

# Distributional semantics in technicolor

**Elia Bruni**

University of Trento  
elia.bruni@unitn.it

**Gemma Boleda**

University of Texas at Austin  
gemma.boleda@utcompling.com

**Marco Baroni**

**Nam-Khanh Tran**  
University of Trento  
name.surname@unitn.it

## Abstract

Our research aims at building computational models of word meaning that are perceptually grounded. Using computer vision techniques, we build visual and multimodal distributional models and compare them to standard textual models. Our results show that, while visual models with state-of-the-art computer vision techniques perform worse than textual models in general tasks (accounting for semantic relatedness), they are as good or better models of the meaning of words with visual correlates such as color terms, even in a nontrivial task that involves nonliteral uses of such words. Moreover, we show that visual and textual information are tapping on different aspects of meaning, and indeed combining them in multimodal models often improves performance.

## 1 Introduction

Traditional semantic space models represent meaning on the basis of word co-occurrence statistics in large text corpora (Turney and Pantel, 2010). These models (as well as virtually all work in computational lexical semantics) rely on verbal information only, while human semantic knowledge also relies on non-verbal experience and representation (Louwerse, 2011), crucially on the information gathered through perception. Recent developments in computer vision make it possible to computationally model one vital human perceptual channel: vision (Mooney, 2008). A few studies have begun to use visual information extracted from images as part of distributional semantic models (Bergsma and Van

Durme, 2011; Bergsma and Goebel, 2011; Bruni et al., 2011; Feng and Lapata, 2010; Leong and Mihalea, 2011). These preliminary studies all focus on how vision may help text-based models in general terms, by evaluating performance on, for instance, word similarity datasets such as WordSim353.

This paper contributes to connecting language and perception, focusing on how to exploit visual information to build better models of word meaning, in three ways: (1) We carry out a systematic comparison of models using textual, visual, and both types of information. (2) We evaluate the models on general semantic relatedness tasks and on two specific tasks where visual information is highly relevant, as they focus on color terms. (3) Unlike previous work, we study the impact of using different kinds of visual information for these semantic tasks.

Our results show that, while visual models with state-of-the-art computer vision techniques perform worse than textual models in general semantic tasks, they are as good or better models of the meaning of words with visual correlates such as color terms, even in a nontrivial task that involves nonliteral uses of such words. Moreover, we show that visual and textual information are tapping on different aspects of meaning, such that they are complementary sources of information, and indeed combining them in multimodal models often improves performance. We also show that “hybrid” models exploiting the patterns of co-occurrence of words as tags of the same images can be a powerful surrogate of visual information under certain circumstances.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces the textual, visual, multimodal,

and hybrid models we use for our experiments. We present our experiments in sections 3 to 5. Section 6 reviews related work, and section 7 finishes with conclusions and future work.

## 2 Distributional semantic models

### 2.1 Textual models

For the current project, we constructed a set of textual distributional models that implement various standard ways to extract them from a corpus, chosen to be representative of the state of the art. In all cases, occurrence and co-occurrence statistics are extracted from the freely available ukWaC and Wackypedia corpora combined (size: 1.9B and 820M tokens, respectively).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in all models the raw co-occurrence counts are transformed into nonnegative Local Mutual Information (LMI) scores.<sup>2</sup> Finally, in all models we harvest vector representations for the same words (lemmas), namely the top 20K most frequent nouns, 5K most frequent adjectives and 5K most frequent verbs in the combined corpora (for coherence with the vision-based models, that cannot exploit contextual information to distinguish nouns and adjectives, we merge nominal and adjectival usages of the color adjectives in the text-based models as well). The same 30K target nouns, verbs and adjectives are also employed as contextual elements.

The **Window2** and **Window20** models are based on counting co-occurrences with collocates within a window of fixed width, in the tradition of HAL (Lund and Burgess, 1996). Window2 records sentence-internal co-occurrence with the nearest 2 content words to the left and right of each target concept, a narrow context definition expected to capture taxonomic relations. Window20 considers a larger window of 20 words to the left and right of the target, and should capture broader topical relations. The **Document** model corresponds to a “topic-based” approach in which words are represented as distributions over documents. It is based on a word-by-document matrix, recording the distribution of the

<sup>1</sup><http://wacky.sslmit.unibo.it/>

<sup>2</sup>LMI is obtained by multiplying raw counts by Pointwise Mutual Information, and it is a close approximation to the Log-Likelihood Ratio (Evert, 2005). It counteracts the tendency of PMI to favour extremely rare events.

30K target words across the 30K documents in the concatenated corpus that have the largest cumulative LMI mass. This model is thus akin to traditional Latent Semantic Analysis (Landauer and Dumais, 1997), without dimensionality reduction.

We add to the models we constructed the freely available Distributional Memory (**DM**) model,<sup>3</sup> that has been shown to reach state-of-the-art performance in many semantic tasks (Baroni and Lenci, 2010). DM is an example of a more complex text-based model that exploits lexico-syntactic and dependency relations between words (see Baroni and Lenci’s article for details), and we use it as an instance of a grammar-based model. DM is based on the same corpora we used plus the 100M-word British National Corpus,<sup>4</sup> and it also uses LMI scores.

### 2.2 Visual models

The visual models use information extracted from images instead of textual corpora. We use image data where each image is associated with one or more words or **tags** (we use “tag” for each word associated to the image, and “label” for the set of tags of an image). We use the ESP-Game dataset,<sup>5</sup> containing 100K images labeled through a game with a purpose in which two people partnered online must independently and rapidly agree on an appropriate word to label randomly selected images. Once a word is entered by both partners in a certain number of game matches, that word is added to the label for that image, and it becomes a taboo word for the following rounds of the game (von Ahn and Dabish, 2004). There are 20,515 distinct tags in the dataset, with an average of 4 tags per image. We build one vector with visual features for each tag in the dataset.

The visual features are extracted with the use of a standard bag-of-visual-words (**BoVW**) representation of images, inspired by NLP (Sivic and Zisserman, 2003; Csurka et al., 2004; Nister and Stewenius, 2006; Bosch et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2007). This approach relies on the notion of a common vocabulary of “visual words” that can serve as discrete representations for all images. Contrary to what hap-

<sup>3</sup><http://clic.cimec.unitn.it/dm>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.espgame.org>

pens in NLP, where words are (mostly) discrete and easy to identify, in vision the visual words need to be first defined. The process is completely inductive. In a nutshell, BoVW works as follows. From every image in a dataset, relevant areas are identified and a low-level feature vector (called a “descriptor”) is built to represent each area. These vectors, living in what is sometimes called a *descriptor space*, are then grouped into a number of clusters. Each cluster is treated as a discrete visual word, and the clusters will be the *vocabulary* of visual words used to represent all the images in the collection. Now, given a new image, the nearest visual word is identified for each descriptor extracted from it, such that the image can be represented as a BoVW feature vector, by counting the instances of each visual word in the image (note that an occurrence of a low-level descriptor vector in an image, after mapping to the nearest cluster, will increment the count of a single dimension of the higher-level BoVW vector). In our work, the representation of each word (tag) is also a BoVW vector. The values of each dimension are obtained by summing the occurrences of the relevant visual word in all the images tagged with the word. Again, raw counts are transformed into Local Mutual Information scores. The process to extract visual words and use them to create image-based vectors to represent (real) words is illustrated in Figure 1, for a hypothetical example in which there is only one image in the collection labeled with the word *horse*.

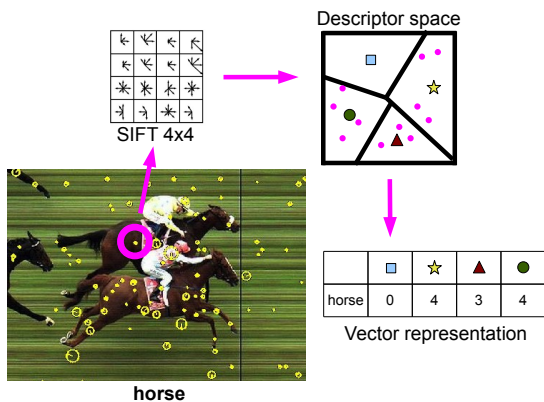


Figure 1: Procedure to build a visual representation for a word, exemplified with SIFT features.

We extract descriptor features of two types.<sup>6</sup> First, the standard Scale-Invariant Feature Transform (SIFT) feature vectors (Lowe, 1999; Lowe, 2004), good at characterizing parts of objects. Second, LAB features (Fairchild, 2005), which encode only color information. We also experimented with other visual features, such as those focusing on edges (Canny, 1986), texture (Zhu et al., 2002), and shapes (Oliva and Torralba, 2001), but they were not useful for the color tasks. Moreover, we experimented also with different color scales, such as LUV, HSV and RGB, obtaining significantly worse performance compared to LAB. Further details on feature extraction follow.

SIFT features are designed to be invariant to image scale and rotation, and have been shown to provide a robust matching across affine distortion, noise and change in illumination. The version of SIFT features that we use is sensitive to color (RGB scale; LUV, LAB and OPPONENT gave worse results). We automatically identified keypoints for each image and extracted SIFT features on a regular grid defined around the keypoint with five pixels spacing, at four multiple scales (10, 15, 20, 25 pixel radii), zeroing the low contrast ones. To obtain the visual word vocabulary, we cluster the SIFT feature vectors with the standardly used  $k$ -means clustering algorithm. We varied the number  $k$  of visual words between 500 and 2,500 in steps of 500.

For the SIFT-based representation of images, we used spatial histograms to introduce weak *geometry* (Grauman and Darrell, 2005; Lazebnik et al., 2006), dividing the image into several (spatial) regions, representing each region in terms of BoVW, and then concatenating the vectors. In our experiments, the spatial regions were obtained by dividing the image in  $4 \times 4$ , for a total of 16 regions (other values and a global representation did not perform as well). Note that, following standard practice, descriptor clustering was performed ignoring the region partition, but the resulting visual words correspond to different dimensions in the concatenated BoVW vectors, depending on the region in which they occur. Consequently, a vocabulary of  $k$  visual words results in BoVW vectors with  $k \times 16$  dimensions.

<sup>6</sup>We use VLFeat (<http://www.vlfeat.org/>) for feature extraction (Vedaldi and Fulkerson, 2008).

The LAB color space plots image data in 3 dimensions along 3 independent (orthogonal) axes, one for brightness (luminance) and two for color (chrominance). Luminance corresponds closely to brightness as recorded by the brain-eye system; the chrominance (red-green and yellow-blue) axes mimic the oppositional color sensations the retina reports to the brain (Szeliski, 2010). LAB features are densely sampled for each pixel. Also here we use the  $k$ -means algorithm to build the descriptor space. We varied the number of  $k$  visual words between 128 and 1,024 in steps of 128.

### 2.3 Multimodal models

To assemble the textual and visual representations in multimodal semantic spaces, we concatenate the two vectors after normalizing them. We use the linear weighted combination function proposed by Bruni et al. (2011): Given a word that is present both in the textual model and in the visual model, we separately normalize the two vectors  $F_t$  and  $F_v$  and we combine them as follows:

$$F = \alpha \times F_t \oplus (1 - \alpha) \times F_v$$

where  $\oplus$  is the vector concatenate operator. The weighting parameter  $\alpha$  ( $0 \leq \alpha \leq 1$ ) is tuned on the MEN development data (2,000 word pairs; details on the MEN dataset in the next section). We find the optimal value to be close to  $\alpha = 0.5$  for most model combinations, suggesting that textual and visual information should have similar weight. Our implementation of the proposed method is open source and publicly available.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.4 Hybrid models

We further introduce hybrid models that exploit the patterns of co-occurrence of words as tags of the same images. Like textual models, these models are based on word co-occurrence; like visual models, they consider co-occurrence in images (image labels). In one model (**ESP-Win**, analogous to window-based models), words tagging an image were represented in terms of co-occurrence with the other tags in the image label (Baroni and Lenci (2008) are a precedent for the use of ESP-Win). The other (**ESP-Doc**, analogous to document-based

models) represented words in terms of their co-occurrence with images, using each image as a different dimension. This information is very easy to extract, as it does not require the sophisticated techniques used in computer vision. We expected these models to perform very bad; however, as we will show, they perform relatively well in all but one of the tasks tested.

## 3 Textual and visual models as general semantic models

We test the models just presented in two different ways: First, as general models of word meaning, testing their correlation to human judgements on word similarity and relatedness (this section). Second, as models of the meaning of color terms (sections 4 and 5).

We use one standard dataset (**WordSim353**) and one new dataset (**MEN**). WordSim353 (Finkelstein et al., 2002) is a widely used benchmark constructed by asking 16 subjects to rate a set of 353 word pairs on a 10-point similarity scale and averaging the ratings (*dollar/buck* receives a high 9.22 average rating, *professor/cucumber* a low 0.31). MEN is a new evaluation benchmark with a better coverage of our multimodal semantic models.<sup>8</sup> It contains 3,000 pairs of randomly selected words that occur as ESP tags (pairs sampled to ensure a balanced range of relatedness levels according to a text-based semantic score). Each pair is scored on a  $[0, 1]$ -normalized semantic relatedness scale via ratings obtained by crowdsourcing on the Amazon Mechanical Turk (refer to the online MEN documentation for more details). For example, *cold/frost* has a high 0.9 MEN score, *eat/hair* a low 0.1. We evaluate the models in terms of their Spearman correlation to the human ratings. Our models have a perfect MEN coverage and a coverage of 252 WordSim pairs.

We used the development set of MEN to test the effect of varying the number  $k$  of visual words in SIFT and LAB. We restrict the discussion to SIFT with the optimal  $k$  (2.5K words) and to LAB with the optimal (256), lowest (128), and highest  $k$  (1024). We report the results of the multimodal

<sup>7</sup><https://github.com/s2m/FUSE>

<sup>8</sup>An updated version of MEN is available from <http://clic.cimec.unitn.it/~elia.bruni/MEN.html>. The version used here contained 10 judgements per word pair.

models built with these visual models and the best textual models (Window2 and Window20).

Columns WS and MEN in Table 1 report correlations with the WordSim and MEN ratings, respectively. As expected, because they are more mature and capture a broader range of semantic information, textual models perform much better than purely visual models. Also as expected, SIFT features outperform the simpler LAB features for this task.

A first indication that visual information helps is the fact that, for MEN, multimodal models perform best. Note that all models that are sensitive to visual information perform better for MEN than for WordSim, and the reverse is true for textual models. Because of its design, word pairs in MEN can be expected to be more imageable than those in WordSim, so the visual information is more relevant for this dataset. Also recall that we did some parameter tuning on held-out MEN data.

Surprisingly, hybrid models perform quite well: They are around 10 points worse than textual and multimodal models for WordSim, and only slightly worse than multimodal models for MEN.

## 4 Experiment 1: Discovering the color of concrete objects

In Experiment 1, we test the hypothesis that the relation between words denoting concrete things and words denoting their typical color is reflected by the distance of the corresponding vectors better when the models are sensitive to visual information.

### 4.1 Method

Two authors labeled by consensus a list of concrete nouns (extracted from the BLESS dataset<sup>9</sup> and the nouns in the BNC occurring with color terms more than 100 times) with one of the 11 colors from the basic set proposed by Berlin and Kay (1969): *black, blue, brown, green, grey, orange, pink, purple, red, white, yellow*. Objects that do not have an obvious characteristic color (*computer*) and those with more than one characteristic color (*zebra, bear*) were eliminated. Moreover, only nouns covered by all the models were preserved. The final list con-

<sup>9</sup><http://sites.google.com/site/geometricalmodels/shared-evaluation>

<i>Model</i>	<i>WS</i>	<i>MEN</i>	<i>E1</i>	<i>E2</i>
DM	.44	.42	3 (09)	.14
Document	.63	.62	3 (07)	.06
Window2	<b>.70</b>	.66	5 (13)	.49***
Window20	<b>.70</b>	.62	3 (11)	.53***
LAB <sub>128</sub>	.21	.41	<b>1</b> (27)	.25*
LAB <sub>256</sub>	.21	.41	2 (24)	.24*
LAB <sub>1024</sub>	.19	.41	2 (24)	.28**
SIFT <sub>2.5K</sub>	.33	.44	3 (15)	.57***
W2-LAB <sub>128</sub>	.40	.59	<b>1</b> (27)	.40***
W2-LAB <sub>256</sub>	.41	.60	2 (23)	.40***
W2-LAB <sub>1024</sub>	.39	.61	2 (24)	.44***
W20-LAB <sub>128</sub>	.40	.60	<b>1</b> (27)	.36***
W20-LAB <sub>256</sub>	.41	.60	2 (23)	.36***
W20-LAB <sub>1024</sub>	.39	.62	2 (24)	.40***
W2-SIFT <sub>2.5K</sub>	.64	<b>.69</b>	2.5 (19)	.68***
W20-SIFT <sub>2.5K</sub>	.64	.68	2 (17)	<b>.73***</b>
ESP-Doc	.52	.66	<b>1</b> (37)	.29*
ESP-Win	.55	.68	4 (15)	.16

Table 1: Results of the textual, visual, multimodal, and hybrid models on the general semantic tasks (first two columns, section 3; Pearson  $\rho$ ) and Experiments 1 (E1, section 4) and 2 (E2, section 5). E1 reports the median rank of the correct color and the number of top matches (in parentheses), and E2 the average difference in normalized cosines between literal and nonliteral adjective-noun phrases, with the significance of a t-test (\*\*\*) for  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $< 0.01$ , \*  $< 0.05$ ).

tains 52 nouns.<sup>10</sup> Some random examples are *fog–grey, crow–black, wood–brown, parsley–green, and grass–green*.

For evaluation, we measured the cosine of each noun with the 11 basic color words in the space produced by each model, and recorded the rank of the correct color in the resulting ordered list.

### 4.2 Results

Column E1 in Table 1 reports the median rank for each model (the smaller the rank, the better the model), as well as the number of exact matches (that is, number of nouns for which the model ranks the correct color first).

Discovering knowledge such that grass is green is arguably a simple task but Experiment 1 shows

<sup>10</sup>Dataset available from the second author’s webpage, under resources.

that textual models fail this simple task, with median ranks around 3.<sup>11</sup> This is consistent with the findings in Baroni and Lenci (2008) that standard distributional models do not capture the association between concrete concepts and their typical attributes. Visual models, as expected, are better at capturing the association between concepts and visual attributes. In fact, all models that are sensitive to visual information achieve median rank 1.

Multimodal models do not increase performance with respect to visual models: For instance, both W2-LAB<sub>128</sub> and W20-LAB<sub>128</sub> have the same median rank and number of exact matches as LAB<sub>128</sub> alone. Textual information in this case is not complementary to visual information, but simply poorer.

Also note that LAB features do better than SIFT features. This is probably due to the fact that Experiment 1 is basically about identifying a large patch of color. The SIFT features we are using are also sensitive to color, but they seem to be misguided by the other cues that they extract from images. For example, pigs are pink in LAB space but brown in SIFT space, perhaps because SIFT focused on the color of the typical environment of a pig. We can thus confirm that, by limiting multimodal spaces to SIFT features, as has been done until now in the literature, we are missing important semantic information, such as the color information that we can mine with LAB.

Again we find that hybrid models do very well, in fact in this case they have the top performance, as they perform better than LAB<sub>128</sub> (the difference, which can be noticed in the number of exact matches, is highly significant according to a paired Mann-Whitney test, with  $p < 0.001$ ).

## 5 Experiment 2

Experiment 2 requires more sophisticated information than Experiment 1, as it involves distinguishing between literal and nonliteral uses of color terms.

---

<sup>11</sup>We also experimented with a model based on direct co-occurrence of adjectives and nouns, obtaining promising results in a preliminary version of Exp. 1. We abandoned this approach because such a model inherently lacks scalability, as it will not generalize behind cases where the training data contain direct examples of co-occurrences of the target pairs.

## 5.1 Method

We test the performance of the different models with a dataset consisting of color adjective-noun phrases, randomly drawn from the most frequent 8K nouns and 4K adjectives in the concatenated ukWaC, Wackypedia, and BNC corpora (four color terms are not among these, so the dataset includes phrases for *black*, *blue*, *brown*, *green*, *red*, *white*, and *yellow* only). These were tagged by consensus by two human judges as **literal** (*white towel*, *black feather*) or **nonliteral** (*white wine*, *white musician*, *green future*). Some phrases had both literal and nonliteral uses, such as *blue book* in “book that is blue” vs. “automobile price guide”. In these cases, only the most common sense (according to the judges) was taken into account for the present experiment. The dataset consists of 370 phrases, of which our models cover 342, 227 literal and 115 nonliteral.<sup>12</sup>

The prediction is that, in good semantic models, literal uses will in general result in a higher similarity between the noun and color term vectors: A white towel is white, while wine or musicians are not white in the same manner. We test this prediction by comparing the average cosine between the color term and the nouns across the literal and nonliteral pairs (similar results were obtained in an evaluation in terms of prediction accuracy of a simple classifier).

## 5.2 Results

Column E2 in Table 1 summarizes the results of the experiment, reporting the mean difference between the normalized cosines (that is, how large the difference is between the literal and nonliteral uses of color terms), as well as the significance of the differences according to a t-test. Window-based models perform best among textual models, particularly Window20, while the rest can’t discriminate between the two uses. This is particularly striking for the Document model, which performs quite well in general semantic tasks but bad in visual tasks.

Visual models are all able to discriminate between the two uses, suggesting that indeed visual information can capture nonliteral aspects of meaning. However, in this case SIFT features perform much better than LAB features, as Experiment 2 involves

---

<sup>12</sup>Dataset available upon request to the second author.

tackling much more sophisticated information than Experiment 1. This is consistent with the fact that, for LAB, a lower  $k$  (lower granularity of the information) performs better for Experiment 1 and a higher  $k$  (higher granularity) for Experiment 2.

One crucial question to ask, given the goals of our research, is whether textual and visual models are doing essentially the same job, only using different types of information. Note that, in this case, multimodal models increase performance over the individual modalities, and are the best models for this task. This suggests that the information used in the individual models is complementary, and indeed there is no correlation between the cosines obtained with the best textual and visual models (Pearson’s  $\rho = .09, p = .11$ ).

Figure 2 depicts the results broken down by color.<sup>13</sup> Both modalities can capture the differences for *black* and *green*, probably because nonliteral uses of these color terms have also clear textual correlates (more concretely, topical correlates, as they are related to race and ecology, respectively).<sup>14</sup> Significantly, however, vision can capture nonliteral uses of *blue* and *red*, while text can’t. Note that these uses (*blue note, shark, shield, red meat, district, face*) do not have a clear topical correlate, and thus it makes sense that vision does a better job.

Finally, note that for this more sophisticated task, hybrid models perform quite bad, which shows their limitations as models of word meaning.<sup>15</sup> Overall,

---

<sup>13</sup>*Yellow* and *brown* are excluded because the dataset contains only one and two instances of nonliteral cases for these terms, respectively. The significance of the differences as explained in the text has been tested via t-tests.

<sup>14</sup>It’s not entirely clear why neither modality can capture the differences for *white*; for text, it may be because the nonliteral cases are not so tied to race as is the cases for *black*, but they also contain many other types of nonliteral uses, such as type-referring (*white wine/rice/cell*) or metonymical ones (*white smile*).

<sup>15</sup>The hybrid model that performs best in the color tasks is ESP-Doc. This model can only detect a relation between an adjective and a noun if they directly co-occur in the label of at least one image (a “document” in this setting). The more direct co-occurrences there are, the more related the words will be for the model. This works for Exp. 1: Since the ESP labels are lists of what subjects saw in a picture, and the adjectives of Exp. 1 are typical colors of objects, there is a high co-occurrence, as all but one adjective-noun pairs co-occur in at least one ESP label. For the model to perform well in Exp. 2 too, literal phrases should occur in the same labels and non-literal pairs should not. We

our results suggest that co-occurrence in an image label can be used as a surrogate of true visual information to some extent, but the behavior of hybrid models depends on ad-hoc aspects of the labeled dataset, and, from an empirical perspective, they are more limited than truly multimodal models, because they require large amounts of rich verbal picture descriptions to reach good coverage.

## 6 Related work

There is an increasing amount of work in computer vision that exploits text-derived information for image retrieval and annotation tasks (Farhadi et al., 2010; Kulkarni et al., 2011). One particular technique inspired by NLP that has acted as a very effective proxy from CV to NLP is precisely the BoVW. Recently, NLPers have begun exploiting BoVW to enrich distributional models that represent word meaning with visual features automatically extracted from images (Feng and Lapata, 2010; Bruni et al., 2011; Leong and Mihalcea, 2011). Previous work in this area relied on SIFT features only, whereas we have enriched the visual representation of words with other kinds of features from computer vision, namely, color-related features (LAB). Moreover, earlier evaluation of multimodal models has focused only on standard word similarity tasks (using mainly WordSim353), whereas we have tested them on both general semantic tasks and specific tasks that tap directly into aspects of semantics (such as color) where we expect visual information to be crucial.

The most closely related work to ours is that recently presented by Özbal et al. (2011). Like us, Özbal and colleagues use both a textual model and a visual model (as well as Google adjective-noun co-occurrence counts) to find the typical color of an object. However, their visual model works by analyzing pictures associated with an object, and determining the color of the object directly by image analysis. We attempt the more ambitious goal of separately associating a vector to nouns and adjectives, and de-

---

find no such difference (89% of adjective-noun pairs co-occur in at least one image in the literal set, 86% in the nonliteral set), because many of the relevant pairs describe concrete concepts that, while not necessarily of the “right” literal colour, are perfectly fit to be depicted in images (“blue shark”, “black boy”, “white wine”).

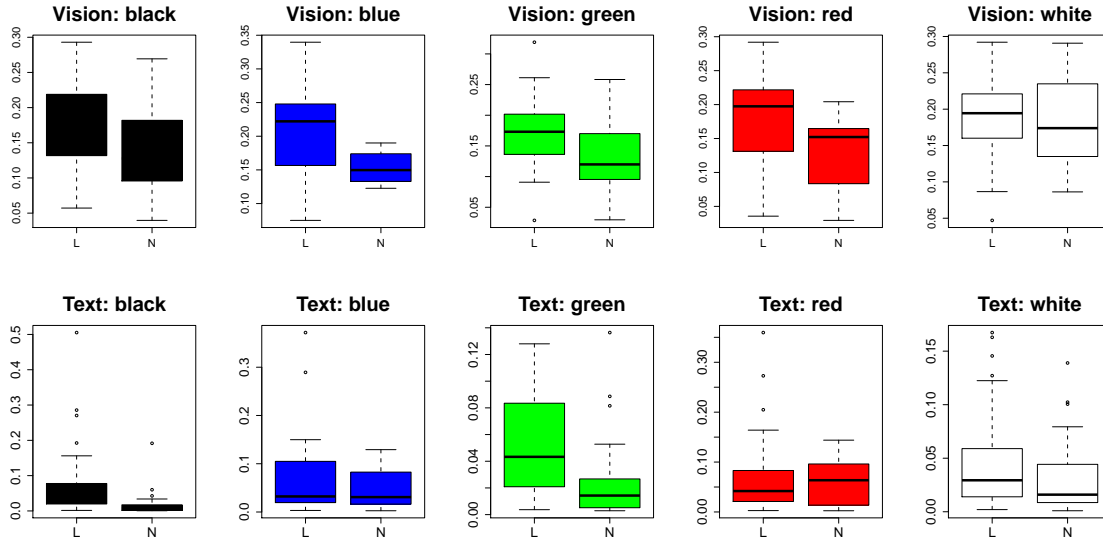


Figure 2: Discrimination of literal (L) vs. nonliteral (N) uses by the best visual and textual models.

termining the color of an object by the nearness of the noun denoting the object to the color term. In other words, we are trying to model the meaning of color *terms* and how they relate to other words, and not to directly extract the color of an object from pictures depicting them. Our second experiment is connected to the literature on the automated detection of figurative language (Shutova, 2010). There is in particular some similarity with the tasks studied by Turney et al. (2011). Turney and colleagues try, among other things, to distinguish literal and metaphorical usages of adjectives when combined with nouns, including the highly visual adjective *dark* (*dark hair* vs. *dark humour*). Their method, based on automatically quantifying the degree of abstractness of the noun, is complementary to ours. Future work could combine our approach and theirs.

## 7 Conclusion

We have presented evidence that distributional semantic models based on text, while providing a good general semantic representation of word meaning, can be outperformed by models using visual information for semantic aspects of words where vision is relevant. More generally, this suggests that computer vision is mature enough to significantly contribute to perceptually grounded computational models of language. We have also shown

that different types of visual features (LAB, SIFT) are appropriate for different tasks. Future research should investigate automated methods to discover which (if any) kind of visual information should be highlighted in which task, more sophisticated multimodal models, visual properties other than color, and larger color datasets, such as the one recently introduced by Mohammad (2011).

## Acknowledgments

E.B. and M.B. are partially supported by a Google Research Award. G.B. is partially supported by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (FFI2010-15006, TIN2009-14715-C04-04), the EU PASCAL2 Network of Excellence (FP7-ICT-216886) and the AGAUR (2010 BP-A 00070). The E2 evaluation set was created by G.B. with Louise McNally and Eva Maria Vecchi. Fig. 1 was adapted from a figure by Jasper Uijlings. G. B. thanks Margarita Torrent for taking care of her children while she worked hard to meet the Sunday deadline.

## References

- Marco Baroni and Alessandro Lenci. 2008. Concepts and properties in word spaces. *Italian Journal of Linguistics*, 20(1):55–88.
- Marco Baroni and Alessandro Lenci. 2010. Distributional Memory: A general framework for



- corpus-based semantics. *Computational Linguistics*, 36(4):673–721.
- Shane Bergsma and Randy Goebel. 2011. Using visual information to predict lexical preference. In *Proceedings of Recent Advances in Natural Language Processing*, pages 399–405, Hissar.
- Shane Bergsma and Benjamin Van Durme. 2011. Learning bilingual lexicons using the visual similarity of labeled web images. In *Proc. IJCAI*, pages 1764–1769, Barcelona, Spain, July.
- Brent Berlin and Paul Key. 1969. *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Anna Bosch, Andrew Zisserman, and Xavier Munoz. 2007. Image Classification using Random Forests and Ferns. In *Computer Vision, 2007. ICCV 2007. IEEE 11th International Conference on*, pages 1–8.
- Elia Bruni, Giang Binh Tran, and Marco Baroni. 2011. Distributional semantics from text and images. In *Proceedings of the EMNLP GEMS Workshop*, pages 22–32, Edinburgh.
- John Canny. 1986. A computational approach to edge detection. *IEEE Trans. Pattern Anal. Mach. Intell.*, 36(4):679–698.
- Gabriella Csurka, Christopher Dance, Lixin Fan, Jutta Willamowski, and Cédric Bray. 2004. Visual categorization with bags of keypoints. In *In Workshop on Statistical Learning in Computer Vision, ECCV*, pages 1–22.
- Stefan Evert. 2005. *The Statistics of Word Cooccurrences*. Dissertation, Stuttgart University.
- Mark D. Fairchild. 2005. Status of cie color appearance models.
- A. Farhadi, M. Hejrati, M. Sadeghi, P. Young, C. Rashtchian, J. Hockenmaier, and D. Forsyth. 2010. Every picture tells a story: Generating sentences from images. In *Proceedings of ECCV*.
- Yansong Feng and Mirella Lapata. 2010. Visual information in semantic representation. In *Proceedings of HLT-NAACL*, pages 91–99, Los Angeles, CA.
- Lev Finkelstein, Evgeniy Gabrilovich, Yossi Matias, Ehud Rivlin, Zach Solan, Gadi Wolfman, and Eytan Ruppin. 2002. Placing search in context: The concept revisited. *ACM Transactions on Information Systems*, 20(1):116–131.
- Kristen Grauman and Trevor Darrell. 2005. The pyramid match kernel: Discriminative classification with sets of image features. In *In ICCV*, pages 1458–1465.
- G. Kulkarni, V. Premraj, S. Dhar, S. Li, Y. Choi, A. Berg, and T. Berg. 2011. Baby talk: Understanding and generating simple image descriptions. In *Proceedings of CVPR*.
- Thomas Landauer and Susan Dumais. 1997. A solution to Plato’s problem: The latent semantic analysis theory of acquisition, induction, and representation of knowledge. *Psychological Review*, 104(2):211–240.
- Svetlana Lazebnik, Cordelia Schmid, and Jean Ponce. 2006. Beyond bags of features: Spatial pyramid matching for recognizing natural scene categories. In *Proceedings of the 2006 IEEE Computer Society Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition - Volume 2, CVPR 2006*, pages 2169–2178, Washington, DC, USA. IEEE Computer Society.
- Chee Wee Leong and Rada Mihalcea. 2011. Going beyond text: A hybrid image-text approach for measuring word relatedness. In *Proceedings of IJCNLP*, pages 1403–1407, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- Max Louwerse. 2011. Symbol interdependency in symbolic and embodied cognition. *Topics in Cognitive Science*, 3:273–302.
- David Lowe. 1999. Object Recognition from Local Scale-Invariant Features. *Computer Vision, IEEE International Conference on*, 2:1150–1157 vol.2, August.
- David Lowe. 2004. Distinctive image features from scale-invariant keypoints. *International Journal of Computer Vision*, 60(2), November.
- Kevin Lund and Curt Burgess. 1996. Producing high-dimensional semantic spaces from lexical co-occurrence. *Behavior Research Methods*, 28:203–208.
- Saif Mohammad. 2011. Colourful language: Measuring word-colour associations. In *Proceedings of the 2nd Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics*, pages 97–106, Portland, Oregon.
- Raymond J. Mooney. 2008. Learning to connect language and perception.
- David Nister and Henrik Stewenius. 2006. Scalable recognition with a vocabulary tree. In *Proceedings of the 2006 IEEE Computer Society Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition - Volume 2, CVPR ’06*, pages 2161–2168.
- Aude Oliva and Antonio Torralba. 2001. Modeling the shape of the scene: A holistic representation of the spatial envelope. *Int. J. Comput. Vision*, 42:145–175.
- Gözde Özbal, Carlo Strapparava, Rada Mihalcea, and Daniele Pighin. 2011. A comparison of unsupervised methods to associate colors with words. In *Proceedings of ACII*, pages 42–51, Memphis, TN.
- Ekaterina Shutova. 2010. Models of metaphor in NLP. In *Proceedings of ACL*, pages 688–697, Uppsala, Sweden.
- Josef Sivic and Andrew Zisserman. 2003. Video Google: A text retrieval approach to object matching in videos. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Computer Vision*, volume 2, pages 1470–1477, October.

- Richard Szeliski. 2010. *Computer Vision : Algorithms and Applications*. Springer-Verlag New York Inc.
- Peter Turney and Patrick Pantel. 2010. From frequency to meaning: Vector space models of semantics. *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*, 37:141–188.
- Peter Turney, Yair Neuman, Dan Assaf, and Yohai Cohen. 2011. Literal and metaphorical sense identification through concrete and abstract context. In *Proceedings of EMNLP*, pages 680–690, Edinburgh, UK.
- Andrea Vedaldi and Brian Fulkerson. 2008. VLFeat: An open and portable library of computer vision algorithms. <http://www.vlfeat.org/>.
- Luis von Ahn and Laura Dabbish. 2004. Labeling images with a computer game. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, pages 319–326, Vienna, Austria.
- Jun Yang, Yu-Gang Jiang, Alexander G. Hauptmann, and Chong-Wah Ngo. 2007. Evaluating bag-of-visual-words representations in scene classification. In *Multimedia Information Retrieval*, pages 197–206.
- Song Chun Zhu, Cheng en Guo, Ying Nian Wu, and Yizhou Wang. 2002. What are textons? In *Computer Vision - ECCV 2002, 7th European Conference on Computer Vision, Copenhagen, Denmark, May 28-31, 2002, Proceedings, Part IV*, pages 793–807. Springer.