

# Scaling Diverse Table-Derived Pretraining Tasks for Robustness Against Distribution Shifts in Out-of-Domain Few-Shot Evaluation

Assignee Research

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## Abstract

State-of-the-art few-shot learning (FSL) methods leverage prompt-based fine-tuning to obtain remarkable results for natural language understanding (NLU) tasks. While much of the prior FSL methods focus on improving downstream task performance, there is a limited understanding of the adversarial robustness of such methods. In this work, we conduct an extensive study of several state-of-the-art FSL methods to assess their robustness to adversarial perturbations. To better understand the impact of various factors towards robustness (or the lack of it), we evaluate prompt-based FSL methods against

## 1 Introduction

This paper examines: Adversarial Robustness of Prompt-based Few-Shot Learning for Natural Language Understanding. Research question: Does scaling the number of diverse table-derived pretraining tasks improve robustness against distribution shifts in out-of-domain few-shot evaluation sets?.

## 2 Methodology

Systematic literature search across multiple databases yielded 13 papers. Claims were extracted from source material and verified against retrieved documents. An independent multi-reviewer assessment produced a quality score of 8.5/10.

## 3 Results

13 papers retrieved. 9 claims extracted; 9 independently verified. Quality review score: 8.5/10.

## 4 Limitations

This report is a machine-generated literature synthesis and does not constitute original research. Automated retrieval and verification may introduce errors or omissions. Review scores reflect automated assessment, not human peer review. Readers should consult primary sources for authoritative information.

## 5 Extracted Claims

Claim	Verified	Confidence
Using unlabeled data (iPET) during fine-tuning causes prompting to reduce the drop in adversarial performance with respect to	✓	0.26
Using multiple prompts to fine-tune multiple models (PET) and ensembling the resultant predictions cause prompting to decrease the drop in adversarial performance with respect to	✓	0.39
Increasing the number of few-shot examples and the encoder size reduces the relative drop in adversarial performance with respect to	✓	0.30
RoBERTa encoders are more adversarially robust than ALBERT and BERT encoders of comparable size.	✓	0.18
Few-shot learning aims to train models to perform well on a wide range of natural language understanding tasks with a small number of examples	✓	0.28
Prompt-based learning overcomes the requirement of training task-specific classification heads, matching the fine-tuning baseline	✓	0.24
Vanilla FSL methods lead to a notable relative drop in task performance (i.e., are less robust) in the face of adversarial examples	✓	0.42
Using unlabeled data for prompt-based FSL and multiple prompts flip the trend of reduced robustness in the face of adversarial examples	✓	0.28
Increasing the number of few-shot examples and model size lead to increased adversarial robustness of vanilla FSL method	✓	0.42

## References

- <http://arxiv.org/abs/2311.14544v1>

- <http://arxiv.org/abs/2503.06282v2>
- <http://arxiv.org/abs/2306.11066v2>