

Context-Specific Sentiment Lexicon Expansion via Minimal User Interaction

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Abstract: One of the important factors in the performance of sentiment analysis methods is having a comprehensive sentiment lexicon. However, since sentiment words have different polarities not only in different domains, but also in different contexts within the same domain, constructing such context-specific sentiment lexicons is not an easy task. The high costs of manually constructing such lexicons motivate researchers to create automatic methods for finding sentiment words and assigning their polarities. However, existing methods may encounter ambiguous cases with contradictory evidence which are hard to automatically resolve. To address this problem, we aim to engage the user in the process of polarity assignment and improve the quality of the generated lexicon via minimal user effort. A novel visualization is employed to present the results of the automatic algorithm, i.e., the extracted sentiment pairs along with their polarities. User interactions are provided to facilitate the supervision process. The results of our user study demonstrate (1) involving the user in the polarity assignment process improves the quality of the generated lexicon significantly, and (2) participants in the study preferred our visual interface and conveyed that it is easier to use compared to a text-based interface.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the growth of Web opinion data, the need for analysing people's attitudes toward different topics has increased markedly. In most existing automatic sentiment analysis methods, utilizing a comprehensive sentiment lexicon is very crucial, otherwise the intended sentiment will be misinterpreted. However, we know that the sentiment value of the words is sensitive not only to the topic domain but also to the context. For instance, in the domain of cell phones, "high" is negative within that domain for the "price" aspect while being positive for the "quality" aspect. Therefore, we can say that even in the same domain, the same word may have different polarities for different aspects. That is to say, the polarity of a sentiment word is often context-dependent (Ding et al., 2008). Consequently, entries in context-specific sentiment lexicons are pairs of sentiment words and aspects. Sentiment words are words indicating sentiment polarities (positive, negative, neutral) and aspects are words modified by the sentiment words. For example, one entry can be "(huge, price)". In this paper, we refer to these pairs as sentiment pairs.

It is well known that available general-purpose

sentiment lexicons cannot be optimal for domain dependent sentiment analysis applications. These lexicons cannot cover sentiment words for all different domains (Lu et al., 2011). Since manually constructing these lexicons is a hard, tedious and time-consuming task, researchers have focused on automatic methods of creating domain and context-dependent sentiment lexicons and have been able to improve the performance of the opinion mining applications. However, these methods may encounter sentiment pairs that are difficult to predict their polarities. There is no automatic method with 100 percent accuracy and they can be further improved.

In this paper, we aim to improve the quality of the generated lexicon by involving the user in the process of the polarity assignment. For this purpose, results of the automatic algorithm can be shown to the user and she can make changes whenever she observes an incorrect assignment. To minimize user effort and make the polarity assignment task easier, we propose a visual interface. We combined existing visualization modules, such as Tree Clouds and Tag Clouds into an interface for context-specific sentiment lexicon curation. Briefly, our main contributions are:

- Improving the quality of context-specific senti-

ment lexicons by engaging the user in the polarity assignment process and determining the extent to which this is possible.

- Introducing a novel visualization for constructing context-dependent sentiment lexicons with the following capabilities: 1) presenting the extracted sentiment pairs and their polarities predicted by the automatic algorithm 2) providing interactions that enable the user to assign new polarities to sentiment pairs 3) making user involvement easier by categorizing aspects and presenting sentiment pairs in a structured way.

To evaluate to what extent involving the user in the process of polarity assignment improves the quality of the lexicon and whether the visual interface is helpful, we ran a user study. An overview of the proposed approach is illustrated in Fig. 1. These steps will be explained throughout this paper. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a survey of related work. The automatic method for generating sentiment lexicons and our proposed visual interface are described in sections 3 and 4 respectively. The user study and the experiments on its results are described in sections 5 and 6. Finally, section 7 contains the conclusion and future work.

2 RELATED WORK

Since we use visualization for constructing sentiment lexicons, we review the literature in two sections: first, related work to sentiment lexicon extraction and then research related to visualizing sentiment values.

2.1 Generating Sentiment Lexicons

Most of the existing methods for constructing domain adapted sentiment lexicons use seed words with known polarity to calculate the sentiment value of the unknown words. A set of methods use a dependency grammar to exploit the relationships between sentiment words and aspects. These methods propagate sentiment values through both sentiment words and the features (Qiu et al., 2009; Qiu et al., 2011). Another approach is to use existing general-purpose sentiment lexicons along with a method that can adapt the lexicon to the new domain (Choi and Cardie, 2009). There is recent work that applies a cross-domain classifier to construct domain-dependent sentiment and aspect lexicons with no training data (Li et al., 2012).

In addition to corpus-based methods that use co-occurrence statistics, there are some methods that make use of knowledge sources like WordNet to expand the sentiment lexicon for different domains.

These methods use distance to the seed words, synonyms, antonyms and the gloss information to calculate the polarity of adjectives (Rao and Ravichandran, 2009; Esuli and Sebastiani, 2006). Finally, there are some approaches that combine more than one of the existing methods. It can be a combination of linguistic heuristics and rules (Ding et al., 2008), or a unified framework that combines different information sources (Lu et al., 2011).

This paper differs from previous work in several ways. First, we involve the user in the polarity assignment process. To the best of our knowledge, there is no prior formal work that engages the user to improve the results of the automatic algorithm. There is only one recent work involving the user in the extraction of the aspects in a corpus of reviews (Husaini et al., 2012), but no user study or evaluation has been reported. Furthermore, we employ visualization for the user supervision. Researchers have used visualization in different sentiment analysis applications so far. However, most of them used visualization for presenting the results rather than providing an interface with interactions that can enable users to provide input.

2.2 Visualizing Sentiment Words

This section reviews literature that uses visualization for presenting sentiment values. Various visual metaphors are employed to visualize the sentiment content of documents such as Rose plot (Gregory et al., 2006). In this visualization, each affect is paired with its opposite in order to allow direct comparisons; each pair has a unique color and the intensity is used to encode the positivity and negativity of the affects within a pair.

There are a number of studies that visualize and track sentiment changes over time. For example, there is a novel visualization called time density plots which is based on the occurrence frequency of features and enables users to detect interesting time patterns (Rohrdantz et al., 2012).

Using colors for encoding sentiment polarities is very common. Annett and Kondrak use SVM to classify movie blogs based on their sentiment polarities. They present their classifier results by using colors to encode the sentiment polarity (Annett and Kondrak, 2008). Green, red, and yellow are used to show positive, negative, and neutral movies respectively. Similarly, we employ colors to encode the sentiment polarity. In addition, tree clouds and tag clouds are used to present extracted information about sentiment pairs.

Section 4 explains the visualization components and the provided user interactions. However, the first

$$p_{i,j} = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^n f_{k,j} \cdot p_{k,j}}{\sum_{k=1}^n f_{k,j}} \quad (1)$$

Selecting the pairs for user adjustment. We select three types of sentiment pairs for presentation to the user and potential adjustment of sentiment polarity. First, If there is no evidence in the context of the new sentiment pair, we consider the polarity of its sentiment word in a general-purpose lexicon as its predicted polarity and consider it as an ambiguous case to be shown to the user through the visual interface. In this paper, we used the lexicon² introduced in (Hu and Liu, 2004) as the general-purpose lexicon. Second, if the existing evidence is contradictory (e.g. 3 positive and 2 negative out of 5 evidence), the probability of wrong polarity assignment by the automatic algorithm is high. Therefore, we consider them as ambiguous cases to be included in our visualization as well. Third, we present the most frequent sentiment pairs (top 10%) in the visual interface since they are the most important pairs in the lexicon. After the pairs are selected, we use the visual interface to present them to the user.

4 VISUALIZATION

The proposed visual interface consists of two views: tree cloud view and polarity assignment view. The tree cloud view is a navigation interface for the polarity assignment view and aims at minimizing user effort, while the polarity assignment view presents the sentiment pairs and their polarity and enables the user to assign new polarities. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 explain the tree cloud and the polarity assignment view respectively. In this paper, all the visualizations are implemented in JavaScript using the d3 library^{3,4}.

4.1 Tree Cloud View

This view presents the set of existing aspects in the domain. For instance, if our dataset contains reviews about printer, “price, quality, ppm, customer service, shipping, cartridge” are some of the aspects in this domain. These aspects are presented in a tree structure which is constructed based on the semantic relatedness between its nodes and is called Tree Cloud. In

²cs.uic.edu/liub/FBS/sentiment-analysis.html

³d3js.org/

⁴The proposed visual interface can be accessed at: cs.dal.ca/~niri/app/SA

other words, aspects that are semantically related will appear close to each other (neighbors in the tree). For example, in the domain of printer, aspects “price” and “cost” will appear as neighbors in the tree as well as “support” and “warranty” (as illustrated in Fig. 2).

Tree clouds were first introduced in (Gambette and Veronis, 2010). Gambette and Veronis used co-occurrence frequency of the terms to calculate their relatedness. Since reviews are usually short, instead of co-occurrence frequency, we employ Google Trigrams to calculate the semantic relatedness between each two terms (Islam et al., 2012). Therefore, we have a matrix that shows the relatedness score for existing pair of terms. Then, to build the tree we follow the neighbor-joining (Saitou and Nei, 1987) algorithm. In each iteration, two terms with the highest score are joined together and considered as a new single node. The relatedness scores for this newly formed node and other terms are updated. Consequently, in each iteration, the dimension of the similarity matrix reduces by one. These steps are continued until all the terms are added to the tree. The reasons of using tree cloud for presenting aspects is explained in section 4.3.

The user interactions in this view include select-

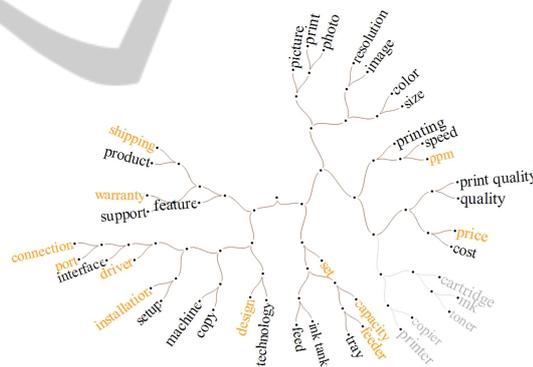


Figure 2: Tree cloud built from a printer review dataset, yellow terms show aspects with at least one sentiment word with unknown polarity. Branches that are already seen by the user are dimmed grey.

ing a group of aspects and the subsequent navigation to the polarity assignment view. For this purpose, the user can click on a node and all the aspects that are its children will be added to the list of selected aspects. Then, in the polarity assignment view, all the sentiment pairs associated with this set of aspects will be presented. This is illustrated in Fig. 3 when sentiment pairs related to the selected aspects, “cost, price, print quality, quality”, are shown. In addition, when the user hovers the mouse over a node, a number appears. This value shows the number of the sentiment pairs that are going to be shown if the user clicks on this

node. It can help the user in selecting branches with appropriate size.

4.2 Polarity Assignment View

This view presents sentiment pairs and their predicted polarity by the automatic algorithm. For this purpose, we use color, size, and position of text elements to present extracted information about the sentiment pairs. Sentiment words are shown as main terms and their aspects are presented as a word cloud around them. The position along the x-axis shows the polarity value of the sentiment pairs. In addition, color is also used to encode polarity value. A color spectrum from red to green at the bottom of the view presents the range from the most negative to the most positive value that is possible for polarity. The position along the y-axis is based on the sentiment word frequency. Frequent terms appear at the top of the view, while sentiment pairs with lower frequency are shown at the bottom. Moreover, since the size of elements is easy for users to interpret, the font-size of the text elements also shows the frequency.

A miniaturized rendering of the tree cloud view is shown at the bottom right of this view. This acts as a mini-map within this drill down view. All the nodes are shown in black except the selected branch which is in blue. This lets the user know which branch of the tree she is currently observing. In addition, whenever the user is satisfied with the polarities, she can click on the minimized tree and go back to the tree cloud view where the current branch is dimmed grey to indicate that it has already been viewed.

To help the user in making decisions about the polarity of the sentiment pairs, their contexts are also displayed in the context view at the top of the minimized tree (Fig. 3). Whenever the user hovers the mouse over a sentiment term, a sample sentence randomly selected from its contexts will be shown. This assists the user in making decisions about the polarity of the selected sentiment words.

We stated that the main point of the polarity assignment view is to enable users to change the polarity of the sentiment pairs. To do this, the user should move the sentiment words horizontally by dragging and dropping them to the desired position. The color of the selected term will accordingly change based on its horizontal position. In addition, other presentations of the same sentiment word, if any, will be highlighted during the movement.

In addition, a sentiment word may be presented with multiple aspects. That is, multiple sentiment pairs are merged into one node. For instance, in Fig. 3, “low” is shown with “cost”, “price” and “qual-

ity” as its aspects. The sentiment word “low” is positive in this figure. This means that all sentiment pairs “(low, cost)”, “(low, price)” and “(low, quality)” also have positive polarities. Since “low” has a positive sentiment for “cost” and “price” but a negative meaning for “quality”, the user may want to correct the polarity of the pair “(low, quality)”. She can click on the text element presenting “quality” and duplicate the current node. The red circle in Fig. 3 displays duplicated terms along with their associated aspects after the user clicks on “quality”.

4.3 Minimizing User Effort

In this section, we discuss the motivation for this way of visualizing sentiment pairs. First of all, we believe that presenting aspects based on their semantic relatedness makes the task easier. Since the terms appearing as neighbours are semantically close, it is expected that their common sentiment words may have similar polarities. To illustrate, assume that aspects “price” and “cost” are neighbours in the tree. If a sentiment word like “low” has a positive value for one of these aspects, the likelihood that it has the same polarity for the other one is high. In this case, we can merge these two pairs and present them as a single node, as illustrated in Fig. 3. This saves space and also minimizes the user effort if a polarity change is required. Besides, without the structured tree cloud view, all the sentiment pairs would be shown together in one view which would be cluttered and hard to read.

Furthermore, every automatic method that generates context-dependent sentiment lexicons may encounter difficult cases in the polarity assignment stage. As explained in 3, these cases are the pairs with contradictory evidence or no evidence in their context and we believe they are more error-prone and there is a higher chance that the user need to make corrections for these sentiment pairs. Therefore, the user input on these sentiment value can improve the quality of the generated lexicon to a greater extent. Aspects that appear in these sentiment pairs will be shown in yellow in the tree cloud, otherwise they will be presented in black. Therefore, the user knows which aspects contain more ambiguous sentiment pairs and she can pay more attention to them when performing the polarity assignment task. In addition, when the user does not want to view all the shown sentiment pairs, she can consider only these ambiguous pairs and still improve the quality of the lexicon to a notable extent. Finally, we select the most frequent and ambiguous sentiment pairs and show them to users for supervision instead of showing all the extracted sentiment pairs. This saves the amount of time users need to

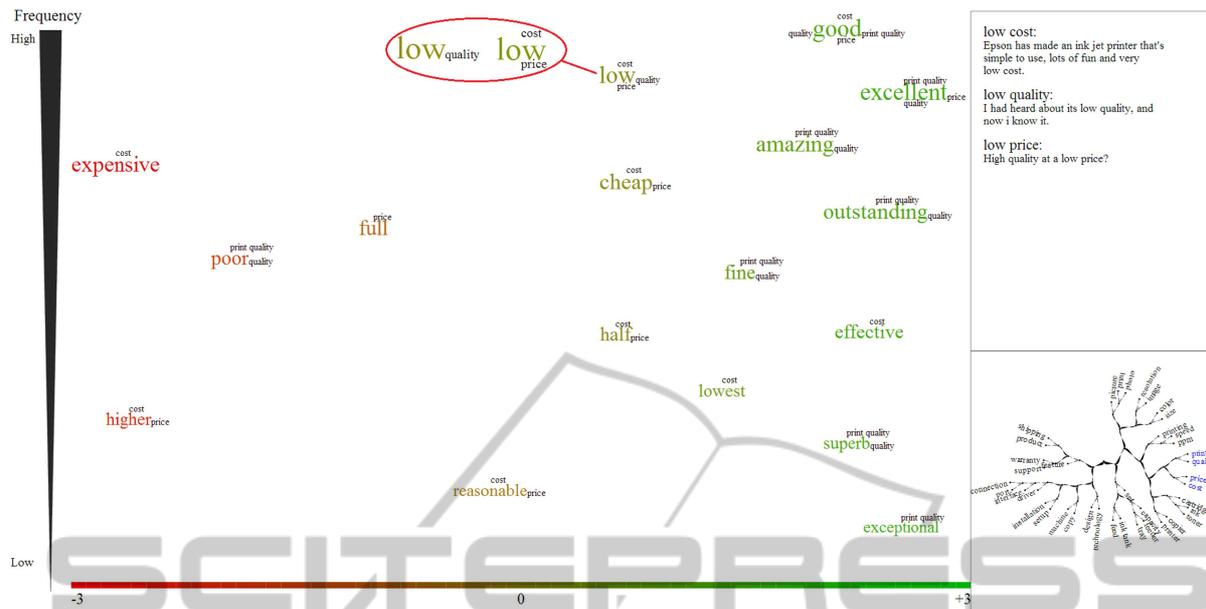


Figure 3: Polarity assignment, sentiment words and aspects are presented as main terms and word clouds respectively. The color presents the polarity and the size indicates the frequency of the sentiment words. Sample contexts are shown at the top right and the minimized tree is at the bottom right of the screen.

spent to complete the task.

5 USER STUDY

To evaluate the generated lexicon and provided interfaces, we ran a user study. The dataset we used in this study contains reviews about three different products from Amazon website. This dataset is available online⁵ and have been provided and used by Hu and Liu (Hu and Liu, 2004). The reviews come with labels at the aspect-level, i.e. aspects are labelled with their polarity value. The maximum and minimum value of these labels are +3 and -3 respectively.

In order to determine whether the proposed visualization is helpful in the polarity assignment task, we also implemented a text-based interface. We compare these two interfaces in the user study. In the text-based interface, the sentiment pairs are shown to the user in a list. Each row contains one sentiment pair, a slider, and a sample sentence related to the sentiment pair. The value of the slider shows the predicted polarity by the automatic algorithm and it is in the range (-3,+3). The user can change the polarity of the sentiment value by moving the slider.

Regarding the study design, thirty students in computer science participated in this study. Each participant was given two separate tasks to perform with

⁵cs.uic.edu/~liub/FBS/sentiment-analysis.html#datasets

both the text-based and visual interfaces. In each task, participants are asked to adjust the polarity values predicted by the automatic algorithm.

Table 1 shows how we conduct the study. The participants' identification number, the datasets and the interfaces used in the first and second task are shown. Different datasets are used in the first and second tasks to avoid the effect of becoming familiar with the data and sentiment pairs on the results.

Table 1: User study tasks and datasets.

UIDs	T1 Intf.	T2 Intf.	T1 Dataset	T2 Dataset
1-5	Text	Visual	Cell Phone	Camera
6-10	Visual	Text	Camera	Cell Phone
11-15	Text	Visual	Mp3 Player	Cell Phone
16-20	Visual	Text	Cell Phone	Mp3 Player
21-25	Text	Visual	Camera	Mp3 Player
26-30	Visual	Text	Mp3 Player	Camera

6 EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

In order to evaluate the user supervision effect on the quality of the generated lexicons, we calculated the accuracy of the lexicons before and after user supervision against the gold standard. To the best of our knowledge, there is no gold standard for context-specific lexicons; consequently, we constructed it for each domain in our dataset using the available score labels of aspects. We extracted the sentiment words which describe these labelled aspects using the same

set of rules given in Sec 3. Having aspects, their sentiment words and their aspects, we can easily construct the gold standard. The datasets used in this paper are relatively small; each domain contains a few hundred reviews. The reason for choosing this dataset is having score labels at the aspect level. So, we can build the gold standard and evaluate our approach.

The results of the user study are shown in Table 2. The average and standard deviation of the accuracy of the generated lexicon for each domain indicates that user supervision improves the quality of the generated lexicon. However, in order to see whether this difference is significant or not, we ran a t-test on the results of the user study for each domain. Since we are testing the effect of user supervision regardless of the type of the interface, we have 20 results about the quality of the generated lexicon after user supervision. The p-values show that the user supervision has a significant affect in the quality of the generated lexicon.

In addition, the results show that in average, the visual interface slightly outperforms the text-based interface. Similarly, to show whether this difference is significant or not, we ran an independent-samples t-test. Although in this study each participant worked with both interfaces, the domains used for each task were different. Therefore, for each domain, the students that worked with the visual interface are different from the students that participated in the text interface. The p-value of this test for each dataset shows that this difference is not significant. Since the user supervision is the same in both interfaces, this result is not surprising. Besides, the aim of the visual interface is to provide an easy to use interface for the user supervision. Finally, the last row in this table shows the number of pairs that were shown to the participants.

Moreover, we recorded the amount of time that each participant spent to complete the tasks. The average and standard deviation of this value for each dataset and interface are shown in Table 3. In average, participants could finish their tasks faster using the visual interface. However, this difference was not statistically significant when we ran the t-test. It is worth mentioning that in this study, no instruction regarding time were given and we did not ask participants to complete their tasks as quick as possible.

At the end of the study, participants were asked to answer a questionnaire. Some of the questions and the frequency of their answers are shown in Table 4. Answers are in the scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is the best. Questions in columns 1 and 2 are about how easy are the interfaces to use. The frequencies of the scores show that in average, participants assigned higher scores to the visual interface. we also ran the

non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test and the results show that there is a significant difference between the participants' scores for the visual and text-based interface. Similarly, for the questions 3 and 4, we infer that the visual interface is significantly more helpful in the polarity assignment task. In addition, we asked this question "Overall, which user interface do you prefer to work with?" 25 participants answered visual interface, while 5 stated that they prefer text-based interface. Therefore, although the visual interface is not significantly faster than the text-based interface, because of its qualifications, most participants prefer to interact with it and its components are more useful in making the polarity assignment task easier.

We also asked participants to give us their comments on the provided interfaces. Participants give responses such as "For the visual system I like the tree a lot, felt well organized." (participant ID = 12), "The text based system was harder to follow, scrolling made it hard and easy to lose your place" (participant ID = 27), and "The text-based interface, it is relatively easy to use and I think it will bring more accurate information" (participant ID = 5).

Table 2: Average, Standard Deviation, and P-Value of the Sentiment Lexicon Accuracy Before and After User Supervision Using Text-based and Visual Interfaces.

	Camera	Cell Phone	Mp3 Player
Ac-U ^a	60.27	55.80	68.52
Ac+UT ^b	91.04(±4.61)	84.24(±5.50)	88.91(±3.49)
Ac+UV ^c	94.21(±2.21)	85.33(±4.20)	91.10(±3.08)
p-val1 ^d	< 0.0001	< 0.0001	< 0.0001
p-val2 ^e	0.079	0.642	0.175
No. of pairs	138	114	141

^aAccuracy without user supervision

^bAccuracy after user supervision, text-based interface

^cAccuracy after user supervision, visual interface

^dP-value, accuracy before and after supervision, df=38

^eP-value, accuracy using text and visual interface, df=18

Table 3: The Average and Standard Deviation of the Amount of Time Spent by the Participants for Each Dataset (in seconds).

Interface	Camera	Cell Phone	Mp3 Player
Text-based	635.8(±237.15)	745.5(±262.19)	745.2(±290.26)
Visual	629(±172.76)	737(±315.19)	707.5(±173.83)

Table 4: Questionnaire and Frequency of the Participants' Answers with the P-Value of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

Score	Q1 ^a	Q2 ^b	Q3 ^c	Q4 ^d	Q5 ^e	Q6 ^f
5	10	19	6	17	11	13
4	13	10	16	12	15	15
3	4	1	3	0	3	1
2	2	0	5	1	1	1
1	1	0	0	0	0	0
P ^g	0.012		0.001		N/A	N/A

^aHow easy is the text-based interface to use

^bHow easy is the visual interface to use

^cHow helpful is the text-based interface in assigning sentiment values

^dHow helpful is the visual interface in assigning sentiment values

^eHow useful is the tree cloud in making the task easier

^fHow appealing are the visual components

^gP-value of the Wilcoxon signed rank test

7 CONCLUSIONS

Our main contribution in this paper is a novel visualization framework for involving the user in the process of generating sentiment lexicon. The visualization shows sentiment pairs and allows the user to assign polarity to them. To evaluate the generated lexicon, we ran a user study with 30 people. The results show the extent to which the engagement of the user in the polarity assignment improves the quality of the lexicon and this improvement is statistically significant. In addition, based on the users' answers to the questionnaire at the end of the study, we can say that the visual interface was preferred by the participants and it was useful for the polarity assignment task. We note that polarity assignment for large lexicons is a very tedious task and we speculate that offering an improved interface that user's prefer would like reduce fatigue and user disinterest.

As a future work, we would like to add user interactions that enable users to accept or reject the extracted aspects or even add new aspects that are missed. In addition, since we needed a gold standard to evaluate the generated lexicon, we chose a fairly small dataset. Another way to evaluate the generated lexicon is to use it in an application such as sentiment classification and see how much it improves the results of the classifier. However, this type of evaluation may add errors of the classifier to the results. Using larger datasets and evaluating the generated lexicon in this way is also considered as future work.

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