COVID-19 Misinformation Detection

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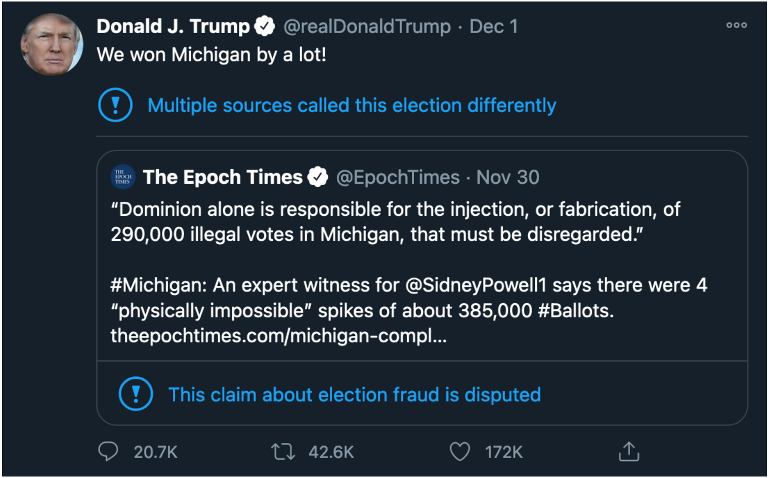

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · Dec 1

We won Michigan by a lot!

Multiple sources called this election differently

The Epoch Times @EpochTimes · Nov 30

“Dominion alone is responsible for the injection, or fabrication, of 290,000 illegal votes in Michigan, that must be disregarded.”

#Michigan: An expert witness for @SidneyPowell1 says there were 4 “physically impossible” spikes of about 385,000 #Ballots. theepochtimes.com/michigan-compl...

This claim about election fraud is disputed

Figure 1: Twitter adds warning labels to tweets.

Dataset

- 560 tweets, perfectly balanced classes
- sample of 282,201 users in Canada
- tweets posted between January 1 - March 13, 2020
- manually labeled as “reliable” or “unreliable”

Table 1: Misinformation rules from Boukouvalas et al. (2020)

Linguistic Feature	Example from Dataset
Hyperbolic, intensified, superlative, or emphatic language	e.g., 'blame', 'accuse', 'refuse', 'catastrophe', 'chaos', 'evil'
Greater use of punctuation and/or special characters	e.g., e.g., 'YA THINK!!?!!?!', 'Can we PLEASE stop spreading the lie that Coronavirus is super super super contagious? It's not. It has a contagious rating of TWO'
Strongly emotional or subjective language	e.g., 'fight', 'danger', 'hysteria', 'panic', 'paranoia', 'laugh', 'stupidity' or other words indicating fear, surprise, alarm, anger, and so forth
Greater use of verbs of perception and/or opinion	e.g., 'hear', 'see', 'feel', 'suppose', 'perceive', 'look', 'appear', 'suggest', 'believe', 'pretend'

Methodology

- raw text
- word embeddings
  - word-word co-occurrence matrix
  - latent variable methods
- tweet embeddings
- classification
- evaluation

Word-Word Co-occurrence Matrix

- text cleaning: **remove stop words, lemmatize text, convert to lowercase, remove special characters**, remove punctuation
- context window size: 1, 2, 4, 6, 10, **15**, 20
- weighting: raw frequencies, **PMI**, PPMI
- Laplace smoothing: add-1, add-2
- shifted or **unshifted**: k = 5, **k = 1**
- **start/end tokens**

Latent Variable Methods

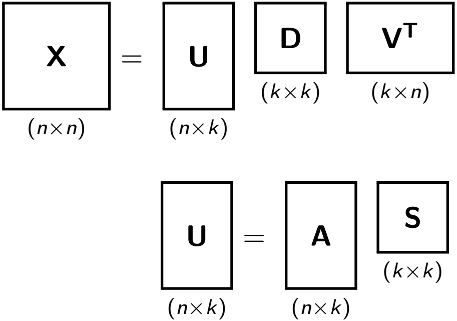

Figure 2: Truncated Singular Value Decomposition followed by Independent Component Analysis.

Tweet Embeddings

A tweet embedding is the average of the word embeddings for the words that occur in that tweet.

$$\mathbf{v}_i = \frac{1}{T_i} \sum_{j=1}^{T_i} \mathbf{e}_j$$

Example tweet: "Covid is fake news."

$$\text{tweet} \begin{bmatrix} v_{i1} \\ \vdots \\ v_{ik} \end{bmatrix} = \frac{\text{covid} \begin{bmatrix} e_{11} \\ \vdots \\ e_{1k} \end{bmatrix} + \text{is} \begin{bmatrix} e_{21} \\ \vdots \\ e_{2k} \end{bmatrix} + \text{fake} \begin{bmatrix} e_{31} \\ \vdots \\ e_{3k} \end{bmatrix} + \text{news} \begin{bmatrix} e_{41} \\ \vdots \\ e_{4k} \end{bmatrix}}{4}$$

Classification

- One-class classification: one-class support vector machines (OCSVM), isolation forest, & local outlier factor (LOF)
- Binary classification: SVM
- Evaluation: performance & explainability

LIME: Local Explainability

ICA: Global Explainability

We define the importance of the i^{th} target word as follows:

$$g_i = \frac{1}{k} \sum_{j=1}^{k} |a_{ij}|$$

where k is the number of SVD features (and therefore the number of ICA features), and $|a_{ij|}$ is the magnitude of the i^{th} word's importance in topic j.

Example: Tweet 170

CNBC ADVICE NOW: Coronavirus is the flu. Wash your hands. Book a vacation. We'll look back on this and laugh.

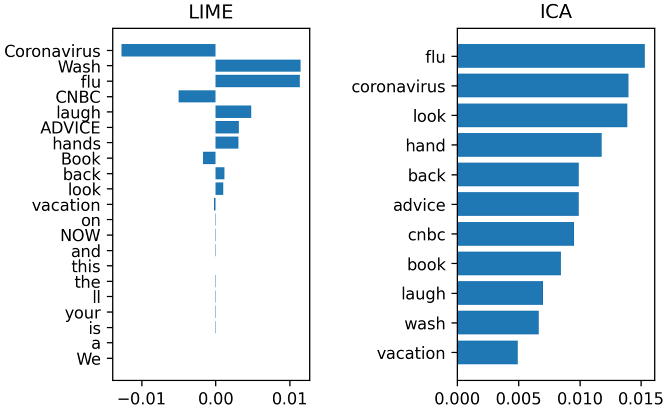

Figure 3: Comparing LIME and ICA explainability.

Explainability metric

Goal: value that captures how "explainable" a classifier's predictions are (with respect to human classification)

With penalty:

$$\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\frac{1}{T_i}\sum_{j=1}^{T_i}\mathbb{1}_A(w_j)-\mathbb{1}_B(w_j)$$

No penalty:

$$\frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}\frac{1}{T_i}\sum_{j=1}^{T_i}\mathbb{1}_A(w_j)$$

where A is the set of words that the classifier associated with the correct class according to LIME for tweet i, B is the set of words that the classifier associated with the wrong class according to LIME for tweet i, there are T_i words in tweet i, and there are N tweets.

Results

Table 2: One-class classification

Model	AUC	Accuracy	F1	Precision	Recall
OCSVM	0.750	0.671	0.629	0.709	0.671
Isolation Forest	0.643	0.552	0.616	0.673	0.552
LOF	0.658	0.539	0.552	0.598	0.539

OCSVM used word embeddings of length 100; isolation forest and LOF used embeddings of length 50.

Results (continued)

Table 3: Binary SVM performance

Dimensions	AUC	Accuracy	F1	Precision	Recall
50	0.903	0.804	0.801	0.818	0.804
100	0.911	0.796	0.793	0.817	0.796
150	0.906	0.795	0.792	0.810	0.795
200	0.901	0.800	0.798	0.815	0.800
250	0.904	0.807	0.804	0.827	0.807
500	0.908	0.789	0.785	0.814	0.789

Results (continued)

Table 4: Binary SVM explainability

Experiment	**Penalty**	**No Penalty**
1: Correctly predicted	0.331	0.534
1: Wrongly predicted	0.222	0.278
1: Aggregated	0.326	0.521
2: Correctly predicted	0.356	0.593
2: Wrongly predicted	0.074	0.315
2: Aggregated	0.342	0.579
3a: Correctly predicted	0.396	0.593
3a: Wrongly predicted	0.444	0.500
3a: Aggregated	0.399	0.588
3b: Correctly predicted	0.378	0.619
3b: Wrongly predicted	0.148	0.407
3b: Aggregated	0.367	0.608

Future work

- local ICA explainability
- different word embeddings (e.g., BERT)
- different classifiers (e.g., neural net)
- improve explainability metric