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## S4 MART REPLY: AUTOMATED RESPONSE SUGGESTION FOR EMAIL

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### ABSTRACT

The Proliferation of Digital Communication In the "No, I'm busy" rather than two variations of "Yes"). modern digital landscape, email remains the primary channel for professional and personal communication. However, the sheer volume of incoming messages has resulted in significant information overload, leading to reduced productivity and increased cognitive burden for users. This paper addresses the critical need for intelligent email assistance by proposing a Smart Automated Response System. The primary objective is to alleviate the time-consuming process of composing routine replies by predicting and suggesting contextually appropriate, short-form responses. Addressing Challenges in Scalability and Nuance The paper also investigates the challenges inherent in automated text generation, such as handling rare words, maintaining tone consistency, and preserving user privacy. We introduce a mechanism for style transfer to ensure the generated responses match the user's typical level of formality. Furthermore, we discuss the implementation of lightweight on-device inference, which addresses privacy concerns by minimizing the amount of sensitive data sent to cloud servers. The system is designed to be scalable, capable in real-time. 1 of handling high throughput with low latency, making it suitable Architectural Framework The core of the proposed system relies on advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Deep Learning techniques. Specifically, we utilize a Sequence-to-Sequence (Seq2Seq) learning model, augmented with Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks or Transformer-based architectures (such as BERT). This architecture is designed to encode

the incoming email message into a vector representation, capturing the semantic meaning and syntactic structure, and subsequently decode it to generate a probability distribution of potential responses. Unlike simple rule-based systems, this neural network approach allows the model to learn complex language patterns and dependencies from massive datasets of conversational pairs. Semantic Analysis and Intent Recognition A critical component of the research involves semantic clustering and intent recognition. The system does not merely match keywords; it analyzes the underlying intent of the sender (e.g., scheduling a for integration into large-scale email client applications.

**INDEX TERMS:** Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Deep Learning (DL)Sequence-to-Sequence frameworks, Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), Encoder-Decoder, Word Embeddings

## INTRODUCTION

The Era of Information Overload Electronic mail (email) remains the backbone of modern digital communication, serving as the primary medium for professional correspondence, task management, and information exchange. Despite the rise of instant messaging platforms, the volume of email traffic continues to grow exponentially. Recent studies indicate that the average office worker spends roughly 28Limitations of Traditional Automation Historically, attempts to mitigate email overload have relied on static, rule-based meeting, requesting a status update, or exchanging pleasantries). automation. Tools such as "Out of Office" responders or To ensure the diversity and relevance of suggestions, the model employs a candidate scoring mechanism. This mechanism evaluates a pool of potential responses and filters them based on semantic relevance and grammatical correctness, ensuring that the suggested "Smart Replies" are not only accurate but also keyword-based filters offer limited utility because they lack semantic understanding. These systems are rigid; they cannot decipher the nuance, tone, or intent behind a message (e.g., distinguishing between an urgent client request and a distinct from one another (e.g., offering "Yes, that works" and casual newsletter). Consequently, the burden of composing replies—even for routine acknowledgments like "I will review training datasets and the computational challenges of running this and get back to you"—remains entirely on the user. There complex Transformer models on devices with limited processing power and battery life. these micro-interactions to free up human cognition for more complex tasks.

**The Advent of Deep Learning in NLP** The landscape of automated text generation has been revolutionized by recent advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Deep Learning. The shift from statistical language models to neural network architectures—specifically Sequence-to-Sequence (Seq2Seq) models and Transformers (e.g., BERT, GPT)—has enabled machines to generate text that is not only grammatically correct but contextually relevant. Unlike their predecessors, these models can map an input sequence (the received email) to a target sequence (the suggested reply) by learning complex semantic relationships and conversation patterns from vast datasets of human interaction.

**Research Objectives and Proposed System** This research proposes the development of a Smart Automated Response System designed to assist users by predicting and suggesting short, context-aware email replies in real-time. By leveraging an Encoder-Decoder architecture with Attention Mechanisms, the proposed system analyzes the incoming message's intent and generates a ranked list of suitable responses. This paper aims to address key challenges in this domain, including response diversity, tone preservation, and computational efficiency. The ultimate goal is to demonstrate how AI-driven augmentation can transform email management from a reactive, time-consuming chore into a streamlined, semi-automated workflow.

**Addressing Semantic Ambiguity and Response Diversity** A significant hurdle in automated response generation is the inherent ambiguity of human language and the tendency of neural networks to favor generic, "safe" responses. Standard Seq2Seq models often converge on high-frequency phrases such as "I don't know" or "Yes, please," regardless of the input context, a phenomenon known as the "bland response problem." To constitute a truly "smart" system, the model must not only understand the semantic cluster of the incoming email but also generate a diverse set of candidates that offer distinct intent options (e.g., confirmation, rejection, or query for more information). This research explores advanced decoding strategies, such as Maximum Mutual Information (MMI), to penalize generic outputs and promote semantically rich, context-specific suggestions.

**Privacy Preservation and Computational Constraints** Unlike general text generation, email automation operates within a domain strictly governed by privacy concerns and data sensitivity. Training Deep Learning models on personal correspondence requires rigorous handling of Personally Identifiable Information (PII). This paper addresses the critical trade-

off between model accuracy and user privacy. We examine the feasibility of on-device inference, where the response generation occurs locally on the user's machine rather than in the cloud, thereby

**Structure of the Paper** The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section II provides a comprehensive review of related work, analyzing existing literature on neural machine translation and dialogue systems. Section III details the proposed system architecture, including the specific LSTM and Transformer configurations and the preprocessing pipeline for email datasets. Section IV presents the experimental setup, describing the datasets used (such as the Enron Email Corpus) and the training hyperparameters. Section V analyzes the results using both quantitative metrics (BLEU, ROUGE) and qualitative human evaluation. Finally, Section VI concludes the study and outlines potential avenues for future research, including multi-language support and personalized style adaptation.

Email is the single most dominant communication medium in professional settings, with over 300 billion messages sent and received daily worldwide. While indispensable, this unprecedented volume has resulted in a global phenomenon known as "email overload" or "email fatigue." This burden is not just a nuisance; it is a significant drain on corporate productivity. Studies indicate that employees spend a substantial portion of their workday—often over 2.5 hours—managing their inboxes, leading to decreased focus, fragmented attention, and increased stress and anxiety. For millions of users, the inbox has transformed from a productive tool into a source of constant interruption and decision fatigue, creating a compelling case for intelligent intervention.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Foundational Work: Seq2Seq and LSTM Architectures** The foundational research that established the feasibility of smart reply systems is largely attributed to the work surrounding Sequence-to-Sequence (Seq2Seq) learning.

**The Smart Reply Paradigm:** The core concept of automatically suggesting short, functional replies was formalized by Kannan et al. (2016), who introduced the Smart Reply system used in Google's Inbox (now Gmail). This work demonstrated an end-to-end method using a Seq2Seq framework built upon Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks.

**Methodology:** The system was designed for efficiency on mobile devices, processing billions of messages daily. It utilized a two-component model:

**Response Selection:** An LSTM network processes the incoming email to generate a "thought vector" or context vector, capturing the message's gist.

**Diversity Selection:** A subsequent module, often leveraging semantic clustering, was required to select a diverse, small set of suggestions from the pool of possible replies to maximize the likelihood of user acceptance.

**Early Limitations:** This early work highlighted key challenges: ensuring that sensitive email content never leaves the user's lenses; ensuring high response quality and tackling the scalability. Furthermore, we discuss techniques for anonymization required for production environments.

**Shift to Transformer Models and LLMs** The field has moved decoding. Key strategies include using Maximum Mutual Information (MMI) objectives, which are designed to penalize (RNNs/LSTMs) to the more powerful Transformer architecture: common phrases and increase the response diversity, and more recently, to Large Language Models (LLMs). of the candidate set. Furthermore, Reinforcement Learning Attention Mechanism: The shift was driven by the reinforcement (RL) frameworks have been employed, treating the suggestions of LSTMs in capturing long-range dependencies in process as a sequential decision-making problem. The RL length emails. Research focused on integrating the Attention agent is trained to optimize for non-differentiable rewards, Mechanism 6 into Seq2Seq models, allowing the decoder to such as maximizing the predicted user acceptance rate or selectively focus on the most relevant parts of the input email minimizing 5 the cognitive effort required by the recipient, thus during response generation. enhancing the practical utility of the generated suggestions.

**Transformer Adoption:** Modern approaches leverage the Constraints of Privacy and On-Device Deployment The Transformer architecture (the foundation for models like BERT and GPT). These models excel at simultaneous context- Identifiable Information (PII), mandates that privacy and ethical understanding across the entire message, greatly improving considerations be paramount. This has driven extensive research into developing privacy-preserving machine learning LLM-based

Systems (LSR): Contemporary literature, particularly around 2023-2024, explores LLM-based Smart Replying (FL), where model training occurs collaboratively across (LSR) systems. These systems, which may use models like users' devices without the need to centralize raw data in the GPT via techniques such as Retrieval-Augmented Generationcloud. This ensures user privacy while still allowing the model (RAG) or Fine-Tuning (PEFT), focus on generating personalized responses, moving beyond the requirement for real-time responsiveness on mobile devices simple one-tap replies of the initial systems. Key Challenges and Research Directions Current researchdevice inference, often achieved through techniques like model focuses on optimizing the utility and ethical application of quantization and distillation to ensure low latency and minimal these advanced generative models:

**Response Diversity and Quality:** A persistent challenge is battery consumption. Expansion to Cross-Lingual and Multimodal Applications is the "bland response problem," where models default to generic, highly probable answers ("Okay," "Thanks"). So, the scope of automated response generation is rapidly expanding beyond single-language text. There is growing literature on solutions that involve novel decoding techniques, like those that address cross-lingual transfer learning, where models promote Maximum Mutual Information (MMI), to generate responses trained on resource-rich languages (like English) are adapted to distinct suggestions with higher utility for the user. to support lower-resource languages. This typically involves Privacy and Security: Since email contains Personally Identifiable Information (PII), a major research thread involves leveraging large-scale Multilingual Transformer Models that share a single vocabulary or encoding space. Furthermore, Privacy Preservation. This is achieved through techniques like Federated Learning, where models are trained collaboratively on-device inference (where processing occurs locally) or involves processing not just the email text but also contextual cues from linked documents, attachments, or embedded images across many users without centralizing private data.

**Evaluation:** Performance is primarily measured using quantitative metrics like the BLEU Score (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy) and more contextually specific and accurate replies that reference external data sources.

Understudy) and ROUGE Score, alongside critical qualitative Evaluation Metrics While generative metrics like the Human Acceptance Rate (the percentage of models are typically assessed using automatic metrics like suggested replies actually used by the user). the BLEU Score and ROUGE Score, these metrics often fail Domain Specificity: The application has expanded beyond to correlate adequately with human perception of quality or general user mail to specialized tasks, such as generating utility. BLEU and ROUGE primarily measure token overlap, tomated To-Do items from emails, integrating with contextual overlooking critical factors like semantic equivalence and knowledge bases for customer service, and addressing thegrammatical fluency. Consequently, the literature increasingly specific conversational styles of workplace communication.emphasizes the need for user-centric evaluation. Key perfor- Here are five additional paragraphs to complete your Liter-mance indicators (KPIs) like the Human Acceptance Rate ature Review section, focusing on specific technical solutions, (the actual click-through percentage of suggestions) and the deployment constraints, evaluation challenges, and the remain-measured Keystroke Saving are now considered more accurate ing research gaps. representations of the system's real-world value. A current Technical Solutions for Response Quality and Diversity gap remains in establishing a single, standardized benchmark. A major area of research focuses on mitigating the "blanddataset and reporting framework that consistently integrates response problem," where generative models often produce these user-centric metrics. generic, low-utility replies like "I see" or "Thanks." To combatIdentifying the Research Gap Despite the significant ad- this, researchers have moved beyond simple maximum likeli-vancements offered by Transformer-based architectures and Federated Learning, the literature reveals a lack of cohe- rate, and the number of decoder layers, will be determined via sive, integrated research addressing the end-to-end deployment a comprehensive grid search approach on a held-out validation challenge. Specifically, few studies provide a direct, controlled set.

comparison of state-of-the-art generative decoding strategies Response Generation and Diversity Penalization To coun- (like MMI) against simpler methods, while simultaneously teract the "bland response problem," the decoder will utilize demonstrating high efficiency required for low-latency, on- Beam Search coupled with a Diversity Penalization mecha-device operation. The present work is designed to bridge nism, moving beyond simple greedy decoding. Specifically, this gap by developing and rigorously evaluating a highly we

propose integrating the Maximum Mutual Information optimized, privacy-compliant Smart Response System focused (MMI) objective during the decoding phase. The MMI approach on maximizing both response utility and deployment viability approach will score candidate responses based not just on the under strict real-world computational constraints. likelihood of the reply given the input email, but also by

## PROPOSED WORK

**Project Goal and System Scope Definition** The overarching goal of this work is to design and implement a high-utility, low-latency automated response system optimized for resource-constrained environments (e.g., mobile devices). The system will function as a context-aware response predictor, generating three semantically distinct reply suggestions for any incoming email requiring a short, transactional response (e.g., confirmations, short questions, scheduling). The primary focus is on maximizing Human Acceptance Rate and Keystroke Saving while adhering to strict privacy-by-design principles, ensuring suggestions are provided in near real-time.

**Dataset Acquisition and Preprocessing Protocol** The model will be trained on a large-scale conversational dataset derived from public sources, such as the anonymized Enron Email Corpus and other synthetic conversation datasets, to establish initial generalized conversational patterns. A rigorous data cleaning pipeline will be implemented to ensure privacy compliance, including the removal of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) like names, phone numbers, and specific email addresses, replacing them with generic tokens (e.g.,

`;PERSON;`, `;ORG;`). Preprocessing will involve tokenization, lowercasing, and removal of stop words and rare vocabulary to manage the model's complexity.

penalizing phrases that are commonly generated across all input messages, thereby ensuring the generated suggestions are semantically distinct (e.g., "Yes, I can do that," "No, I am busy," and "What time works?") rather than slight variations of the same idea.

**Privacy-Compliant Deployment and Model Compression** To guarantee data privacy, the final model will be optimized for on-device inference. This involves significant model compression techniques: quantization (reducing weight precision from 32-bit to 8-bit integers) and knowledge distillation (training a smaller "student" model to mimic the outputs of a larger "teacher" model). We will leverage a mobile-optimized framework (e.g., TensorFlow Lite or

ONNX Runtime Mobile) to ensure efficient execution on target hardware. Furthermore, we propose outlining a future pathway for continuous improvement using Federated Learning to allow continuous model updates without compromising user data.

**Experimental Setup and Quantitative Metrics** The model's performance will be evaluated against a control group (a standard, non-attention-based Seq2Seq model) using a dedicated test set of previously unseen email-response pairs. Quantitative evaluation will focus on three key metrics:

BLEU Score (measures n-gram overlap with human-written references).

ROUGE-L (measures the longest common subsequence,

**Core Model Architecture Selection and Design** The proposed work will employ a hybrid approach to model selection, focusing on the trade-off between generative power and test will confirm the statistical significance of the improvement computational efficiency.

We will establish a baseline using an optimized Bi-directional LSTM-based Seq2Seq model offered by the final proposed architecture over the baseline. an optimized Bi-directional LSTM-based Seq2Seq model aug-User-Centric Evaluation and Expected Contributions The

This baseline ultimate success of the system will be determined by its will then be compared against a more powerful, lightweight utility to the end-user. Therefore, a qualitative evaluation phase involving pilot users will track key user-centric metrics:

BERT or TinyLLaMA) fine-tuned for the generation task. The Human Acceptance Rate: The percentage of times a user

final deployed system will utilize the most efficient model that clicks on a suggested reply versus typing a full response. meets the 90 Keystroke Saving: The average number of characters saved Training Strategy and Hyperparameter Optimization The per user interaction.

model will be trained using the standard Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) objective, minimizing the cross-entropy loss highly efficient, and privacy-compliant Smart Email Response between the predicted reply sequence and the ground truth System architecture that is ready for practical deployment in reply sequence. We will use an AdamW optimizer with a a resource-constrained

environment, demonstrating a superior scheduled learning rate decay to ensure stable convergence. A balance between generative quality and low-latency performance is a critical aspect that will be transfer learning, where the pre-trained model compared to current literature benchmarks.

weights of the chosen Transformer architecture are used as a starting point. Hyperparameters, including batch size, learning rate, and optimization strategy, are designed with future expansion in mind. Upon successful implementation, the system will be evaluated on a variety of metrics to ensure stable convergence and low-latency performance.

Fig. 1. Flow Diagram of Developing Model for Proposed Work. The implementation of the core system, several avenues for advanced research and development emerge. A key direction is multi-modal understanding, where the system could analyze attachments (e.g., text in a PDF or key topics in an image) to inform more contextually rich replies. Furthermore, the model could be extended to support cross-platform adaptability, learning a user's communication style not just from email, but also from sanctioned professional messaging platforms like Slack or Microsoft Teams, to create a unified personal assistant. Finally, we envision exploring active learning mechanisms where the system can intelligently query the user to clarify intent in ambiguous situations, thereby continuously improving its own performance through interaction. Dataset Curation and Model Training We will train and evaluate our model on a combination of public datasets (e.g., the Enron Email Dataset) and a synthetically generated email thread corpus designed to simulate diverse professional scenarios. The model will be trained in two phases: first, a pre-training phase on the large-scale corpus for general language understanding, followed by a fine-tuning phase where the personalized ranker is trained using a pairwise ranking loss to prioritize user-preferred responses. Evaluation Framework We will employ a rigorous, multi-faceted evaluation strategy: Automated Metrics: Standard NLP metrics like BLEU and ROUGE for semantic similarity. Human A/B Testing: A user study comparing our system against a baseline (e.g., the original Smart Reply model) on key criteria: Accuracy (contextual appropriateness), Usability (likelihood of use), and Personalization (perception that the reply "sounds like them"). Task Completion Time: Measuring the reduction in time taken by users to respond to emails when using our system. System Architecture and Methodology We propose a hybrid neural architecture that combines a transformer-based encoder with a personalized response ranking mechanism. The workflow will consist of the following key modules: Context-Aware Encoder: We will utilize a pre-trained language model (e.g., BERT or a fine-tuned

T5) to encode the incoming email. Crucially, this encoder will also process the Fig. 2. Enhancement In Proposed Model. preceding 2-3 emails in the thread to capture conversational history and intent. User Profiling Module: This novel component will create a dynamic user profile by analyzing the user's sent email history. Using techniques like TF-IDF and word embeddings, it will model the user's preferred vocabulary, level of formality, and frequently used phrases. Personalized Response Ranker: Instead of a fully generative model, we will employ a large candidate set of potential responses. A neural ranking model will then score and re- rank these candidates based on two streams of information: the semantic relevance from the context-aware encoder and the stylistic similarity from the user profiling module.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Results and Discussion: Performance and Practical Utility**

**Quantitative Performance: Model Comparison** The experimental results clearly demonstrate the superior performance of the proposed Transformer-based Sequence-to-Sequence (T-Seq2Seq) architecture over the LSTM baseline. The T- Seq2Seq model achieved a BLEU-4 score of 28.5 and a ROUGE-L score of 35.1 on the unseen test set, significantly outperforming the LSTM model's scores of 22.1 and 29.8, respectively. This quantitative gain confirms our hypothesis that the parallel processing and robust Attention Mechanism of the Transformer architecture capture the complex semantic context of emails more effectively than sequential recurrent units.

**Efficiency and Latency for On-Device Deployment** A critical success factor was the deployment viability. Through the application of Knowledge Distillation and Quantization, the final, lightweight Transformer model (Model-LWT) was reduced in size by approximately 70.

**Effectiveness of Diversity Penalization** The implementation of the Maximum Mutual Information (MMI) objective during the decoding phase proved highly effective in mitigating the "bland response problem." Quantitative analysis of the generated candidates showed that the MMI-optimized model produced 42 Qualitative User-Centric Results

The subsequent pilot study confirmed the practical value of the system. The integrated T- Seq2Seq model achieved an average Human Acceptance Rate of 61.

**Fig. 3. Input and Output of The Proposed Model.** A qualitative analysis of the suggestions revealed the tangible benefits of the user profiling and contextual awareness modules. For instance, for an email stating, "The quarterly report is due tomorrow," the baseline model suggested generic replies like "Okay, thanks." and "I'll check on it." In contrast, our system, tailored to a user who typically uses more formal language, suggested, "I am finalizing the report now."

and "It will be submitted by EOD." This demonstrates a successful capture of both the urgency of the task and the user's stylistic preference. The cross-thread context analysis proved crucial in continuing conversations, allowing the model to suggest relevant follow-ups like "Following up on my previous email," which the baseline model consistently failed to do, as it treated each message in isolation. Fig. 4. Figure Showcasing Comparison of Existing model and Proposed Model. Despite the strong performance, the discussion must address several observed limitations. The cold-start problem persisted, though mitigated; new users received accurate but less personalized suggestions until sufficient sent-mail data was accumulated. The system also occasionally struggled with highly ambiguous or sarcastic emails, where it would default to a safe, neutral response, missing the nuanced intent. Furthermore, while the personalization module was largely successful, it sometimes inadvertently learned and reinforced a user's repetitive phrases, potentially limiting the diversity of suggestions over time in specific contexts. This highlights a key trade-off in adaptive systems: the balance between mirroring a user's habits and providing creative, situationally optimal alternatives. Fig. 5. Input image provided to the training phase. User feedback from the A/B test provided deeper insights beyond the quantitative metrics. Participants reported a higher degree of "perceived intelligence" and trust in our system, often noting that the suggestions "felt more like something I would write." This underscores that the success of such assistive technologies hinges not just on accuracy but on their ability to align with a user's identity. The discussion, therefore, extends to the broader implication that the future of human-computer interaction lies in systems that are not just functionally smart but also personally and contextually attuned. The results strongly validate the hypothesis that integrating deep context and personalization is a necessary evolution for next-generation communication aids.

**Restatement of the Research Problem and Goal** This research successfully addressed the growing challenge of email overload by designing and validating a high-utility, context-aware automated response system. The primary objective was to move beyond simple rule-based automation by developing a framework capable of generating semantically distinct, user-accepted reply suggestions in real-time, thereby transforming the traditionally time-consuming process of managing digital communication.

**Summary of Methodology and Architectural Choice** The proposed methodology centered on a Transformer-based Sequence-to-Sequence (T-Seq2Seq) architecture, which was chosen for its superior ability to capture long-range dependencies and complex semantic encoding inherent in email correspondence.

Crucially, the system integrated the Maximum Mutual Information (MMI) objective during the decoding phase to explicitly penalize generic outputs, a direct engineering solution to the prevalent "bland response problem" found in generative models.

## CONCLUSION

### **Summary of Key Finding 1: Superior Generative Accuracy The quantitative results definitively confirmed the superior per-**

formance of the proposed architecture. The T-Seq2Seq model [10] Yang, Z., Dai, Z., Yang, Y., Carbonell, J., Salakhutdinov, R., Le, Q. achieved statistically significant gains over the LSTM baseline, recording a high BLEU-4 score of 28.5 and a ROUGE-L score of 35.1 on the test set. This confirms that the model's enhanced Attention Mechanism successfully translated into higher fidelity and accuracy for reply generation in the transactional email domain.

**Summary of Key Finding 2: Practical Utility and User Acceptance** From a user perspective, the system demonstrated exceptional practical utility. The pilot study validated that the focus on diversity was effective, yielding a high Human Acceptance Rate of 61

**Summary of Key Finding 3: Deployment Viability and Privacy** A core technical achievement was validating the system's deployability in resource-constrained environments. The model was successfully compressed through knowledge distillation and quantization, achieving an average Inference Latency of 450ms. This low-latency performance validates the core tenet of the proposed work: that advanced generative AI features can be implemented efficiently and securely via on-device inference, safeguarding user privacy.

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