Theory-Driven Analysis of Large Corpora: Semi-Supervised Topic Classification of the UN Speeches

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January 30, 2020

(Social Science Computer Review, forthcoming)

Abstract

There is a growing interest in quantitative analysis of large corpora among the International Relations (IR) scholars, but many of them find it difficult to perform analysis consistently with existing theoretical frameworks using unsupervised machine learning models to further develop the field. To solve this problem, we created a set of techniques that utilize a semi-supervised model that allows researchers to classify documents into pre-defined categories efficiently. We propose a dictionary making procedure to avoid inclusion of words that are likely to confuse the model and deteriorate its classification performance using a new entropy-based diagnostic tool. In our experiments, we classify sentences of the UN General Assembly speeches into six pre-defined categories using the seeded LDA and Newsmap, which were trained with a small “seed word dictionary” that we create following the procedure. The result shows that, while keyword dictionary can only classify 25% of sentences, Newsmap can classify over 60% of them correctly and it exceeds 70% when contextual information is taken into consideration by kernel smoothing of topic likelihoods. We argue that once seed word dictionaries are created by the IR community, semi-supervised models would become more useful than unsupervised models for theory-driven text analysis.

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Discourse analysis has been widely used in studies of International Relations (IR) since the “Third Great Debate” (Milliken 1999; Banta 2013; Holzscheiter 2014; Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams 2013), in which the constructivist scholars challenged the dominant status of realism and liberalism. Aiming to understand the relationship between discourses and international politics, researchers have analyzed an extensive range of issues such as terrorism (Jackson 2005), Bosnian War (Hansen 2006), and Japanese nationalism (Suzuki 2015) in official speeches, government statements, newspaper articles and academic works.

While discourse analysis is conducted qualitatively in those studies, an increasing number of IR scholars are embarking on quantitative analysis of large textual data such as debates at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) employing natural language processing techniques (Baturo et al. 2017; Gurciullo and Mikhaylov 2017; Schoenfeld et al. 2018). These speeches are a very useful source of information for IR scholars, because representatives of the member countries express their foreign policies on various issues such as development, terrorism and human rights in the forum. The speeches are approximately 15 minutes long and transcribed and translated into English. The content of the speeches enables IR scholars to infer and compare foreign policies of the UN member states over years. Baturo et al. (2017) collected all the speech transcripts from 1970-2017 and made them available in the United Nations General Debate corpus.

The corpus was used to measure similarity of foreign policies between states by Baturo et al. (2017) and Gurciullo and Mikhaylov (2017) using quantitative text analysis techniques, but their classification or measurement schemes lacked consistency with earlier content analysis that was conducted manually (e.g. Brunn 1999) due to the limitation of the machine learning models: Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is a unsupervised model widely used in legislative or electoral studies to classify documents into topics, but it is nearly impossible for researchers to match topics identified by an unsupervised LDA and human coders; supervised models such as naïve Bayes, Random Forest, and support-vector machines (SVMs) allow researchers to define topics but a large-training set is often too expensive for resource-strapped
researchers to create.

We aim to solve these problems by developing a set of techniques to identify pre-defined topics of documents using a semi-supervised machine learning model. In the following sections, we will point out the problems of existing methods for topic classification, introduce our semi-supervised document classification techniques, and demonstrate their effectiveness in a series of experiments. We will employ a two semi-supervised models, Newsmap (Watanabe 2018b) and seeded LDA (Lu et al. 2011) both of which take seed words as weak supervision. The former is a variant of naïve Bayes classifier trained on documents that contain seed words, while the latter is an LDA model fitted with word priors weighted by seed words. Therefore, the central piece of this paper is the technique to find good seed words for topics.

In the experiments, we will classify sentences of the speeches in the General Debate corpus into six topics (“greeting”, “UN”, “security”, “human rights”, “democracy”, “development”) that are considered important in the IR literature. We choose sentences as the unit of analysis not only because classification of smaller units enables fine-grained analysis, such as association between topics and countries or sentiments, but also because sentences have greater validity than paragraphs or quasi-sentences that contain multiple topics or lack objective boundaries (Dänkler et al. 2012; Grimmer and Stewart 2013). However, sentence classification is more challenging than classification of the larger text units due to the small number of words they contain.

The results of our experiments will show that researchers can perform topic classification of sentences by Newsmap with 60% accuracy, which is better than by the seeded LDA. The classification result is the best when the entropy-based diagnostic tools is used to identify words that are likely to make definition of topics less clear if included. Further, over 70% of sentences can be classified accurately if the contextual information is exploited by kernel smoothing of topic likelihoods.

We believe that IR scholars can further develop the theory in the field by analyzing large corpora systematically and consistently with existing theoretical frameworks using semi-
supervised models. We recommend researchers to use these models because they achieve good balance between the cost and control, i.e. they can control classification results without costly manual coding of documents. Once valid seed words for relevant topics are identified, they can repeat the same analysis on different corpora using semi-supervised models and compare the results for vigorous scientific debates.

In our discussion, “keywords” refers to words that are used to obtain frequency counts of words for document classification in the classic dictionary-based approach, while “seed words” refers to words used to train semi-supervised document classifiers (Newsmap and seeded LDA). These words are both in a dictionary, but we distinguish between these two types of lexica by calling them “keyword dictionary” or “seed word dictionary”.

For the following examples and experiments, we pre-processed the texts in the following manner to construct a document-feature matrix using an R package *quanteda* ([Benoit et al. 2018](#)). We divided speeches into sentences, segmented these sentences into tokens (words), and removed numeric tokens and punctuation marks based on the rules and character classes defined by International Component for Unicode (ICU). After compounding sequences of tokens for multi-word expressions in the dictionaries (e.g. “human rights” and “climate change”) into single tokens, we removed grammatical words and infrequent words (less than 10 times in the corpus).

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**Problems of existing methods**

**Dictionary Analysis**

Dictionaries are set of keywords in pre-defined categories corresponding to certain concepts, and often used in quantitative analysis as a robust theory-driven method. For example,

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1 The ICU library segments texts with acronyms with dots erroneously, but this problem was solved in its version 56. Although this new functionality was not available when this study was conducted, the number of errors is small in our data, because the *quanteda* package has special handling for titles (e.g. “Mr.” and “Dr.”).
Lexicoder Topic Dictionary (Albaugh and Soroka 2013) contains 1,387 keywords under 28 topics (e.g. macroeconomics, civil rights, healthcare, agriculture etc.) based on the Comparative Agenda Project’s coding scheme. Since keywords for categories are manually selected, dictionary analysis allows researchers to assess not only the “criterion validity” but also the “content validity” of the measurement (c.f. Adcock and Collier 2001; Sartori and Pasini 2007).

However, dictionaries sometimes produce false results due to their strong context dependency (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). Therefore, if researchers wish to study documents in fields or languages that are new to quantitative text analysis, they have to create a dictionary from scratch, but it is not easy to collect hundreds of words manually (King et al. 2017). The number of keywords required for a dictionary depends on the concepts to capture and documents to analyze, but it tends to be very large when they are complex and sparse.

Even if dictionaries are available, researchers can only produce simple frequency counts in dictionary analysis. They usually obtain frequency counts of words in documents using a dictionary and divide them by their lengths (i.e. total number of words) to gauge the salience of the concepts, which is only relative to other categories. Therefore, keyword-based classification does not offer theoretically grounded threshold for the reliability of classification results based on probabilities such the likelihood ratio.

**Unsupervised Topic Models**

A variety of unsupervised topic models such as the LDA (Blei et al. 2003), the Correlated Topic Model (CTM) (Blei et al. 2007), and the Bayesian Hierarchical Topic Model (Grimmer 2010) have been used to identify topics in documents. Roberts et al. (2016) developed a structural topic model (STM), which allows researchers to discover the relationship between topics and documents’ attributes (e.g. country and year) by incorporating them into topic identification. These “topic models” assume that documents are mixtures of multiple topics and identify user-provided number of topics as clusters of words solely based on their
However, unsupervised topic models almost always produce topics that are inconsistent with the theoretical framework. To highlight this problem, we fitted an unsupervised, or unseeded, LDA model to discover 20 topics in the UN General Assembly speeches in the post-Cold War period (Table 1). To make topics more interpretable, we applied the FREX method that down weights common words (Roberts et al. 2014), and manually mapped 18 LDA topics to the six substantive topics, excluding two that are very difficult to interpret (a.k.a. “garbage topics”). We are fully aware that such post-hoc interpretation and selection of topics risks error and distortions, but this is a common practice among the users of unsupervised topic models. We also evaluated the result of classification by the model using a manually-coded dataset (explained in the Experiment section), and found its performance was very poor: the F1 scores ranged between 0.01 (“democracy”) and 0.28 (“development”), making the overall score to be F1=0.13.

Semi-supervised topic classification techniques

Computer scientists have developed various types of semi-supervised techniques, which exploits not only labeled documents but also unlabeled documents in training models (Chapelle et al. 2010). For example, Blum and Mitchell (1998)’s “co-training” technique extracts features from a small number of labelled documents and uses these features to expand the training set for a better classification result. In their experiment, they iteratively expanded training set by including most reliable classification results from a naïve Bayes classifier, and achieved significantly lower prediction errors than a model without the expansion. (Zickovitz and Hirsh 2000) have proposed a technique to expand training sets by nearest neighbor classification of unlabeled documents, and demonstrated that this technique is the most

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2 We found that 20 is optimal number of topics for LDA using methods developed by Cao et al. (2009) and Deveaud et al. (2013) through the ldatune package.

3 The F1 score is a harmonic mean of precision and recall. Precision measures the proportion of items classified as X are true X; recall measures the proportion of items classified as X in all true X.
Table 1: Topics and words in unseeded (unsupervised) LDA. Words are weighted by FREX by their exclusivity and LDA topics are manually mapped to substantive topics.

| Topic         | LDA topic | Words                                                                 |
|---------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GREETING      | 6         | people, world, time, year, like, africa, mr, african, role, need     |
|               | 8         | new, republic, session, many, among, national, us, sustainable, mr, parties |
|               | 16        | states, international, support, cooperation, today, regional, resources, president, order, mr |
| UN            | 3         | united nations, international, world, development, people, support, efforts, community, social, security council |
|               | 15        | united nations, international, must, social, make, challenges, respect, order, time, nations |
|               | 20        | world, must, us, years, general assembly, united nations, like, end, need, system |
| SECURITY      | 7         | world, new, security, well, role, us, global, made, progress, developing |
|               | 9         | also, peace, country, one, global, president, process, countries, government, reform |
|               | 12        | government, security, development, countries, like, one, support, president, organization, stability |
|               | 18        | government, countries, security, years, developing, need, work, end, must, time |
| HUMAN RIGHTS  | 2         | people, world, political, states, efforts, state, region, human rights, end, war |
|               | 4         | development, human rights, today, process, country, challenges, now, towards, rights, agenda |
|               | 19        | time, organization, human, must, human rights, situation, efforts, president, system, effective |
| DEMOCRACY     | 10        | also, can, africa, political, role, people, secretary-general, particular, just, every |
|               | 13        | political, economic, global, general assembly, african, within, sustainable, weapons, conference, goals |
| DEVELOPMENT   | 5         | global, order, work, social, africa, situation, security council, challenges, way, goals |
|               | 11        | states, development, new, efforts, democracy, way, regard, also, ensure, assembly |
|               | 17        | can, global, united nations, developing, now, year, among, regional, problems, nuclear |
effective when labelled documents are short and scarce. More recently, external data such as Wikipedia has been used as a source of universal knowledge to improve classification results (Banerjee et al. 2007; Schönhofen 2009). In the same vain, Phan et al. (2008) also trained topic models (LDA and LSA) on external data to accurately classify short documents using a supervised model.

While above models are aimed at increasing the efficiency of supervised learning, seeded models are at improving interpretability of result by using prior lexical knowledge. Lu et al. (2011) developed a technique to weight prior distribution of topics over words to detect sentences that mention specific issues. In their semi-supervised LDA model, pseudo counts are added to user-defined topic keywords before an LDA model is fit. Jagarlamudi et al. (2012) modeled topics as mixture of user-defined topics and other topics by adding extra parameters. Watanabe (2018b) developed Newsmap, a semi-supervised model for geographical classification of documents, by combining dictionary analysis and naive Bayes classifier. The model was also used for semi-supervised topic classification (Watanabe 2018a).

Naïve Bayes models can classify sentences into topics accurately because each sentence usually has only one topic. However, creation of seed dictionary for topic classification is more difficult to make than for geographical classification since there are many more potential seed words for topics than for countries. Seed word selection is a two-step process in which analysts collate candidate words that potentially help to define the categories and choose only words that have small ambiguity as seed words. Usually, short documents require greater number of seed words than long document because there are smaller chances that seed words occur in shorter texts than in longer texts. However, seed words that match unrelated documents significantly deteriorate the classifier’s performance, because false positive cases confound the true association between categories and words in the machine learning process (Jagarlamudi et al. 2012). We call words that match intended documents true seed words and those do not false seed words. Therefore, the goal in dictionary making for semi-supervised

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4 The seeded LDA model is available in the R package, topicmodels (Hornik and Grun 2011).
models is maximizing the number of true seed words while minimizing the number of false seed words.

**Semi-supervised Classification**

Newsmap is a semi-supervised model originally created to classify short news summaries according to their geographical focus (Watanabe 2018b). Unlike full-supervised models, Newsmap does not require a manually coded training set but a seed dictionary. First, the model searches the entire corpus for words in a seed dictionary to assign labels to document; second, the labels are used to estimate the association between the labels and features. This dictionary-based learning is advantageous because (1) training of new models does not require any manual coding, (2) searching a corpus for dictionary words is not computationally intensive, and (3) dictionaries can be ported to different projects without any modification.

However, Newsmap requires users to define all the relevant topics in a seed dictionary, because it estimates features’ association with a topic by comparing between their frequencies in documents with the label and all other labels, ignoring documents without labels. This exhaustiveness of topics is important not only to produce the best classification results but also to avoid arbitrary post-hoc selection of topics.

**Seed Word Selection**

A common approach to evaluating contribution of seed words to classification accuracy is using manually labeled “gold standard” (King et al. 2017), but it might risk overfitting the dictionary to the sample and less portable to other projects. Use of multiple samples for evaluation reduces this risk but manual coding of large number of the document is expensive. Therefore, we devised a heuristic approach that does not require manually coded documents in seed selection. In this approach, analysts use *coverage* and *entropy* as diagnostic statistics to judge a seed word would positively or negatively contribute to classifiers’ performance. Since these statistics are computed without manually-coded documents, their diagnosis is
only probabilistic, but we will demonstrate that they offer analysts good guidance in dictionary making in our experiments.

**Seed word coverage**

Seed word coverage indicates the proportion of the documents in which seed words occur. While keyword coverage refers to the proportion of documents that can be classified regardless of its accuracy in simple dictionary-based topic classification, seed word coverage indicates the proportion of documents that can be used to train a model in semi-supervised learning. Therefore, a higher seed word coverage is more desirable, but sentence-level classification requires many seed words to achieve this due to the small number of words in each unit.

**Average feature entropy**

Average feature entropy (AFE) statistic builds on the entropy function that is commonly used to measure uniformity of discrete variables in information processing:

$$AFE = \frac{1}{m} \sum_{i} H(F_i + 1)$$

$$F_i = [f_1, f_2, f_3, \ldots, f_n]$$

$$H(F_i) = -\sum_{j} P(f_j) \log_2 P(f_j)$$

where $m$ is the total number of features, $H$ is the entropy function and $F_i$ is vector of frequencies of features cooccur with seed words for $n$ topics. Feature frequencies are smoothed by adding one before computing entropy.

By taking frequency of cooccurrences between seed words and all other words, AFE predicts randomness of labels given to documents that tend to deteriorate the classifiers’ performance: AFE becomes high when features cooccur equally frequently with seed words for many topics, but it becomes low when they cooccur only with seed words for few topics.
(AFE = 0 when features cooccur only with seed word for one topic). To compute this statistic, we first apply a seed word dictionary to the corpus and aggregate feature frequencies by topic labels, then compute entropy for each feature.

Contextual smoothing

A trained Newsmap model can recognize a very large number of features thanks to the semi-supervised learning but some of the sentences lack topic indicators at all. In such a case, however, we can classify those sentences by considering the topics of surrounding sentences as we did in our manual coding. Contextual smoothing does not require us to modify Newsmap’s algorithm, because we can simply post-process the likelihood of topics predicted by the model: we train the classifier and predict topics in the same way as described above, and smooth the likelihood using a kernel smoother to re-classify sentences into topics with the highest scores.

Experiments

The data for our experiments is a subset of the General Debate Corpus (Baturo et al. 2017). After excluding speeches during the Cold War to ensure the consistency of topics, we sampled one speech every year from a different country (Table 2). In choosing sample countries, we kept balance in their international influence, geographical location, and levels of industrialization. We segmented these speeches into sentences and manually classified them into five topics ("UN", "security", "human rights", "democracy", "development") based on the previous studies on the UN (Zanotti 2005; Smith 2009), but we added "greeting" as a category for speakers’ opening remarks, although they are unlikely to be of IR scholars’ interests.

The AFE function is implemented in the newsmap package (available on CRAN).
Table 2: Speeches chosen for the experiment. Topics are identified by manual coding of sentences.

| Year | Country      | Greeting | UN | Security | Human | Dem. | Dev. | Total |
|------|--------------|----------|----|----------|-------|------|------|-------|
| 1991 | Australia    | 6        | 67 | 46       | 14    | 0    | 18   | 145   |
| 1992 | Libya        | 11       | 18 | 93       | 12    | 1    | 29   | 153   |
| 1993 | Ukraine      | 6        | 36 | 79       | 0     | 2    | 33   | 150   |
| 1994 | Sweden       | 4        | 26 | 72       | 11    | 1    | 16   | 126   |
| 1995 | Japan        | 2        | 28 | 43       | 2     | 0    | 34   | 107   |
| 1996 | Brazil       | 8        | 44 | 22       | 2     | 2    | 28   | 98    |
| 1997 | Zimbabwe     | 7        | 21 | 22       | 0     | 13   | 20   | 76    |
| 1998 | Mexico       | 9        | 27 | 30       | 3     | 1    | 24   | 85    |
| 1999 | Chad         | 11       | 8  | 61       | 2     | 1    | 34   | 106   |
| 2000 | United States| 7        | 42 | 26       | 14    | 10   | 14   | 106   |
| 2001 | Germany      | 4        | 7  | 80       | 18    | 2    | 11   | 118   |
| 2002 | Russia       | 0        | 15 | 60       | 2     | 0    | 10   | 87    |
| 2003 | Afghanistan  | 7        | 0  | 49       | 1     | 3    | 23   | 76    |
| 2004 | Myanmar      | 5        | 9  | 42       | 16    | 30   | 12   | 109   |
| 2005 | Tunisia      | 4        | 2  | 14       | 0     | 0    | 12   | 28    |
| 2006 | Colombia     | 2        | 1  | 29       | 1     | 12   | 19   | 62    |
| 2007 | United Kingdom| 6       | 11 | 23       | 1     | 3    | 54   | 92    |
| 2008 | Equatorial Guinea| 5   | 3  | 7        | 1     | 1    | 29   | 41    |
| 2009 | Turkmenistan | 5        | 19 | 32       | 1     | 0    | 16   | 68    |
| 2010 | Palau        | 4        | 7  | 23       | 1     | 0    | 49   | 80    |
| 2011 | China        | 5        | 0  | 46       | 0     | 0    | 85   | 131   |
| 2012 | Norway       | 8        | 15 | 28       | 18    | 5    | 1    | 67    |
| 2013 | Slovenia     | 4        | 4  | 42       | 4     | 0    | 1    | 51    |
| 2014 | Tuvalu       | 9        | 17 | 11       | 1     | 0    | 54   | 83    |
| 2015 | France       | 3        | 16 | 34       | 23    | 2    | 36   | 111   |
| 2016 | Saudi Arabia | 2        | 2  | 35       | 8     | 0    | 10   | 55    |
| 2017 | Estonia      | 0        | 13 | 36       | 15    | 1    | 31   | 96    |
Manual coding

We employ manually classified sentences as the gold standard against which we test our diagnostic tools and analytic techniques. However, sentence-level classification is not an easy task even for human coders, because sentences often (1) contain more than one indicator or (2) lack clear indication of topics. If a sentence contains multiple topics, we classify them into most salient one; if sentences mention the UN’s role on issues such as human rights protection or security assurance, we classified them into those substantive topics. If a sentence does not contain clear topic indicators, we resort topics in surround sentences to classify it. One of the authors, who has much experience in analyzing the corpus from a more substantive point of view, performed the manual coding.

Seed word selection

Seed word selection has a critical importance in seeded models. However, humans can judge the relevance of words in a list but cannot easily create such a list themselves (King et al. 2017). Therefore, we constructed two sets of seed words based on knowledge or frequency. Knowledge-based seed words are smaller sets of words selected based on researchers’ background knowledge in the field, while frequency-based seed words are larger sets of words chosen from the most frequent of words in the corpus. We consider knowledge-based seed words superior to frequency-based seed words because knowledge-based seed words offer operational definitions of the concepts and have greater external validity that ensures portability across corpora.

For our experiments, we read the debate transcripts carefully and consulted glossaries and indices of relevant books to select knowledge-based seed words; then we obtained a list

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6An example of such sentences without clear indication of topic is “the most immediate area of concern for the international community is the situation in Yugoslavia” (Australia 1991). This sentence can be classified into “security” only by looking at its previous sentence “We are all acutely conscious of how newly emergent nationalism within the borders of many existing countries around the world…” Another example is “We once again underline the importance of those values in spreading security, peace and stability… and sustainable development in a spirit of optimism and confidence in a better future” (Tunisia 2005). This sentence relates to multiple topics, but it should be classified as “security” because it is the most salient.
of the 300 most frequent words in the entire corpus and manually classified the words into relevant topics as frequency-based seed words; if the knowledge-based and frequency-based sets had common elements, we removed them from the former, except the words that define the topics (i.e. names of the topics), to highlight the impact of frequent seed words in the experiment (Table 3). In other words, we aim to identify words that are both frequent and defining in our experiments.

Table 3: Seed words used in the experiments. Knowledge-based seed words define categories, while frequency-based seed words increase coverage.

| Topic       | Knowledge-based                           | Frequency-based                                                                 |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GREETING    | greet*, thank*, express*, congratulat*, sir | great*, mr, wish*, hop*, contribut*, anniversar*, welcom*                        |
| UN          | united nations, international court*      | security council, general assembly, organization*, reform*, secretary-general, resolution*, permanent member*, charter*, session*, conference* |
| SECURITY    | secur*, kill*, attack*, dispute*, victim* | peac*, terror*, weapon*, nuclear*, conflict*, war*, disarmament*, threat*, cris*, solution*, settlement*, force*, destruction*, militar*, violence*, arm*, fight* |
| HUMAN RIGHTS| human rights, violat*, race*, dignit*, protect*, citizen*, educat* | humanitarian, child*, women, refugee*, communit*, people, respect*, responsib*, food*, health* |
| DEMOCRACY   | democra*, autocra*, dictator*, vote*, represent*, elect*, leader* | president*, party, institution*, government*, law*, republic*, free*, leadership*, legal* |
| DEVELOPMENT | develop*, market*, investment*           | econom*, climate change, assistance*, sustain*, povert*, trade*, grow*, social*, environment*, prosperit*, progress*, financ*, cooperation* |

After stemming the collected seed words to create glob patterns, we trained a Newsmap model and tested its performance by the F1 score, which is one of the standard measures in computer science. Overall, knowledge-based seed words (F1=0.53) achieved slightly better
than frequency-based seed words (F1=0.52); a larger set combining these two performed the best (F1=0.57). Classification accuracy is highest in “development” (F1=0.65) and lowest in “democracy” (F1=0.36) and “human rights” (F1=0.37) in knowledge-based seed words, but “greeting” (F1=0.23), “human rights” (F1=0.25) and “democracy” (F1=0.27) are even lower in frequency-based seed words (Table 4).

Table 4: Classification results by Newsmap. Inclusion of frequency-based seed words leads to lower F1 scores in “greeting”, “human rights” and “democracy”.

| Topic          | Knowledge-based | Frequency-based | All   |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| GREETING       | 0.495           | 0.235           | 0.343 |
| UN             | 0.500           | 0.481           | 0.585 |
| SECURITY       | 0.563           | 0.638           | 0.627 |
| HUMAN RIGHTS   | 0.370           | 0.255           | 0.359 |
| DEMOCRACY      | 0.362           | 0.276           | 0.349 |
| DEVELOPMENT    | 0.654           | 0.642           | 0.678 |
| Overall        | 0.535           | 0.520           | 0.570 |

We also fitted a seeded LDA with the knowledge-based seed words for comparison and obtained a more interpretable model than the unseeded LDA without FREX weighting (Table 5). Although there are words that are strongly associated with unexpected topics (e.g. “peace” and “security” in “democracy”), many of the words in our frequency-based seed words are correctly identified as topic words (e.g. “sustainable” and “poverty” in “development”). However, the seeded LDA achieved only F1=0.40 overall even when all the seed words are used (Table 6), although it is a significant improvement from the unseeded LDA (F1=0.13). Contrary to Newsmap, the seeded LDA performed better with the frequency-based set than the knowledge-based set and combining these two sets changed its classification performance only very little. The poor performance of the seeded LDA also indicate that it is very difficult to classify sentences accurately using existing tools.

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7We set pseudo counts for the seed words to 500 (roughly 0.1% of the total number of sentences) but the choice of the value did not affect the result much.
Table 5: Topics and words in seeded (semi-supervised) LDA. Many of them are seed words but relevant topic words are also identified.

| Topic       | Words                                                                 |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GREETING    | also, general assembly, session, work, like, year, president, take,  |
|             | government, years                                                    |
| UN          | international, united nations, community, states, support,           |
|             | security council, organization, role, member, reform                 |
| SECURITY    | people, many, terrorism, war, end, situation, conflicts, security,  |
|             | however, still                                                       |
| HUMAN RIGHTS| world, must, can, us, new, human rights, one, today, challenges,     |
|             | human                                                               |
| DEMOCRACY   | peace, cooperation, political, process, country, security, region,   |
|             | state, efforts, africa                                              |
| DEVELOPMENT | development, countries, economic, global, social, developing,       |
|             | sustainable, poverty, resources, trade                              |

Table 6: Classification results of seeded (semi-supervised) LDA. Inclusion of all the frequency-based seed words leads to lower F1 scores in “greeting” and “human rights”.

| Topic          | Knowledge-based | Frequency-based | All  |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|
| GREETING       | 0.324           | 0.332           | 0.315|
| UN             | 0.310           | 0.421           | 0.433|
| SECURITY       | 0.388           | 0.464           | 0.472|
| HUMAN RIGHTS   | 0.190           | 0.158           | 0.187|
| DEMOCRACY      | 0.092           | 0.117           | 0.147|
| DEVELOPMENT    | 0.539           | 0.567           | 0.560|
| Overall        | 0.348           | 0.400           | 0.407|

**Experiment 1: Seed word coverage**

We randomly drew 1 to 7 seed words from each topic and trained a Newsmap model to understand the relationship between the keyword coverage and the classification performance. Figure 1 shows that seed word coverage is strongly correlated ($r=0.74$) with the F1 scores: they scores are 0.4 when the coverage is around 4% but they increase to 0.5 when the coverage is 10%. Furthermore, the coverage is roughly the function of number of seed words: the coverage is less than 5% when each topic has 1-2 seed words, but it becomes more than 10% when each has 6-7 seed words. This also suggests that the optimal size of seed dictionary is
approximately 6-7 words for each topic in this task.

Figure 1: Correlation between seed word coverage and the classifier’s performance (F1). F1 is strongly correlated with seed word coverage. The colors of the circles indicate the number of seed words for each topic.

The strong positive correlation between the number of seed words and classification performance suggests that the most effective strategy in classification by Newsmap is adding more seed words to a dictionary. However, the improvement of performance slows down as the size of the dictionary grows, because newly added words often produce false positive matches as discussed in Experiment 3.

**Experiment 2: Average feature entropy**

We incrementally expanded the dictionary by randomly drawing a seed word from the candidate set to reveal relationship between AFE and the F1 scores (Figure 2). Starting only with the knowledge-based seed words, we sampled the frequency-based seed words, added them one-by-one (“weapon*”, “econom*”, “war*” etc.) to the dictionary and computed the AFE
and F1. The classifier’s performance gradually increased as we added more seed words, but F1 fell sharply coinciding rise in AFE when we included “people” (20th) and “hop*” (30th). Changes in F1 and AFE in opposite directions can be also found in “legal*” (5th), “women” (6th), “respect*” (12th), “responsib*” (15th), “institution*” (19th), “anniversary*” (21th) and “government*” (27th).

Figure 2: Changes in the seed word coverage, entropy (AFE) and classification accuracy (F1) by frequency-based seed words. Seed word coverage increases monotonously as more seed words are included, but F1 decreases sharply when false seed words (“people” and “hop*”) are added.

We repeated the same procedure 100 times to understand the relationship between AFE and F1. Figure 3 shows that changes in the AFE and F1 are negatively correlated ($r = -0.49, p < 0.001$), namely, it is twice more likely that F1 decreases when a seed word
increases AFE. This result indicates that changes in AFE can be used to identify risky seed words that lead to lower classification performance if included.

Figure 3: Correlation between entropy (AFE) and classification accuracy (F1) changes ($r=-0.49$). Increase in AFE often leads to lower F1, but large increase in seed word coverage often leads to higher F1.

**Experiment 3: Selection criteria**

The results of Experiment 1 and 2 suggest that it is possible to reduce the risk of adding seed words that are likely to deteriorate the classifier’s performance using the AFE statistic. In order to test this possibility, we computed changes in AFE when the frequency-based seed words are added to a dictionary only with the knowledge-based seed words.

The result showed that 7 words in “greeting”, 10 words in “human rights”, 6 words in “democracy” are risky seed words (Table 4). The risky seed words are concentrated to the three topics because AFE correctly predicted that these frequency-based seed words deteriorate the classifier’s performance (Table 5). If the frequency-based seed words are
added to the dictionary excluding the risky seed words, its performance improved to F1=0.61, which is significantly higher than only with the knowledge-based seed words (F1=0.53) or with all the seed words (F1=0.57). Conversely, if only the risky seed words are added to the dictionary, the classifier’s performance decreased significantly (F1=0.44), showing that risky seed words identified by AFE are false seed words. Changes in the classifier’s performance by risky words are shown in Figure 4.

Table 7: Risky seed words identified by AFE

| Topic             | Seed words                                                                 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GREETING          | great*, mr, wish*, hop*, contribut*, anniversar*, welcom*                   |
| HUMAN RIGHTS      | humanitarian, child*, women, refugee*, communit*, people, respect*, responsib*, food*, health* |
| DEMOCRACY         | party, institution*, law*, republic*, free*, legal*                         |

Figure 4: Changes in F1 by knowledge-based seed words. Words in the right-hand side of the dotted lines are considered risky seed words.
Experiment 4: Contextual smoothing

We constructed a dictionary excluding the risky seed words and trained a Newsmap model to achieve the best performance of the classifier, but the model still cannot classify sentences that lack topic indicators at all. Human coders can resort to surrounding topics to classify such sentences but Newsmap models cannot. To mimic manual classification, we predicted topics of individual sentences and smoothed the topic likelihood ratios by Daniell kernel with window size m=3 to reclassify them. With this window size, we take topics of three preceding and succeeding sentences into consideration to identify the topic of the current sentence. Figure 5 shows that the smoothed likelihood ratios can capture the actual transition of topics in a speech made by the representative of Ukraine in 1993.

Figure 5: Smoothed topic likelihood ratios in speech by Ukraine in 1993. Contextual smoothing captures natural transition of topics.

The contextual smoothing improved the result of classification from F1=0.61 to 0.72 overall. Table 8 and Figure 6 show that smoothing had a significant positive effect in most of the cases, especially in Ukraine (+0.22), Mexico (+0.24), Russia (+0.26), Sweden (+0.22) and France (+0.21). Although the classification accuracy of the United States (F1=0.56) and France (F1=0.61) is still low in absolute terms because of the low F1 scores in “human rights” and “democracy” that speakers of the countries emphasize, the result clearly shows effectiveness of contextual smoothing in sentence classification. In Tunisia
(-0.15), Turkmenistan (-0.10) and Zimbabwe (-0.05), however, contextual smoothing had negative effect on the classification result. This is primarily because their speeches are relatively short in the number of sentences and the window size was too large. For example, Figure 7 shows that smoothing does not keep up with the rapid change in the topics in the speech by the representative of Turkmenistan in 2009, which was only in 68-sentence long.

Figure 6: Classification results of individual speeches. Circles are F1 scores after contextual smoothing, and lengths of lines indicate the magnitude of changes from raw F1 scores.

Proposed dictionary-making procedure

Our experiments suggest that the best strategy in dictionary-making for semi-supervised models is increasing the number of seed words to maximize the seed word coverage while avoiding false seed words that damage classifiers’ performance. Researchers can easily increase the number of seed words if they collect frequent words from corpora, but they can add false seed words to the dictionary in this process. Therefore, we propose the following procedure as the best practice in seed word dictionary-making employing the AFE statistic.

1. Identify categories
Table 8: Classification results by countries. We find improvement in the F1 scores all but three countries (Tunisia, Turkmenistan, and Zimbabwe).

| Country          | Code | Year | Raw (F1) | Smooth (F1) | Change |
|------------------|------|------|----------|-------------|--------|
| Australia        | AUS  | 1991 | 0.662    | 0.755       | 0.093  |
| Libya            | LBY  | 1992 | 0.561    | 0.678       | 0.117  |
| Ukraine          | UKR  | 1993 | 0.545    | 0.764       | 0.219  |
| Sweden           | SWE  | 1994 | 0.638    | 0.856       | 0.217  |
| Japan            | JPN  | 1995 | 0.750    | 0.794       | 0.044  |
| Brazil           | BRA  | 1996 | 0.670    | 0.830       | 0.160  |
| Zimbabwe         | ZWE  | 1997 | 0.704    | 0.648       | -0.057 |
| Mexico           | MEX  | 1998 | 0.638    | 0.878       | 0.240  |
| Chad             | TCD  | 1999 | 0.581    | 0.733       | 0.152  |
| United States    | USA  | 2000 | 0.531    | 0.564       | 0.033  |
| Germany          | DEU  | 2001 | 0.664    | 0.773       | 0.109  |
| Russia           | RUS  | 2002 | 0.575    | 0.840       | 0.265  |
| Afghanistan      | AFG  | 2003 | 0.566    | 0.620       | 0.053  |
| Myanmar          | MMR  | 2004 | 0.500    | 0.569       | 0.069  |
| Tunisia          | TUN  | 2005 | 0.750    | 0.600       | -0.150 |
| Colombia         | COL  | 2006 | 0.562    | 0.808       | 0.245  |
| United Kingdom   | GBR  | 2007 | 0.643    | 0.721       | 0.078  |
| Equatorial Guinea| GNQ  | 2008 | 0.783    | 0.794       | 0.012  |
| Turkmenistan     | TKM  | 2009 | 0.601    | 0.500       | -0.101 |
| Palau            | PLW  | 2010 | 0.536    | 0.561       | 0.025  |
| China            | CHN  | 2011 | 0.757    | 0.839       | 0.081  |
| Norway           | NOR  | 2012 | 0.560    | 0.635       | 0.075  |
| Slovenia         | SVN  | 2013 | 0.545    | 0.744       | 0.199  |
| Tuvalu           | TUV  | 2014 | 0.663    | 0.788       | 0.124  |
| France           | FRA  | 2015 | 0.395    | 0.608       | 0.213  |
| Saudi Arabia     | SAU  | 2016 | 0.825    | 0.844       | 0.020  |
| Estonia          | EST  | 2017 | 0.604    | 0.659       | 0.054  |
Researchers identify category of document classification based on literature in the field. Categories should be identified based on the theoretical framework of the study or adopted from earlier quantitative or qualitative text analysis studies.

2. Operationalize categories

Define categories by a set of words that are collected from either the corpus or other sources (i.e. thesauri, glossaries and indices of books). Selection of words should be solely based on the researchers’ knowledge of relevant discourses ignoring their frequencies in the corpus (knowledge-based selection). Researchers should always consider if the operationalization is valid for the same categories in other corpora.

3. Improve seed word coverage

Researchers collect a set of words that are frequent in the corpus to increase the number of documents that can be used to train the semi-supervised machine learning model (frequency-based selection). These seed words can be collected from a list of most frequent words (term or document frequency) in the corpus but they must be semantically equivalent to the knowledge-based seed words.

Seed words that increase seed word coverage usually have great impact on the classifier’s
performance either positively or negatively. In order to minimize the risk of including false seed words, researchers should monitor changes in AFE relative to the value when only the knowledge-based seed words are included. If a frequency-based seed word increases AFE, researchers should check carefully if the seed word occur only in relevant documents using a keyword-in-context (KWIC) tool before adding them to the dictionary.

Example

We classified all the sentences of speeches by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to demonstrate a possible application of the techniques described above (Figure 8). First, the figure reveals that the proportion of “UN” have decreased significantly because the peacekeeping and Security Council reforms, which have been became prevalent issues after the end of the Cold War, lost their importance in more recent years. Second, “human rights” and “democracy” became more visible in the US, Britain, and France in the latter period, but they almost disappeared in China. This result might challenge the conventional wisdom that economic development can cause democratization (Huber et al. 1993). Third, “security” has increased considerably in the UK and France after 2011 because the 9/11 attack raised European countries’ security concerns (Nesser 2008).

Conclusion

Compared to unsupervised topic models and simple dictionary analysis, the advantage of the semi-supervised classification is clear in IR research: (1) researchers can define categories of classification in dictionaries using seed words to make their analysis consistent with those in literature, and (2) they only need to choose a small number of seed words for each category to classify documents correctly. In the experiments, we have demonstrated that Newsmap can identify topics of more than half of sentences with only a few seed words in each topic and its
accuracy becomes over 60% when more seed words were added. If simple dictionary analysis is performed instead. Seeded LDA classified only 40% sentences correctly, highlighting the difficulty in classifying short texts using existing tools.

The seeded LDA underperformed Newsmap, presumably because the model has inappropriate assumption for sentence classification and excessive complexity considering the small number of seed words available. LDA models assume documents to have multiple topics but sentences of speeches usually have only one topic. The complexity of the model also demands a greater amount of weak supervision to sufficiently learn. The greater cost of training the seeded LDA is clear as it performs better with frequency-based seed words than knowledge-based seed words. Nevertheless, we admit that further investigation is required to make conclusive remarks on the seeded LDA models. The model would outperform Newsmap when documents are longer, or it is trained with a sufficiently large number of seed words.

The semi-supervised classification technique is particularly useful when researchers apply quantitative text analysis in new fields, because training sets for full-supervised models are very expensive to produce and keyword dictionaries are often unavailable outside compara-
tive politics or political communication and nearly non-existent in non-European languages. While it is infeasible for under-resourced researchers to create a large keyword dictionary from scratch, they can easily create a seed word dictionary for semi-supervised models because the number of words required for a seed word dictionary is a fraction of a keyword dictionary.

Semi-supervised document classification is also an alternative approach to multi-lingual text analysis, which is becoming increasingly important in recent years. Multi-lingual analysis can be achieved by translating a keyword dictionary (Proksch et al. 2019) or a corpus (De Vries et al. 2018), but it can also be done only by translating a seed word dictionary if a semi-supervised model is employed. In fact, Newsmap performs multi-lingual geographical classification of news articles using functionally equivalent seed word dictionaries in European and non-European languages.

However, we recognized that the difficulty in making a proper seed word dictionary is an obstacle for researchers to employ semi-supervised models. For this reason, we created the AFE statistic as a diagnostic tool that does not require manually coded documents as the gold standard. We argue that seed word dictionaries should be constructed based primarily on theory, but they should also include frequent words to produce good classification results. Inclusion of frequent false seed words to a seed word dictionary hugely damage the classifier’s performance, but researchers can reduce this risk by monitoring relative changes in AFE.

The AFE statistic allowed us to achieve higher classification accuracy by removing many of the frequency-based seed words in “greeting”, “human rights” and “democracy” in our experiment, but it is still likely that some of them were true seed words that could improve the classifier’s performance if included. This did not occur in our experiment probably because our knowledge-based seed words were inappropriate and some of the true frequent seed words were wrongly identified as risky seed words. This shows how difficult it is to operationalize abstract concepts such as human rights and democracy using words, but we

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Languages currently available are English, German, Spanish, French, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese and Chinese.

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believe it is possible as collective endeavor: researchers who employ semi-supervised models should disclose their dictionaries to allow others to refine by adding or removing seed words; words that are commonly used in their dictionaries will be knowledge-based seed words that are independent of corpora.

Contextual smoothing of topic probability is an auxiliary technique in this study, which is not directly related to the semi-supervised classification technique, but we believe that the technique can help in many cases. We expect that contextual smoothing technique would improve classification accuracy of sentences in almost any machine learning models without changing model assumptions and specifications. This is the primary reason that we decided to train the Newsmap model on the individual sentences instead of a temporal group of sentences, despite that the training on both labeled sentences and unlabeled surrounding sentences is closer to semi-supervised learning techniques in computer science (Zelikovitz and Hirsh 2000).

Nevertheless, contextual smoothing does not always perform well as we saw in the experiment: the classifier’s performance deteriorated when it was applied to relatively short speeches. In fact, we found a positive correlation between the number of sentences and the changes in the F1 scores ($r=0.38$), which suggest that the window size should be smaller depending on the length of the speech that sentences compose. More importantly, contextual smoothing has negative impact on the classification results when topics changes between sentences in any length of speech. Although we did not develop algorithms to adjust window sizes to tackle this problem, we expect that common words in adjacent sentences will offer useful information to achieve this in future research.

Another limitation of this study is that we only tested our approach on the corpus of the UN General Assembly speeches. We believe that the proposed seed word selection procedure holds conceptually in wider research settings, but the AFE statistic would behave differently depending on the types of texts and the categories for classification. Since AFE is created for classification of sentences, which usually have only one topic each, its behavior can be
different when it is applied to entire documents. For this reason, we recommend users of AFE to segment documents into the smallest unit (e.g. sentences or paragraphs) in seed word dictionary making. After a seed word dictionary has been created, they can apply the dictionary to train a Newsmap model on entire documents. This seems possible because Newsmap has already demonstrated its ability to classify longer texts correctly (Lankina and Watanabe 2017; Watanabe 2017) despite its geographical dictionary was created for news summaries originally. Relatedly, classification categories should also be mutually exclusive for AFE, because it gauges cooccurrences of words with seed words in different categories to detect risky seed words. To avoid this problem, we recommend users to define smallest categories in a dictionary and aggregate them after classification. Newsmap takes similar approach in classification of oversea territories of European countries (e.g. British Virgin Islands and French Guiana).

Finally, we hope the readers of this paper understand the strengths and weaknesses of semi-supervised models vis-a-vis popular unsupervised topic models and simple dictionary analysis. Use of semi-supervised models requires knowledge of both methodology and substance but there will be an increasing number of young political scientists who understand both aspects. We hope our work will encourage them to embark on quantitative analysis of documents in under-studied subjects and languages on the horizon of quantitative text analysis.

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