

# IOL Research’s Submission for WMT 2023 Quality Estimation Shared Task

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## Abstract

This paper presents the submissions of IOL Research in WMT 2023 quality estimation shared task. We participate in task 1 Quality Estimation on both sentence and word levels, which predicts sentence quality score and word quality tags. Our system is a cross-lingual and multitask model for both sentence and word levels. We utilize several multilingual Pretrained Language Models (PLMs) as backbones and build task modules on them to achieve better predictions. A regression module on PLM is used to predict sentence level score and word tagging layer is used to classify the tag of each word in the translation based on the encoded representations from PLM. Each PLM is pretrained on quality estimation and metrics data from the previous WMT tasks before finetuning on training data this year. Furthermore, we integrate predictions from different models for better performance while the weights of each model are automatically searched and optimized by performance on Dev set. Our method achieves competitive results.

## 1 Introduction

Quality Estimation (QE) is the task of predicting the quality of a target machine translation without using reference texts or human inputs (Specia et al., 2018). Since machine translation is in high demand nowadays, the development of QE system becomes crucial for the broad application of machine translation. In WMT 2023 Quality Estimation shared task, there are two tasks: quality estimation and fine-grained error span detection. This paper describes our submission to task 1 quality estimation in both sentence and word levels in detail.

Considering the powerful capability and widely used in previous QE tasks of pretrained language models (PLMs) (Zerva et al., 2022; Specia et al., 2021), our method utilizes different multilingual PLMs to encode *source-translation* sentence pairs and predict sentence-level scores or word-level tags.

Such PLMs are pretrained on various languages which could show incredible ability when trained QE models are transferred to unseen language pairs. Meanwhile, extra task modules are added to PLMs to boost the interaction between source and translation sentences to make better predictions. Also, it is common that using other task data similar to QE can further improve the performance of QE. According to the results from previous years’ QE tasks, we use the data from QE and Metrics tasks from previous years’ WMT tasks, as well as Automatic Post-Editing (APE) data, to pretrain PLMs before training on data of this year.

Moreover, ensemble methods of different models are explored in sentence and word level tasks. For sentence level, we sum scores with weights from different models which are filtered by the performance on the Dev set. As for word level, we use voting or weighted sum of tag probabilities to get the final predicted tags. Taking zero-shot language pairs into account, we choose the best model evaluated on other language pairs to test if they can generalize to unseen language pairs.

## 2 Quality Estimation Task

### 2.1 Task description

WMT 2023 Quality Estimation task 1 contains two tasks. The sentence level task aims at predicting a quality score for *translation* and the word level task is to classify a quality tag for each word in *translation*. Both tasks have zero-shot language pairs to test the generalization ability of QE models and use the same *source-translation* pairs for each language pair.

**Sentence level** There are two types of quality scores. One is the Direct Assessments (DA) score which is given by human annotators for each *source-translation* pair. The other is the Multi-dimensional Quality Metrics (MQM) score which is defined and computed under MQM methodology.

train_sent	train_word	train_mtl
224195	263184	105992

Table 1: The statistics of train data

	Dev	Test
En-De	511	1897
Zh-En	505	1677
En-Mr	1000	1086
En-Gu	1000	1075
En-Hi	1000	1074
En-Ta	1000	1075
En-Te	1000	1075
He-En	-	1182
En-Fa	-	1000

Table 2: The statistics of dev and test data

A regression model is always employed to predict quality scores.

**Word level** The tags of words in *translation* are annotated by human annotators according to the MQM or DA annotations. This task requires predicting an OK or BAD for each word in *translation* given *source-translation* pairs. HTER (Specia and Farzindar, 2010)-like scores for translations can be collected by calculating the ratio of 'BAD' tags in tag sequence of *translations*. For example, given a tag sequence "OK OK BAD BAD OK", an HTER-like score is deduced by computing  $2/5=0.4$ .

**Data** QE task provides official train and dev datasets gathered from competitions of previous years and the statistics are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. On account of the task similarity to QE, we also collect the MQM data (Freitag et al., 2021a,b) from previous WMT Metrics tasks<sup>1</sup> and APE data from QT21 (Specia et al., 2017) and APE-QUEST (Depraetere et al., 2020) to do further pretraining. We calculate HTER-like score for each *source-translation* pair in APE data for the purpose of merging with those of DA and MQM.

### 3 Method

#### 3.1 Model architecture

We design distinct task modules on top of encoders for regression on sentence level and sequence tagging on word level. Source and translation texts are concatenated and input into the encoder and

then task modules to get scores or tags. Our model architecture is illustrated in Fig.1.

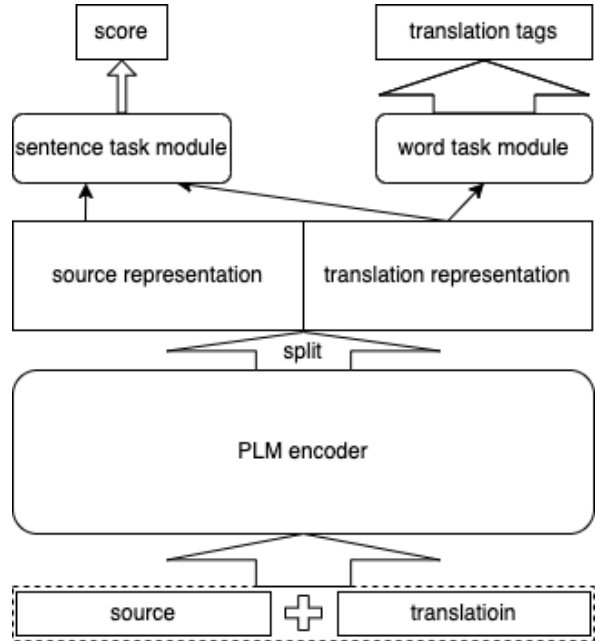


Figure 1: Model architecture with task modules for sentence-level scoring and word-level tagging

**Sentence regression module** Inspired by ESIM (Chen et al., 2017) and RE2 (Yang et al., 2019), the cross attention between *source* and *translation* reflects the similarity between words in different languages. Also considering that different layers in a transformer (Vaswani et al., 2017) based PLM catch different granularities of features of *source* and *translation* (Jawahar et al., 2019), we determine to combine these two kinds of methods to strengthen the representations of *source* and *translation*. In detail, for *source*  $s$  and *translation*  $t$  respectively, mixed layer-wise representations  $s_{mix}$  and  $t_{mix}$  from a PLM with  $L$  layers are computed in Eq. 1~Eq. 4.

$$s^l = \text{mean\_pooling}([s_1^l, s_2^l, \dots, s_m^l]), \quad (1)$$

$$t^l = \text{mean\_pooling}([t_1^l, t_2^l, \dots, t_n^l]), \quad (2)$$

$$s_{mix} = \sum_{l=1}^L w_s^l * s^l, \text{ where } \sum_{l=1}^L w_s^l = 1 \quad (3)$$

$$t_{mix} = \sum_{l=1}^L w_t^l * t^l, \text{ where } \sum_{l=1}^L w_t^l = 1 \quad (4)$$

Then cross attention outputs  $s_{ca}$  and  $t_{ca}$  from the last layer of PLM are calculated to get token level

<sup>1</sup><https://github.com/Unbabel/COMET>

interactions between *source* and *translation* as shown in Eq. 5 ~Eq. 9.

$$e_{ij} = s_i^T t_j \quad (5)$$

$$s_i^{ca} = \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{\exp(e_{ij})}{\sum_{k=1}^n \exp(e_{ik})} t_j, \forall i \in [1, 2, \dots, m] \quad (6)$$

$$t_j^{ca} = \sum_{i=1}^m \frac{\exp(e_{ij})}{\sum_{k=1}^m \exp(e_{kj})} s_i, \forall j \in [1, 2, \dots, n] \quad (7)$$

$$s_{ca} = \text{mean\_pooling}([s_1^{ca}, s_2^{ca}, \dots, s_m^{ca}]) \quad (8)$$

$$t_{ca} = \text{mean\_pooling}([t_1^{ca}, t_2^{ca}, \dots, t_n^{ca}]) \quad (9)$$

Next, features of *source* and *translation* are fused separately to transform into a combined representation through feedforward network (FFN) layer by Eq. 10 and Eq. 11.

$$s_{comb} = FFN([s_{ca}; s_{mix}; |s_{ca} - s_{mix}|; s_{ca} * s_{mix}]) \quad (10)$$

$$t_{comb} = FFN([t_{ca}; t_{mix}; |t_{ca} - t_{mix}|; t_{ca} * t_{mix}]) \quad (11)$$

Finally, the sentence-level score is obtained by another FFN layer in Eq. 12.

$$\text{score} = FFN([s_{comb}; t_{comb}]) \quad (12)$$

**Word tagging module** We choose two distinct modules to generate tags for words after encoded by PLM. A Bidirectional-LSTM (Hochreiter and Schmidhuber, 1997) (BiLSTM) layer is added to enhance the interaction between the representations of *source* and *translation*, and a FFN layer on it to predict tags in *translation*. Another kind of module only adopts a FFN layer to generate tag predictions to avoid overfitting on training data.

**Multitask combination** In order to boost the individual performance of sentence level and word level models, we propose a multitask training approach. Both the regression module and tagging module are added to the encoder which predicts the sentence score like DA or MQM and word tags simultaneously. For language pairs that have no DA or MQM data but only word tags, we take HTER scores as sentence scores. We train word-level models by optimizing the prediction of HTER scores and word tags simultaneously. To not damage the potentiality of tagging module, some simple regression modules are used when doing multitask training, including

$$\text{score} = FFN(\text{mean\_pooling}(\mathbf{t}_{[1:n]})) \quad (13)$$

and

$$\text{score} = FFN([\bar{s}; \bar{t}; |\bar{s} - \bar{t}|; \bar{s} * \bar{t}]) \quad (14)$$

where  $\mathbf{t}_{[1:n]}$  is the list of word representations of *translation* from tagging module, and  $\bar{s}$  and  $\bar{t}$  are the mean representations of words' representations of *source* and *translation* from the encoder.

**Loss** The losses for score regression, word tagging and multitask training are described as follows:

$$\mathcal{L}_{sent} = (\text{score}_{pred} - \text{score}_{true})^2 \quad (15)$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{word} = -\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \log p(y_i) \quad (16)$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{multitask} = \mathcal{L}_{sent} + \mathcal{L}_{word} \quad (17)$$

where  $p(y_i)$  is the probability of OK/BAD tag from the model.

### 3.2 Score refinement

According to the similar definitions and score intervals of DA and MQM, we transform the score  $s$  out of  $[-1, 1]$  as close to  $[-1, 1]$  as possible while keeping the Spearman correlation coefficient unchanged using Eq. 18 to lessen the need for predicting extreme values during training.

$$s' = \begin{cases} (s+1)*0.1-1, & s < -1 \\ s, & -1 \leq s \leq 1 \\ (s-1)*0.1+1, & s > 1 \end{cases} \quad (18)$$

### 3.3 Encoder selection

QE requires texts from different languages as input, so we take multilingual PLMs as encoders which are pretrained on colossal multilingual corpus. The following PLMs are selected as encoders: XLM-Roberta-Large (Conneau et al., 2020)<sup>2</sup>, RemBERT (Chung et al., 2021)<sup>3</sup>, InfoXLM-Large (Chi et al., 2021)<sup>4</sup> and mDeBERTa (He et al., 2021)<sup>5</sup>. Each PLM is combined with different task modules for training.

<sup>2</sup><https://huggingface.co/xlm-roberta-large>

<sup>3</sup><https://huggingface.co/google/rembert>

<sup>4</sup><https://huggingface.co/microsoft/infoclm-large>

<sup>5</sup><https://huggingface.co/microsoft/mdeberta-v3-base>

### 3.4 Model Training

We first pretrain encoders with a simple regression head to do regression on WMT Metrics and HTER data while retaining the checkpoints of encoders with the best performance on Dev set. When using WMT Metrics data, we train two versions of models where one uses DA data only and the other uses a mix of DA and MQM data. Subsequently, we drop the regression head and then finetune the pretrained encoder with different task modules on multilingual QE data. In order to eliminate the possible side effect of position variation in *translation*, we swap the input order of *source* and *translation* as a comparison. We conduct single-task and multitask training for both sentence and word levels.

### 3.5 Ensemble methods

**Sentence level** For each language pair having training data, we randomly search weights for the weighted sum of the top 10 models in accordance with the Spearman correlation coefficient on Dev set. As for zero-shot language pairs, we pick the best two or three trained models from those language pairs having training data individually then predict and average the scores from them.

**Word level** We propose three strategies of tag prediction ensemble for each word. At first, for each language pair having training data, the top 10 models with the best Matthews Correlation Coefficient on Dev set are picked out. Therefore each word in *translation* has 10 predicted tags or 10 probability pairs of (OK, BAD) from different models. The final tag of one word is acquired in one of three ways:

- 1 if one of 10 tags is BAD, the final tag is BAD;
- 2 if one of 10 tags is OK, the final tag is OK;
- 3 if the weighted sum of probabilities of OK is larger than that of BAD, the final tag is OK, and vice versa.

When utilizing the third one, the weights of models are searched randomly as in sentence-level ensemble. As for zero-shot language pairs, we pick the best two trained models from those language pairs having training data individually and apply one of the above strategies to get final predictions.

## 4 Experiments

### 4.1 Settings

All our models are completed with PyTorch and transformers (Wolf et al., 2020)<sup>6</sup> and trained on NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3090 24G for the pre-training and finetuning described in 3.4. Models are trained with AdamW (Loshchilov and Hutter, 2017) with learning rate of 1e-5, max sequence length of 230, batch size of 16 and 3 epochs. Models with different task modules are optimized by selecting the checkpoint with the best Spearman correlation coefficient or Matthews Correlation Coefficient (MCC) on Dev set for each language pair separately. Three versions of PLM are pretrained as described in 3.4 for each combination of language pair and PLM, which are listed in the order of "DA-only, DA+MQM, HTER" in Table 4, Table 7 and Table 8 while Table 3 are only "DA-only, DA+MQM" for each language pair. Optuna (Akiba et al., 2019) is used to search the weights of model ensembles described in 3.5.

### 4.2 Results and Analysis

**Sentence level** For results in Table 3 of Dev set with MQM annotations, results based on mDeBERTa perform best in all settings. Models with PLMs pretrained on "DA-only" data achieve better results than those "DA+MQM" models which indicates that the difference in score range between DA and MQM has a great effect. For Table 7 of Dev set with DA annotations, models pretrained on "DA-only" data perform best among different combinations of PLMs and language pairs. Also, InfoXLM and XLM-Roberta-Large show higher correlations than other PLMs. Meanwhile, the score refinement defined in 3.2 has a positive impact in both Table 3 and Table 7 which suggests the necessity to unify the range of different scores. However, correlations of different PLMs vary a lot for each language pair which suggests we still have room for improvement. Also, when using multitask training, the Spearman correlation coefficient increases compared to only training on sentence-level data. The "DA+MQM" data improves the performance of En-De while becoming worse on Zh-En.

**Word level** The results in Table 4 indicate that pretraining data, PLM and task modules affect the model performance to varying degrees. Since HTER data is most related to word-level task, the

<sup>6</sup><https://github.com/huggingface/transformers>

sentence level	MQM			
	En-De		Zh-En	
	DA-only			
XLM-Roberta-Large	0.5162	0.4219	0.3424	0.3028
mDeBERTa	0.5467	0.5281	0.3310	0.3717
RemBert	0.5040	0.4231	0.3048	0.2948
InfoXLM	0.5295	0.3786	0.3670	0.2881
	DA+MQM			
XLM-Roberta-Large	0.5346	0.4459	0.2889	0.2495
mDeBERTa	0.5668	0.5470	0.3110	0.3597
RemBert	0.5141	0.4323	0.3042	0.2822
InfoXLM	0.5342	0.4451	0.3039	0.2793
	DA-only w/ score_refine			
XLM-Roberta-Large	0.5218	0.4277	0.3254	0.2772
mDeBERTa	0.5435	0.5202	0.3319	0.3594
RemBert	0.5144	0.4092	0.2894	0.3080
InfoXLM	0.5266	0.4047	0.3734	0.2945
	DA+MQM w/ score_refine			
XLM-Roberta-Large	0.5386	0.4561	0.3005	0.2473
mDeBERTa	0.5728	0.5494	0.3227	0.3547
RemBert	0.5092	0.4302	0.2973	0.2840
InfoXLM	0.5309	0.4599	0.3037	0.2863

Table 3: Spearman correlation on Dev of sentence level on combinations of training data and score refinement(optional)

results based on pretraining on HTER data are best. Besides, models with RemBert or InfoXLM on En-De give bad results while models with BiLSTM as task module on Zh-En overfit on Dev set when submitting to test. In addition, swapping the order of *source* and *translation* has no improvement. For En-De and En-Mr, training on word-level data only is better than multitask training.

**Multitask** As shown in Table 8, multitask training improves the correlation of sentence-level task on all language pairs while only MCC of Zh-En grows. The score refinement method raises the correlation of word-level task obviously compared to models without applying score refinement. Yet, it does not always have a positive effect on sentence-level task. The multitask training for Zh-En avoids overfitting on Dev set and using BiLSTM as task module surpasses using FFN. Different PLMs will perform better if combined with specific task modules, which needs further experiments.

**Ensemble** The official results of models ensemble on dev and test for sentence level and word level are shown in Table 5 and Table 6 respectively. The ensemble method outperforms single model performance by a large margin. Our models have competitive results on all language pairs.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper describes our work for WMT 2023 Quality Estimation Task 1 on both sentence level and word level. With the help of PLMs and extra data, we can train better representations of *source* text and its *translation* for quality estimation task. We also experiment with diverse combinations of PLMs, task modules, and pretraining datasets. We find that QE systems for certain language pairs need to adopt particular combinations to acquire improvement, which reveals that there are distinct characteristics between languages. Such features make it hard to build one model for all languages, especially those without labeled data. The multitask training approach shows obvious improvements and prevents models from overfitting. Besides, the score refinement trick does not always give us positive feedback which suggests the number range is not the only factor to train on DA and MQM data properly. As expected, the ensemble method makes the predictions have a higher correlation with the ground truth. For future work, we will explore more profitable pretraining techniques for quality estimation and efficient modules that work well for various language pairs.

## Limitations

Although our method has shown competitive results on most language pairs, evaluation results on zero-shot language pairs suggest that the model is not so powerful in generalization and relies on manual adjustment to some extent like choosing the weights among different models in the ensemble. Such operations could affect the model performance when transferring to unseen language pairs. Furthermore, we only designed two kinds of modules to generate tags in word-level task with slight improvement over baselines. It will be a potential research area to design more efficient prediction modules that can predict more accurate tags and we leave it as future work.

Also, other training configurations like weight decay and layer-wise learning rate decay were not experimented with sufficiently. Due to the discrepancy between training loss and evaluation metric, the choice of loss was a critical factor in model performance which was unexplored. Lastly, the limited amount of data constrained the improvement of models and overfitting on Dev set still has a great effect on optimization. We hope these analyses can promote the research of quality estimation.

word level	En-De		Zh-En				En-Mr		
	BiLSTM + regression(Eq. 13)								
mDeBERTa	0.3354	0.3364	0.3388	0.4483	0.4868	0.4447	0.3443	0.3500	0.3566
RemBert	0.0370	0.0160	0.0076	0.4842	0.4140	0.4736	0.3657	0.3601	0.3637
InfoXLM	0.0327	0.0456	0.0288	0.5491	0.4656	0.5249	0.3466	0.3385	0.3603
FFN + regression(Eq. 14)									
mDeBERTa	0.3206	0.3306	0.3315	0.4666	0.5013	0.4727	0.3399	0.3396	0.3443
RemBert	0.3213	0.2477	0.3313	0.4715	0.4993	0.4575	0.3724	0.3158	0.3504
InfoXLM	0.2972	0.2905	0.3042	0.5411	0.4860	0.5230	0.3554	0.3407	0.3601
FFN + regression(Eq. 14) w/ swap_order									
mDeBERTa	0.3167	0.3451	0.3306	0.5252	0.4951	0.4506	0.3305	0.3339	0.3469
RemBert	0.3123	0.2752	0.3023	0.4547	0.4513	0.4715	0.3610	0.3448	0.3153
InfoXLM	0.2969	0.2851	0.2957	0.5167	0.5032	0.5549	0.3520	0.3277	0.3626

Table 4: Spearman correlation on Dev of word level on combinations of tagging modules(BiLSTM/FFN) and regression modules with swapping orders(optional)

	Dev	Test
En-De	0.612	0.483
Zh-En	0.403	0.482
En-Mr	0.626	0.505
En-Gu	0.706	0.695
En-Hi	0.603	0.600
En-Ta	0.708	0.740
En-Te	0.474	0.376
He-En	-	0.575
Multilingual	-	0.513

Table 5: Spearman correlation of sentence level on Dev and Test

	Dev	Test
En-De	0.343	0.256
Zh-En	0.221	0.250
En-Mr	0.398	0.334
He-En	-	0.359
En-Fa	-	0.351
Multilingual	-	0.298

Table 6: MCC of word level on Dev and Test

## Ethics Statement

This work follows all the rules of [ACL Ethics Policy](#) during the experiments of training and evaluation. The data used in this work are publicly available and widely used or provided by the organization of the competition. And to the best of the authors’ knowledge, we do not foresee any risks against the [ACL Ethics Policy](#).

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multitask	En-De			Zh-En			En-Mr		
				SRM + BiLSTM					
mDeBERTa	0.5724/0.2933	0.5360/0.3503	0.5749/0.3012	0.3063/0.2360	0.3383/0.2062	0.3170/0.2412	0.5783/0.2294	0.5808/0.2381	0.5707/0.2086
RemBert	0.5390/0.0018	0.4353/0.0013	0.5340/0.0052	0.2882/0.1920	0.2661/0.1804	0.3108/0.1879	0.5895/0.2934	0.5710/0.2515	0.5926/0.3205
InfoXLM	0.5206/-0.0004	0.4342/0.0377	0.5033/0.0087	0.3237/0.2826	0.2791/0.2230	0.2980/0.2791	0.5712/0.2860	0.5739/0.2788	0.5801/0.3151
				SRM + FFN					
mDeBERTa	0.5638/0.3036	0.5389/0.3070	0.5738/0.3055	0.3113/0.2212	0.3377/0.2091	0.3140/0.2187	0.5859/0.2581	0.5669/0.2555	0.5829/0.2942
RemBert	0.5439/0.2475	0.4288/0.2509	0.5134/0.2869	0.2834/0.1774	0.2878/0.1558	0.3069/0.1516	0.5787/0.2982	0.5674/0.2615	0.5911/0.3036
InfoXLM	0.5317/0.3161	0.4254/0.1994	0.5358/0.2149	0.3487/0.3283	0.2721/0.2043	0.3114/0.2935	0.5703/0.3018	0.5668/0.2896	0.5799/0.3169
				SRM + BiLSTM w/ score_refine					
mDeBERTa	0.5580/0.3028	0.5411/0.3461	0.5597/0.2766	0.3281/0.2308	0.3438/0.2116	0.3143/0.2027	0.5877/0.2796	0.5709/0.2959	0.5834/0.2819
RemBert	0.5457/0.0080	0.4425/0.0119	0.5239/0.0051	0.2750/0.1871	0.2968/0.1695	0.3332/0.1684	0.5762/0.3176	0.5962/0.3233	0.5868/0.3250
InfoXLM	0.5272/0.0088	0.4186/0.0195	0.5097/-0.0042	0.3390/0.2763	0.2621/0.1742	0.3332/0.2704	0.5714/0.3062	0.5700/0.3026	0.5734/0.3227
				SRM + FFN w/ score_refine					
mDeBERTa	0.5681/0.3224	0.5364/0.3209	0.5706/0.3190	0.3277/0.2490	0.3364/0.1634	0.3052/0.2231	0.5841/0.2606	0.5735/0.2874	0.5803/0.3015
RemBert	0.5419/0.2808	0.4226/0.2376	0.5268/0.2688	0.2839/0.1695	0.2818/0.1663	0.3346/0.1743	0.5833/0.3086	0.5901/0.3194	0.5848/0.3254
InfoXLM	0.5062/0.2516	0.4300/0.2761	0.5072/0.2882	0.3256/0.2746	0.2677/0.2480	0.3059/0.2784	0.5679/0.3008	0.5753/0.3009	0.5809/0.3108

Table 8: Spearman correlation and MCC on Dev of multitask training on sentence and word levels of sentence regression module(SRM) with tagging modules(BiLSTM/FFN) and score refinement(optional)