Abstract

All language is constantly changing and evolving, but we often lack the resources to accurately track semantic changes in words because of a lack of corpora tagged for meaning. This paper aims to examine evolution of meaning in semantic neologisms, using the EM algorithm. To avoid the problem of a lack of semantically tagged corpora, we used pseudo-neologism models – a variation on pseudowords that combines an ordinary word with a formal neologism, therefore adding a diachronic aspect to it - to simulate semantic neologisms.

To test the efectiveness of EM, we experimented extensively with pseudo-neologisms of various sizes and compositions. We have concluded that, EM can indeed provide valuable insight into the rise and fall of a semantic neologisms‘ usage, depending on how well that neologism is represented, how distinct its new meaning is from the old one and provided that the less-used meaning is still used at least once for every three uses of the better-represented meaning.