Context Beyond Grammar: Synonym Substitution for Korean Grammatical Error Correction in Specialized Texts

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Abstract

Many previous studies on grammatical error correction (GEC) have primarily focused on language learner corpora, which consist of texts 004 written by learners acquiring a non-native language. In this study, we address a GEC task that involves selecting contextually appropriate words in texts containing domain-specific vocabulary. We propose the UniGEC (Unified-Replacement GEC) dataset, which combines results from multiple models to determine the likelihood of substituting synonyms for specific keywords, based on token occurrence probabil-013 ities. Our experiments show that the UniGEC presents a more challenging task compared to language learner corpora. We observed that as the number of synonyms increases, the perfor-017 mance gap widens. Furthermore, we found significant performance variations across differ-019 ent domains, highlighting the need for further exploration of synonym substitution in special-021 ized texts to expand the applicability of GEC tasks to a wider range of scenarios.

1 Introduction

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Grammatical error correction (GEC) task involves identifying and correcting various types of errors in sentences (Bryant et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021). With the advent of large language models (LLMs), there has been considerable effort to leverage their extensive pre-trained knowledge to enhance performance on this task (Davis et al., 2024; Zeng et al., 2024; Katinskaia and Yangarber, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023a). However, most existing GEC datasets in Korean have focused on relatively simple errors, such as those commonly made by language learners or typological mistakes frequently encountered online (Yoon et al., 2023; Koo et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Min et al., 2020).

It can be effectively used in various tasks to improve sentence clarity (Bryant et al., 2023). In this study, we explored scenarios where GEC could be applied to specialized texts. Writing that conveys specific information contains complex vocabulary and poses challenges in understanding the context (Candlin and Plum, 2014; Ädel, 2010). Consequently, it is required to choose a more contextually appropriate word to ensure sentence clarity (Nirenburg and Nirenburg, 1988).

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For instance, in the sentence "The experiment proved the hypothesis under specific conditions," there are no explicit grammatical errors, but depending on the context, the word supported might be more appropriate than *proved*¹. Understanding synonyms is notably more challenging than identifying semantically unrelated words (Waring, 1997; Tinkham, 1993; Higa, 1963), and the task to distinguish them within texts containing advanced vocabulary remains unexplored. In this paper, we expanded the scope of GEC to include these cases where word selection depends on the context of the specialized texts. This approach informed the construction of UniGEC (Unified-Replacement GEC) dataset, with particular emphasis on leveraging multiple models to establish a robust foundation for the use of appropriate synonyms.

The process of constructing UniGEC is shown in Figure 1. We collected a corpus of research paper summaries from 8 domains, including *Social Science, Engineering*, and *Humanities*. First, we used LLMs to extract keywords from each text (Lee et al., 2023) to identify words that could be replaced with synonyms. To facilitate keyword extraction within each domain, we employed fewshot learning (Brown et al., 2020), providing LLMs with domain-specific samples during the instruction. By focusing on keywords consistently identified across multiple LLMs, we ensured more robust results and minimized the dependence on a single

¹If the experiment provided evidence for the hypothesis under specific conditions, *supported* would be more appropriate, whereas *proved* would be used if the hypothesis was fully validated under all conditions.



Figure 1: Process of constructing the proposed UniGEC dataset. It involves extracting keywords from research paper summaries across multiple LLMs, and replacing these keywords with synonyms or inserting typos.

model (Wang et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2023).

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The extracted keywords were replaced with other words from a predefined list of synonyms. In Figure 1, the word '인식(recognition)' was replaced with '의식(awareness).' While the word '의식' itself does not contain a grammatical error, its usage might feel awkward depending on the context of the specialized text. In the process of selecting which synonym to use from the list, we employed the concept of masked language modeling (Lewis et al., 2020; Devlin et al., 2019). By replacing the keywords in the original text with a [mask] token, we considered the occurrence probabilities of the surrounding tokens to determine the suitability of each synonym replacement (Chang et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). We also leveraged probabilities from multiple pre-trained language models (PLMs) rather than relying on a single model, enabling us to achieve more stable results (Zou et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2020).

We conducted correction task based on prompting techniques previously introduced and evaluated their performance with the UniGEC dataset. Unlike learner corpora (Yoon et al., 2023) commonly used in existing GEC tasks, we observed that the correction performance showed limited under the same prompting configurations. Through this, we emphasize the need to go beyond detecting explicit grammatical errors, highlighting the importance of identifying and revising contextually unnatural word choices in specialized texts. We will make UniGEC dataset publicly available to enable further research in this field².

2 Related Work

The GEC task has traditionally focused on language learner corpora, which arise during the process of non-native speakers learning a foreign language (Fang et al., 2023b; Takahashi et al., 2020; Bryant et al., 2019; Ng et al., 2014). For English,

> ²https://anonymous.4open.science/r/ UniGEC-895F/README.md

the primary focus of past research, these corpora have been drawn from essays written by learners or their online language use (Yannakoudakis et al., 2018; Dahlmeier et al., 2013). While GEC datasets have been developed for other languages like Chinese, German, and Russian, they also developed and utilized datasets derived from language learner corpora (Zhang et al., 2023b; Fang et al., 2023a; Katinskaia and Yangarber, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). 117

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For Korean, datasets have similarly been constructed by leveraging errors from language learning or by manually introducing noise (Lee et al., 2021; Min et al., 2020). Some studies employed human annotators to create realistic errors (Koo et al., 2022), while other categorized error types and conducted detailed analyses (Yoon et al., 2023). Many recent studies using LLMs have also been conducted on language learner corpora (Koo et al., 2024; Maeng et al., 2023).

In this work, unlike learner corpora that explicitly contain grammatical errors, we constructed a dataset focusing on how word choice depends on context. Recognizing that even native speakers may struggle with selecting the appropriate synonym, we aimed to ensure the correct use of synonyms by integrating the results from multiple models.

3 UniGEC: Dataset Construction

We used a research paper summary dataset divided into eight topics, ensuring the inclusion of domainspecific context. The detailed dataset preprocessing steps are provided in Appendix A.

3.1 Keyword Extraction

We conducted keyword extraction to determine150which words in the given text should be replaced151with synonyms. We employed few-shot learn-152ing (Brown et al., 2020), specifically providing153domain information and domain-specific few-shot154samples consisting of pairs of actual domain texts155and their extracted keywords by human. This ap-156

proach aimed to improve the capabilities of the
model by incorporating additional information,
rather than depending solely on its inherent parameters (Shi et al., 2024).

We use keywords that were consistently identified across multiple LLMs, rather than relying on the output of a single model. Let $K_{(i,j)}$ represent the set of keywords extracted from text_i by the *j*th model, the mutual keywords K_i are as follows:

$$K_i = K_{(i,1)} \cap K_{(i,2)} \cap K_{(i,3)}, \tag{1}$$

The types of LLMs used, along with examples of the extracted keywords and their associated statistics, and details in domain-specific samples are provided in Appendix B.1.

3.2 Synonym Substitution

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We retrieved synonym lists from the Naver Korean Dictionary³, a popular resource among Korean speakers that offers definitions and synonyms for specific terms. For each keyword in the set $K_i = \{k_1, k_2, ..., k_n\}$, the corresponding synonym list S_i was obtained as follows:

$$dict(k_n) = \{k_n : s_{(n,1)}, s_{(n,2)}, ..., s_{(n,m)}\}, (2)$$

$$S_i = \{ dict(k_1), ..., dict(k_n) \},$$
 (3)

To decide which synonym to use for replacing each keyword, we adopted the concept of masked language modeling (Devlin et al., 2019). We replaced the keyword k_n in the text_i with a [mask] token and then inserted one of the synonyms from $S_i[k_n]$. Let the synonym $s_{(n,m)}$ represent the selected one, they can be represented as follows:

$$s_{(n,m)} = \texttt{select}(S_i[k_n]), \tag{4}$$

$$text_i = replace([mask], s_{(n,m)}), \quad (5)$$

We then passed the text_i through a PLM to obtain the token probability distribution probs_i . By excluding the dimension corresponding to the selected synonym, we calculated the product of the probabilities for surrounding tokens (Chang et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023), allowing us to consider the overall context when replacing the original keyword with its synonym.

In this case, we considered the probabilities from two PLMs to achieve more stable results. Let $probs_i \in \mathbb{R}^D$ is the averaged probabilities from both models, the *replaced probability* $p_{\langle i,k_n,s_{(n,m)}\rangle}$ is as follows:

if d

$$p_{\langle i,k_n,s_{(n,m)}\rangle} = \prod_{d=1}^{D} \operatorname{probs}_i^d,$$
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is unrelated to the
$$s_{(n,m)}$$
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(6)

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We calculated the $p_{\langle i,k_n,s_{(n,m)}\rangle}$ for all synonyms corresponding to a given keyword. The final synonym replacement was determined by comparing the absolute differences between these probabilities and the *keyword probability* $p_{\langle i,k_n,k_n\rangle}^4$. If m' represents the index of the synonym with the largest difference, the keyword k_n is replaced with the synonym $s_{(n,m')}$.

$$m' = \operatorname{argmax}(|p_{\langle i,k_n,s_{(n,m)}\rangle} - p_{\langle i,k_n,k_n\rangle}|),$$

for all
$$s_{(n,1)}, ..., s_{(n,m)}$$
 in dict (k_n) , (7)

We applied synonym substitution across the entire research paper summary texts. The details about the equations and process for synonym substitution are provided in Appendix B.2.

4 Experiment

4.1 Experimental Design

We conducted experiments using the UniGEC dataset to evaluate LLMs' ability to correct swapped synonyms in specialized texts. Following prior studies, we provided task instructions (Wu et al., 2023a) and applied zero-shot chain-of-thought (CoT) (Kojima et al., 2022) to encourage the models to leverage reasoning paths. Additionally, we employed task decomposition (Zhou et al., 2022), instructing the models to first identify unnatural words in the text before making corrections.

We selected four versions of LLMs for our experiments. Qwen (Qwen Team, 2024) and Gemma (Team et al., 2024) series are the recent models and perform well in Korean, even though they are multilingual. The details in the implementations and prompt configurations are provided in Appendix C.1 and D.

4.2 Main Results

The results of evaluating the correction of substituted synonyms across different domains are presented in Table 1. We set up to three keywords per

³https://ko.dict.naver.com

⁴The *keyword probability* is calculated in the same way as the *replaced probability*, as outlined in Equations (5)-(7), but with the synonym $s_{(n,m)}$ replaced by the keyword k_n . It represent the probability that a specific keyword is considered in the given context.

Method		Task		Zero-shot		Task	
		Description		CoT		Decomposition	
Metric		BLEU	GLEU	BLEU	GLEU	BLEU	GLEU
Learner Corpus	Gemma2-2b	69.34	61.77	63.14	54.74	64.63	57.82
UniGEC	Gemma2-2b	53.23	55.67	41.25	44.04	55.86	58.11
	Gemma2-9b	55.21	57.48	45.22	47.70	61.15	62.92
	Qwen2.5-1.5b	59.21	61.33	52.94	55.28	58.11	59.82
	Qwen2.5-7b	50.14	52.79	47.54	50.40	61.93	63.83

Table 1: Correction task performance with the prompting methods applied to each model. We compared UniGEC with the learner corpus (Yoon et al., 2023), presenting the results of the best model for the latter⁵.

	Synonyms	Task		Zero-shot		Task		
Model		Description		C	oT Decor		position	
		BLEU	GLEU	BLEU	GLEU	BLEU	GLEU	
Commo	2	57.53	59.54	46.45	48.88	64.41	65.98	
OF	3	55.21	57.48	45.22	47.70	61.15	62.92	
-90	4	53.96	56.30	44.45	46.98	59.56	61.53	
Qwen2.5 -7b	2	52.75	55.15	50.78	53.29	65.76	67.39	
	3	50.14	52.79	47.54	50.40	61.93	63.83	
	4	48.69	51.45	46.91	49.74	59.78	61.88	

Table 2: Performance differences in the correction task by varying the maximum number of synonyms replaced per text, focusing on the larger models.

text were replaced with synonyms. While smaller models performed reasonably well with only the task description, but larger models achieved better results as prompts were refined through task decomposition. In particular, Qwen2.5-7b achieved a GLEU score of 63.83, showing an improvement of 11.04 points over the simpler prompt.

5 Discussion

We conducted further experiments and analyses to explore various aspects of the UniGEC dataset constructed through synonym replacements.

Comparison based on the Nature of the Corpora We observed that the UniGEC performance was significantly lower than that of the learner corpus. This suggests that distinguishing contextually appropriate synonyms in specialized texts is more challenging than addressing the simpler vocabulary and error types found in language learner corpora. Therefore, it is essential to develop GEC techniques tailored to the unique characteristics of each corpus. We emphasize the need to expand synonym replacement tasks across a broader range of specialized texts to address this challenge.

Impact of Synonym Replacement Counts While Table 1 reported results based on replacing up to three keywords per text, we also experimented



Figure 2: Performance differences across 8 domains in research paper summaries, focusing on the bestperformed model Qwen2.5-7b in our experiments.

with varying the range to two and four keywords, as shown in Table 2. The results revealed that the correction performance consistently declined as the number of replaced keywords increased, with a maximum drop of 5.98 points. This highlights the difficulty models face in restoring the original text when more synonyms are replaced in that text. 267

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Performance Variations across Domains When up to three keywords per text were replaced with synonyms, the results for each domain are presented in Figure 2. We observed significant variations depending on the domain-specific context. *Arts and Physical Education* achieved the highest scores, while *Natural Sciences* and *Agriculture and Marine Sciences* recorded the lowest, suggesting that synonym replacement is particularly challenging for scientific texts due to their specialized nature. The varied performance across domains further underscores the need for a more detailed analysis of synonym usage within each domain.

6 Conclusion

We introduce the UniGEC dataset, which performs synonym substitution by leveraging results from multiple models. This approach assumes that the GEC task, commonly applied to language learner corpora, can also be extended to specialized texts. The process involves extracting keywords and determining the probability of substituting synonyms. In our experiments, the results revealed that UniGEC is more challenging than language learner corpora. We observed that performance is influenced by the number of synonyms that can be substituted per text. Additionally, the performance variations across domains highlight the need for further research into synonym substitution for specialized texts, in order to expand GEC tasks to a broader range of scenarios.

⁵The results from the experiments with other models are provided in Appendix C.2.

Limitations

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305Nature of the Source Dataset Since our experi-306ments were conducted using an exist paper sum-307mary dataset, we assumed that the texts were in-308tentionally chosen to align with human intent, and309treated them as the ground truth. This means that310selecting a source dataset directly influences the311approach to synonym substitution and significantly312impacts results.

Absence of Direct Method We constructed a dataset based on synonym substitution, distinct from typical language learner corpora, but this study does not propose methods specifically designed for it. We plan to explore broader GEC scenarios using synonym substitution in diverse contexts and to propose methods tailored to these scenarios as future work.

Scalability of the Research While this study focuses on a Korean, expanding it to include English and other languages is essential for broader exploration. The careful selection of source datasets will also be crucial for other languages, and we believe our research on synonym substitution will offer valuable insights in this context.

Ethics Statement

We used multiple LLMs and PLMs in our approach, which may have influenced both the dataset construction and experimental results due to model biases. To mitigate this, we integrated results from various models during dataset creation to minimize such biases (Wang et al., 2024; Zou et al., 2024). Our goal was to develop a dataset that is not overly dependent on the results of any single model.

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A Dataset Descriptions

We collected a research paper summary dataset⁶ and used only the valid dataset from the existing configuration. This dataset consists of abstracts summarized by human experts, ensuring that the text captures the overall content of the paper while incorporating domain-specific vocabulary. To ensure an appropriate length distribution, we removed the top 25% of texts that were either too short or too long. As a result, we used texts ranging from 154 to 239 lengths across all topics.

The topics were divided into eight categories: (1) Arts and Physical Education, (2) Social Sciences, (3) Natural Sciences, (4) Agriculture and Marine Sciences, (5) Engineering, (6) Medicine and Pharmacy, (7) Humanities, and (8) Interdisciplinary Studies. After preprocessing the texts, we standardized the dataset by selecting 140 texts from each topic, resulting in a total of 1,120 texts.

B Details in UniGEC Construction

B.1 Keyword Extraction Details

Selected LLMs We employed three instructiontuned models trained on a Korean dataset⁷⁸, along with a recent multilingual model with string performance on Korean⁹. The temperature for keyword extraction was set to 0.2 (Chen et al., 2024).

Few-shot Samples We facilitated the keyword extraction for each LLM by incorporating domainspecific few-shot samples. Using the train split from the existing configuration of the source dataset we provided five sampled per text to enable few-shot learning. The prompt design for keyword extraction using few-shot samples was adapted from previous study (Kluge and Kähler, 2024).

Exceptional Cases To account for cases where no keywords were unanimously extracted by all models, we collected keywords extracted jointly by two models as K'_i . Additionally, when increasing the maximum number of synonym substitutions as shown in Table 2, we supplemented the K_i with K'_i if the original one was insufficient.

$$K_{i}^{'} = (K_{(i,1)} \cap K_{(i,2)}) \cup (K_{(i,2)} \cap K_{(i,3)}) \\ \cup (K_{(i,3)} \cap K_{(i,1)}) \setminus (3 * K_{i}),$$
(8)

B.2 Synonym Substitution Details

Selected PLMs We selected two types of models: one fine-tuned specifically for Korean¹⁰ and another multilingual model with strong performance in Korean¹¹. These models were used to derive token probabilities for input texts with substituted synonyms during inference stage.

Additional Explanations to Equations Using Equation (7), we described the process of replacing the keyword k_n with the synonym $s_{(n,m')}$. By applying this process to all keywords extracted from a given text, we obtained the list of substituted synonyms S'_i . As previously defined, K_i and S_i represent the mutual keyword set and synonym list for text_i, respectively. This process are as follows:

$$S'_{indices} = \{ \text{Eq} (7)(k_n, \text{dict}(k_n)) \\ for k_n \text{ in } K_i \text{ for } \text{dict}(k_n) \text{ in } S_i \}, (9)$$

$$S'_{i} = \{\{k_{n} : s_{(n,m')}\}$$
for n in range(len(K_i))
for m' in S'_{indices}\}. (10)

We prioritized keyword-synonym pairs from S'_i based on the largest absolute difference between the *replaced probability* and *keyword probability*, as defined in Equation (7). This approach aimed to avoid replacing all identified keywords with every possible synonym, instead selecting the synonym most contextually incongruous. In the experiments in Table 1, we used up to the top 3 keyword-synonym pairs, while in Table 2, we selected 2 to 4 pairs depending on the conditions.

Human Evaluation We conducted a human evaluation to determine whether the synonym sub-

⁶https://aihub.or.kr/aihubdata/data/view.do? currMenu=115&topMenu=100&aihubDataSe=realm& dataSetSn=90

⁷https://huggingface.co/LGAI-EXAONE/EXAONE-3. 0-7.8B-Instruct

⁸https://huggingface.co/nlpai-lab/KULLM3

⁹https://huggingface.co/meta-llama/Llama-3. 1-8B-Instruct

¹⁰https://huggingface.co/klue/bert-base

¹¹https://huggingface.co/FacebookAI/

xlm-roberta-base

Domains	Rate #1	Rate #2	Rate #3
Arts and Physical Education	2.4	2.0	2.2
Social Sciences	2.3	2.3	2.3
Natural Sciences	1.9	1.7	1.8
Agriculture and Marine Sciences	2.3	2.2	2.2
Engineering	2.2	2.1	1.8
Medicine and Pharmacy	2.2	2.1	1.8
Humanities	2.5	2.3	2.3
Interdisciplinary Studies	2.0	1.8	1.8

Table 3: Confusion scores in synonym-substituted texts for all domains, with higher scores indicating greater confusion. The average scores are reported.

stitution in the UniGEC dataset effectively create potential confusion with the original text as intended. Three native university graduates fluent in Korean volunteered for this evaluation. We asked them to rate whether the modified text could cause confusion if they were asked to write the original version. We provided each rater with 10 texts from each domain, for a total of 80 texts. The results of this evaluation are presented in Table 3.

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Higher scores indicate that the synonymreplaced text is more confusing compared to the original, suggesting that the synonym replacement process effectively created texts that could confuse even human raters. The results showed that most domains had scores near or above 2 out of 3, reflecting a consistent level of difficulty. However, in the *Natural Sciences* domain, all raters gave lower scores, indicating that the complexity of synonym replacement may depend on the domain.

C Details in Experiments

C.1 Implementation Details

Prompt Configurations Unlike common GEC tasks that address explicit grammatical errors, correcting swapped synonyms based on context required modifications to the standard prompts. Furthermore, to mitigate the problem of over-correction (Wu et al., 2023b), where generative models tend to make unnecessary edits, we modified the prompt configurations accordingly.

Experimental Setup The temperature for the correction task was set to 0 (Song et al., 2024). We used BLEU and GLEU scores, which are commonly used metrics in GEC research (Koo et al., 2024; Yoon et al., 2023). To facilitate efficient inference with the LLMs used in our experiments, we utilized the vLLM library (Kwon et al., 2023).

Model		Task		Zero-shot		Task	
		Description		CoT		Decomposition	
Metric		BLEU	GLEU	BLEU	GLEU	BLEU	GLEU
	Gemma2-2b	69.34	61.77	63.14	54.74	64.63	57.82
Learner	Gemma2-9b	60.98	50.13	57.75	45.46	65.42	57.78
Corpus	Qwen2.5-1.5b	66.64	57.01	63.11	49.97	68.14	60.08
	Qwen2.5-7b	58.49	47.70	60.42	50.50	63.84	55.56

Table 4: Correction task performance of all models using the learner corpus.

C.2 Remaining Experimental Results

Results of Learner Corpus We present the full results of the four models using the learner corpus in Table 4. We selected the Kor-Learner dataset from the original one (Yoon et al., 2023), as it effectively represents the typical characteristics of language learner corpora. When comparing the results with those from UniGEC, we found that our dataset was more challenging in simpler prompt configurations, as outlined in the task description. However, when the task was broken down into its core components for inference, our dataset exhibited higher scores.

Performance Variations across Domains In addition to the results presented in Figure 2, we observed consistent performance differences for all models and metrics. The trends across all eight domains resembled those in Figure 2, with domains using more technical terminology, such as containing *Sciences*, showing notably lower performance.

D Prompt Templates

Keyword extraction

keywords: {keywords}

Your task is extracting the keywords from the given sentences. You will be provided with the text written on the topic of "{*domain_name*}". Please refer these examples, do not copy them for the generated results. # domain-specific few-shot samples sentences: {*sentences*}

Please extract the top 8 most significant keywords from the sentences below. Always answer in Korean without any explanations. sentences: {*input_text*} keywords:

Task description for the leaner corpus

Do grammatical error correction on all the following sentences. Always answer in Korean, without any explanations. input: {*input_text*} output: 783

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786	• Task description for UniGEC
787	Please revise any unnatural words in the given sentences to better fit the context, while keeping the rest unchanged as much as possible. Always answer in Korean, without any explanations. input: { <i>input_text</i> } output:
788	• Zero-shot CoT for the learner corpus
	<pre># phase 1 Do grammatical error correction on all the following sentences. Let's think step by step. Always answer in Korean. input: {input_text} reasoning path:</pre>
789	<pre># phase 2 reasoning path: {reasoning_path} Do grammatical error correction that fit the given sentences. Let's think step by step. Always answer in Korean, without any explanations. input: {input_text} output:</pre>
790	• Zero-shot CoT for UniGEC
	<pre># phase 1 Please revise any unnatural words in the given sentences to better fit the context, while keeping the rest unchanged as much as possible. input: {input_text} reasoning path:</pre>
791	<pre># phase 2 reasoning path: {reasoning_path} Please revise any unnatural words in the given sentences to better fit the context, while keeping the rest unchanged as much as possible. Let's think step by step. Always answer in Korean, without any explanations. input: {input_text} output:</pre>
792	• Task decomposition for the learner corpus
	<pre># phase 1 Please detect words with any grammatical errors in the given sentences. Always answer in Korean. input: {input_text} reasoning path:</pre>
793	<pre># phase 2 reasoning path: {reasoning_path} Based on detected words, do grammatical error correction that fit the given sentences. Always answer in Korean, without any explanations. input: {input_text} output:</pre>

• Task decomposition for UniGEC

phase 1

Please detect any unnatural words in the given sentences according to the context. Always answer in Korean. input: {input_text} reasoning path:

phase 2

reasoning path: {*reasoning_path*} Based on detected words, please revise any unnatural words in the given sentences to better fit the context, while keeping the rest unchanged as much as possible. Always answer in Korean, without any explanations. input: {input_text} output:

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