(D_{\text{ref}}, \theta^*(\epsilon))$

Model with Training data $D \cup z_m$

Improvement on target reference metric

Two challenges:

- 1. Very expensive to calculate. Require actual training of the model
- 2. Pointwise data valuation while training is set level

Local approximation of data Influence oracle

 $v(z_m) \approx -\nabla_{\theta} L_{\text{ref}}(D_{\text{ref}}, \theta^*) \mathbf{H}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} L(z_m, \theta^*) \epsilon$

 $\approx -\nabla_{\theta} L_{\text{ref}}(D_{\text{ref}}, \theta^*) \nabla_{\theta} L(z_m, \theta^*)$

Approximated using local Taylor Expansion

Ignore the Hessian for Efficiency

Local approximation of data Influence oracle

 $v(z_m) \approx -\nabla_{\theta} L_{\text{ref}}(D_{\text{ref}}, \theta^*) \mathbf{H}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} L(z_m, \theta^*) \epsilon$

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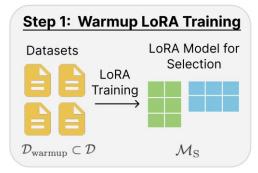
Approximated using local Taylor Expansion

Ignore the Hessian for Efficiency

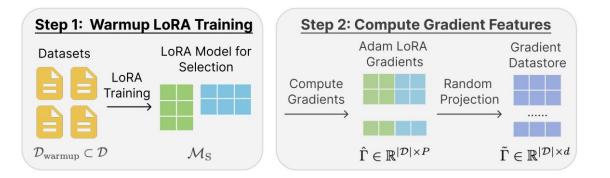
Measure data influences by its similarity of gradients with validation data A common approach derived from many starting points

- Data influence
- Meta Learning

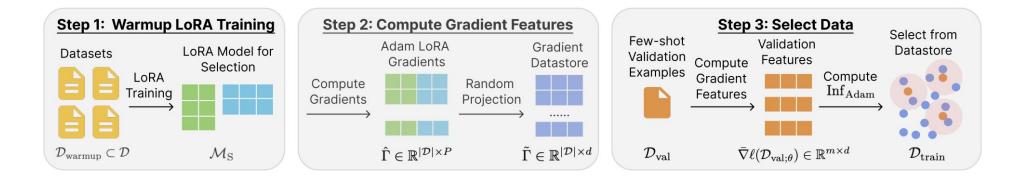
LESS: selecting synthetic instruction tuning data by gradient similarities [14]



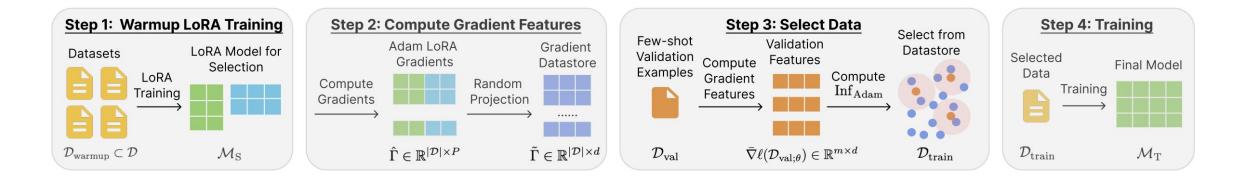
LESS: selecting synthetic instruction tuning data by gradient similarities [14]



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LESS: selecting instruction tuning data by gradient similarities [14]



LESS: selecting instruction tuning data by gradient similarities [14]

55	MMLU				ΤΥΔΙQΑ				BBH			
	Full	Rand.	LESS-T	LESS	Full	Rand.	LESS-T	LESS	Full	Rand.	LESS-T	LESS
Data percentage	(100%)	(5%)	(5%)	(5%)	(100%)	(5%)	(5%)	(5%)	(100%)	(5%)	(5%)	(5%)
LLAMA-2-7B	51.6	46.5 (0.5)	-	50.2 (0.5)	54.0	52.7 (0.4)	-	56.2 (0.7)	43.2	38.9 (0.5)	-	41.5 (0.6)
LLAMA-2-13B	54.5	53.4 (0.1)	54.6 (0.3)	54.0 (0.7)	54.3	53.0 (1.3)	57.5 (0.8)	54.6 (0.3)	50.8	47.0 (1.6)	49.9 (0.5)	50.6 (0.6)
MISTRAL-7B	60.4	60.0 (0.1)	<u>60.6</u> (0.3)	<u>61.8</u> (0.4)	57.7	56.9 (0.2)	<u>61.7</u> (1.7)	<u>60.3</u> (2.4)	53.0	54.5 (0.1)	<u>56.0</u> (0.8)	<u>56.0</u> (1.0)

Performance with Gradient Based Instruction Data Selection [14]

Learn the oracle data influence using a parameterized model

• Sample a bunch of z, train and evaluate the target model to obtain their oracle influence

$$v(z_1) = L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*) - L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*(z_1, \epsilon))$$

$$v(z_2) = L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*) - L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*(z_2, \epsilon))$$

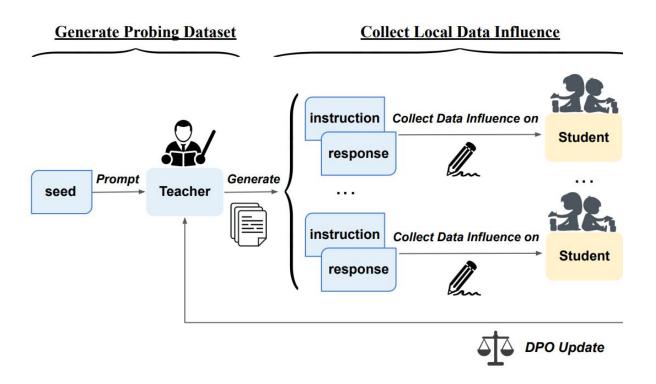
$$v(z_3) = L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*) - L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*(z_3, \epsilon))$$

...

$$v(z_n) = L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*) - L_{ref}(D_{ref}, \theta^*(z_n, \epsilon))$$

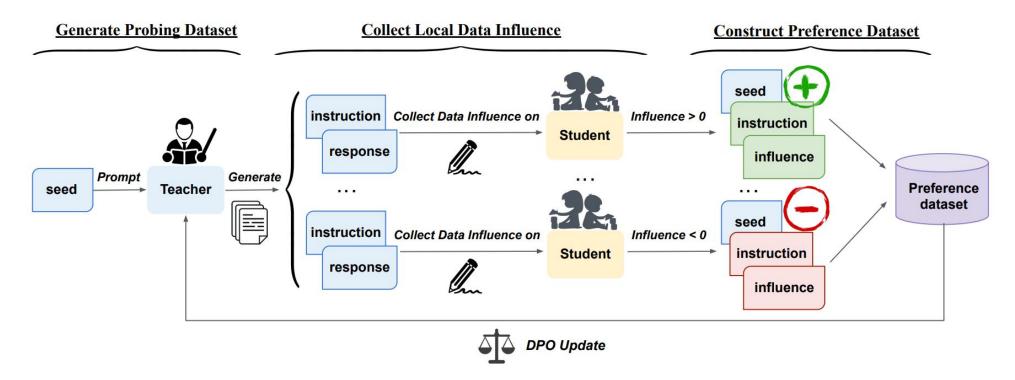
• Use a model to learn the function v() using training data (z, v(z))

Learn the oracle data influence in the teacher model



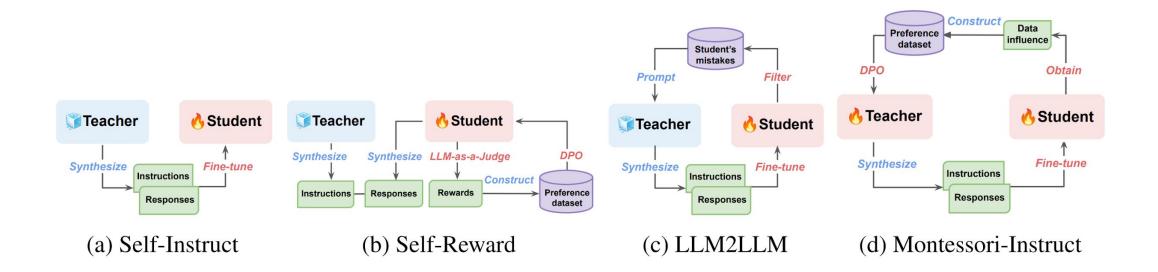
Building a Feedback Loop from Data Influence to Data Synthesizer [15]

Learn the oracle data influence in the teacher model



Building a Feedback Loop from Data Influence to Data Synthesizer [15]

Various controls on synthetic training data curation

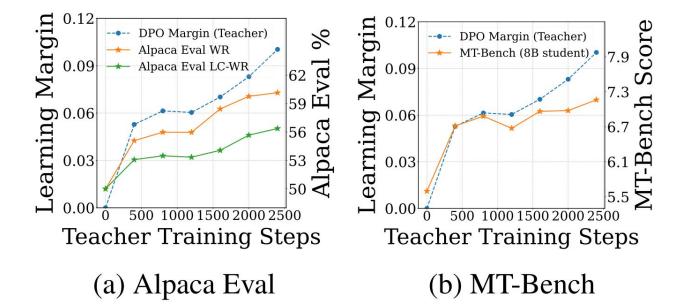


Learn to generate more influential synthetic data

	In-Do	omain	Out-Of-Domain							
Methods	Alpaca Eval 2.0		MT-Bench	MMLU	GPQA	ARC-C	GSM8K	HellaSwag		
	LC-WR WR		Score	Accuracy						
8B Setting: Student=Llama3-8B										
No fine-tuning	2.09%	3.39%	5.597	62.15	24.33	57.85	51.25	81.96		
Self-Instruct Self-Instruct*	50% 54.95%	50% 56.39%	6.490 5.918	62.42 <u>63.41</u>	31.92 30.13	59.98 60.58	$\frac{58.76}{50.42}$	80.93 81.42		
Self-Reward* Iteration 1 Iteration 2	51.87% 53.49%	55.38% 57.32%	6.713 6.798	62.46 62.02	28.19 29.08	59.84 <u>60.64</u>	53.60 56.37	81 .04 81.13		
<i>LLM2LLM</i> Iteration 1 Iteration 2	51.49% 52.63%	53.12% 55.02%	6.531 6.519	62.18 62.46	29.12 30.04	57.49 59.65	55.28 57.75	80.49 80.57		
<i>Montessori-Instruct</i> Iteration 1 Iteration 2	54.92% 56.82%	<u>58.59%</u> 60.23%	<u>6.903</u> 7.092	62.93 63.44	29.91 <u>31.19</u>	62.97 59.98	<u>58.76</u> 60.05	81.22 81.98		

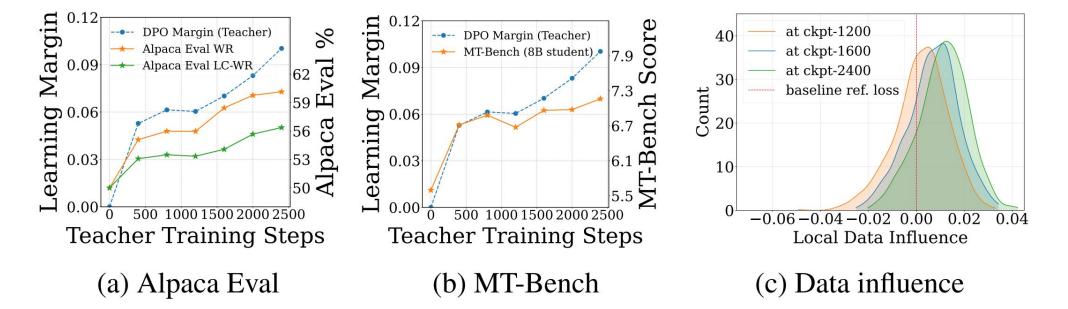
Performance of Different Synthetic Data Curation Methods [15]

Learn to generate more influential synthetic data



Generating More Influential Data Through Iterations [15]

Learn to generate more influential synthetic data



Generating More Influential Data Through Iterations [15]

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Recap

Prompt LLMs to generate synthetic training data

- Labels
- Generative Rewards
- Entire Training Data

Various recent progresses in identifying good synthetic training data

- Quality
- Self-consistency
- Informativeness
- Data influence and its approximations

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Recap

Prompt LLMs to generate synthetic training data

- Labels
- Generative Rewards
- Entire Training Data

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- Self-consistency
- Informativeness
- Data influence and its approximations

All the above work on individual data points, but training is done on the set

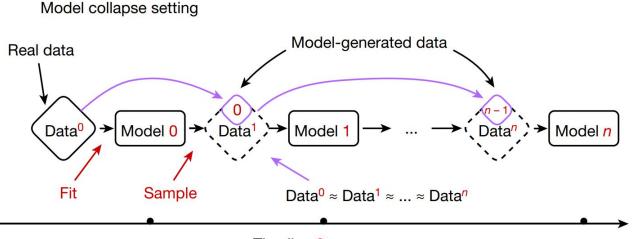
Lost of data variety in data synthetize

- Synthetic dataset lacks long tail variety
- Though may maintain average quality



Lost of data variety in data synthetize

- Synthetic dataset lacks long tail variety
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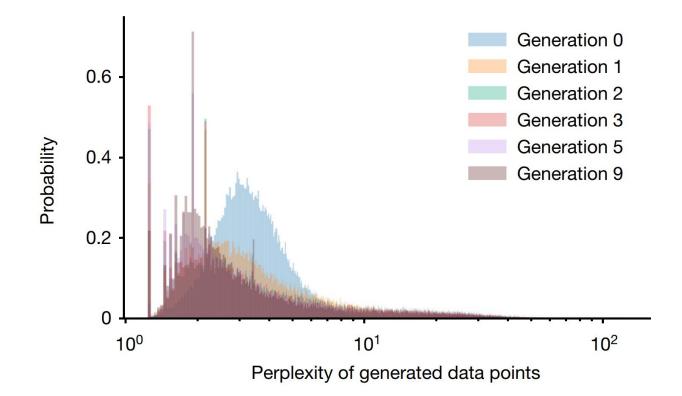


Timeline 0 ... *n*



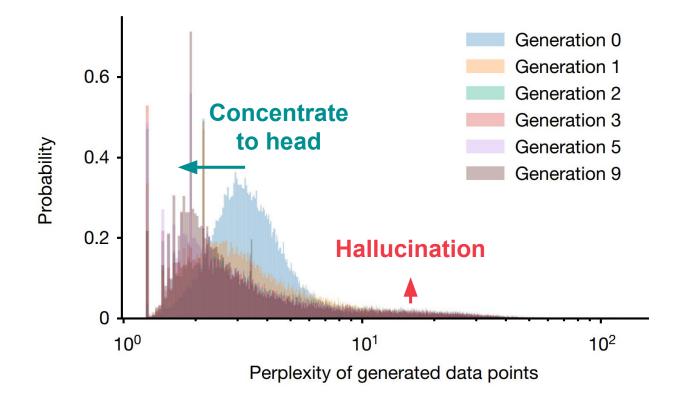
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Generated data distribution loses the high perplexity part



Perplexity of Synthetic Data Evaluated by Wikitext LM [16]

Generated data distribution loses the high perplexity part



Perplexity of Synthetic Data Evaluated by Wikitext LM [16]

Recap

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Current capability

- Distillation
- Mitigate the lack of SFT data, but not replace them
- A few round of benefits from self-play
- Assist pretraining

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