

Too good to be true: Current approaches to author profiling

Malvina Nissim*

* Center for Language and Cognition, Faculty of Arts, University of Groningen

Abstract

State-of-the-art performance on author profiling (e.g., gender and age) for English in social media is around 80%, or even higher. I will present systems that yield those results, but I will also question the reliability of such figures. Specifically, I will show that the same reasons why these models work are also the cause of serious performance drops when we change, even moderately, domain or topic. If we create conditions to bypass such powerful but at the same time limiting clues, we might be able to identify features that are indeed more relevant for profiling, and we will build more portable systems. I will describe experiments in this direction, exploring whether portability can be stretched even into a cross-language setting. I will also compare these flexible models to human performance in quite an interesting way!

Bio

Malvina Nissim is Associate Professor in Language Technology at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. She has extensive experience in sentiment analysis and author identification and profiling, as well as in modelling the interplay of lexical semantics and pragmatics, especially regarding the computational treatment of figurative language and modality. She is the author of 100+ publications in international venues, is member of the main associations in the field, and annually reviews for the major conferences and journals. She has recently co-chaired the Fourth Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics (CLiC-it 2017), and was the general chair of the Seventh Joint Conference on Lexical and Computational Semantics (*SEM 2018). She is also active in the field of resource and system evaluation, as both organiser and participant of shared tasks, and is interested in the philosophy behind them. She graduated in Linguistics from the University of Pisa, and obtained her PhD in Linguistics from the University of Pavia. Before joining the University of Groningen, she was a tenured researcher at the University of Bologna (2006-2014), and a post-doc at the Institute for Cognitive Science and Technology of the National Research Council in Rome (2006) and at the University of Edinburgh (2001-2005). In 2017, she was elected as the 2016 University of Groningen Lecturer of the Year.