

# TFW2V: An Enhanced Document Similarity Method for the Morphologically Rich Finnish Language

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## Abstract

Measuring the semantic similarity of different texts has many important applications in Digital Humanities research such as information retrieval, document clustering and text summarization. The performance of different methods depends on the length of the text, the domain and the language. This study focuses on experimenting with some of the current approaches to Finnish, which is a morphologically rich language. At the same time, we propose a simple method, TFW2V, which shows high efficiency in handling both long text documents and limited amounts of data. Furthermore, we design an objective evaluation method which can be used as a framework for benchmarking text similarity approaches.

## 1 Introduction

Identifying documents that describe similar topics is a challenging yet important task. Detecting similar documents automatically has a wide range of digital humanities applications such as OCR post-correction (Dong and Smith, 2018), automatic clustering and linking of documents (Arnold and Tilton, 2018; Riedl et al., 2019) and clustering of semantic fields within a document (Hämäläinen and Alnajjar, 2019).

Assessing document similarity automatically becomes an important task especially due to the often unstructured nature of digital humanities research data (see Mäkelä et al. 2020). This makes it possible to handle large text corpora in a more organized fashion by clustering similar texts together.

In this paper, we explore different approaches to textual similarity detection, namely TF-IDF, USE, Doc2Vec and our own proposed approach named TFW2V<sup>1</sup>. Our approach combines the traditional TF-IDF method with word embeddings to

improve the overall performance of the text similarity method. Unlike the recent neural approaches such as BERT (Devlin et al., 2018), RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019) or XLNet (Yang et al., 2019b), our method does not rely on a large external corpus, but can be fully trained on the texts the similarity of which one is to assess. This is useful since our model can then work on corpora that represent a different era than what modern NLP models are trained on, or even for languages that do not have massive text collections readily available or are spoken by communities that do not have access to the computational resources needed to train large neural language models.

## 2 Related work

A survey conducted by Beel et al. (2016) showed that 83% of text-based recommendation systems in digital libraries use TF-IDF. There is also a recent survey paper on the current state of Finnish NLP (Hämäläinen and Alnajjar, 2021). There is a number of papers studying automatic detection of genres (Dalan and Sharoff, 2016; Worsham and Kalita, 2018; Gianitsos et al., 2019), which, as a task, is not too far from ours. However, in this section, we focus mainly on approaches on document similarity.

Kim et al. (2019) have combined multiple document representation approaches, which are TF-IDF, LDA and Doc2Vec, to classify documents in a semi-supervised fashion. Their results indicate that combining the features of the aforementioned models enhanced the performance of the classification task. Truşcă (2019) has compared how different text representation models perform when training a Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifier. The results show that Doc2Vec was the superior model for the task addressed by the author, which is text categorization. Duong et al. (2021b) also showed

<sup>1</sup>Code available: <https://github.com/ruathudo/tfw2v>

that clustering Finnish text is more effective by Doc2Vec compared to LDA.

A recent study by Marcińczuk et al. (2021) compared WordNet –a manually constructed network of concepts–, TF-IDF and word embeddings extracted from Doc2Vec and BERT for unsupervised classification of Polish text documents. Their study showed that manually constructed knowledge bases, i.e. WordNet in this case, is a valuable resource for the task. Yang et al. (2016) merged TF-IDF and Word Embeddings similarity scores to build the recommendation system for similar bug reports.

Li et al. (2019) have used text representation models to extract keywords from short texts collected from social media by employing a TextRank (Mihalcea and Tarau, 2004) algorithm which constructs a network and traverses it using random walk to discover the most important concepts. Text representation models have also been utilized with deep neural networks to classify text by Dogru et al. (2021). TF-IDF and word embeddings have also been used to assess the similarity of entities (Hämäläinen et al., 2021). In particular, the authors used the aforementioned methods to extract and predict properties for Pokémon.

### 3 Experiments

In this section, we apply four of the existing approaches to predict similarity of documents: Doc2Vec, Universal Sentence Encoder (USE), term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) and average weighted word vector (AvgWV). Later on, we propose a new method to optimize TF-IDF by using a word embeddings model (TFW2V). All the experiments use the same datasets, the sampling process of which will be presented in the following section.

#### 3.1 Dataset

We run the experiments based on the Yle News corpus. This corpus contains news articles published from 2011 to 2018 by the Finnish broadcasting company Yle (Yleisradio). The corpus is distributed through the Language Bank of Finland (Kielipankki)<sup>2</sup> and is freely available for research use<sup>3</sup>. There are more than 700,000 articles written in Finnish, each of which belongs to different

<sup>2</sup><http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:1b-2017070501>

<sup>3</sup>According to the license we cannot redistribute datasets derived from these data.

categories with top-level categories such as Sport, Politics and Transportation. These categories have been defined by human authors and they have been coupled with keyword tags. For example, an article about a hockey match has the tags: *urheilu* (sports), *jääkiekon* (ice-hockey), *miesten* (men’s), *sm-liiga* (The Finnish National League). The keyword tags illustrate well the contents of each article.

Our study focuses on tackling the text similarity problem for documents as opposed to individual sentences or paragraphs. For this reason, we decided to filter the corpus to include only the articles that are between 200 and 600 words for the experiments. Next, we randomly sample 10 datasets from the filtered corpus so that each dataset contains 2000 unique articles. Thus, all datasets are independent from each other with no overlap. We only optimize the models for the first dataset as the training set. For testing, the models are applied to the rest of datasets with the extracted parameters without any modification.

#### 3.2 TF-IDF

The first method we experiment with is TF-IDF. As stated in section 2, this is a very simple method but it is very effective in many cases. The idea of this method can be expressed as follows: In a document, if a term (word) appears more frequently, it is given more weight, or a more important score. In contrast, if a term appears in many other documents in the corpus, it is regarded as less important or assumed to be a common word not descriptive enough for the document. The concurrence of these two metrics is combined in the equation below, to indicate the importance of a term in the text.

$$W_{i,j} = TF_{i,j} \times \log\left(\frac{N}{DF_i}\right)$$

In this equation, the  $W_{i,j}$  is the weight of a term  $i$  in document  $j$ ,  $TF_{i,j}$  is frequency of term  $i$  in document  $j$ ,  $N$  is the number of documents in the corpus and  $DF_i$  refers to the number of documents where the term  $i$  appears. The weights hence tend to filter out common terms and emphasize the important keywords of a given document. The value of TF-IDF weight is in range  $[0, 1]$ .

Before running the experiment, the text data is cleaned by removing punctuation and stopwords using NLTK (Bird et al., 2009). For each sampled dataset, we calculate the TF-IDF weights for all documents. The pairs of terms and weights are feature vectors for each document. By using the

cosine similarity function, we can measure the similarity between feature vectors. In order to not depend on magnitudes of vectors but their angles, this is a common metric to compute the semantic similarity for encoded text (Singhal, 2001). After having similarity scores calculated, they are saved for each pair of documents in dataset and sorted in descending order. From now, the top N similar documents can be queried from a given document.

### 3.3 Average Weighted Word Vectors

Extending from the previous section 3.2, we introduce a combined method between TF-IDF and word embeddings algorithms called average weighted word vectors (AvgWV). This method was used in several previous researches to get a better representation for text document. Rani and Lobiyal (2021) used this method to get the representation of sentences in document to find the similarity between them. With the same approach, Charbonnier and Wartena (2018) applied to map the definition of an acronym with its context. The idea of this method is very easy to conduct. Both word embeddings and TF-IDF are trained for the given corpus. The representation of a document is the average of embedded vectors multiplied with the TF-IDF scores (weights) for all words in that document. By that, the TF-IDF scores punish the insignificant words and the influenced words have more impact on the averaged vector. The equation below is used to formulate the method.

$$\vec{D} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_i^N TF_i * \vec{WV}_i$$

Where  $\vec{D}$  is the vector representation of a document,  $N$  is the number of word features. For each word  $i$ , we calculate the product of its TF-IDF score ( $TF$ ) with its word vector ( $\vec{WV}_i$ ) to get a new weighted vector. All weighted vectors corresponding to the word features are then averaged as the representation of document  $D$ .

The word embeddings model used in our experiment is based on Word2Vec from the work of Mikolov et al. (2013). The model was trained in 20 epochs using the Gensim library with a vector size of 128, skip-gram method, negative windows of 5 for each sample dataset. Inherit from previous TF-IDF section 3.2, the averaged vectors are applied cosine distance to get the similarity score for documents.

### 3.4 Doc2Vec

Documents originally stored in text format are convenient for humans to read, but they pose a challenge for computational tasks. Transforming from characters to a fixed length numeric representation is helpful for many purposes, for example: document retrieval, semantic comparison. One vector representation of text has been introduced by Harris (1954) as a bag of words method. Even though this method is easy to compute and it shows the efficiency in many cases, there are still some weaknesses such as the lack of importance given to the word order and it suffers from data sparsity and high dimensionality. It is also missing the semantic meaning between the words, for example, the words “dog” and “cat” are more similar than “dog” and “car” but they are treated equally in the Bag of Words method.

Doc2Vec (Le and Mikolov, 2014) is a document embeddings algorithm that comes to solve the issue from Bag of Words. The advantage of Doc2Vec is to vectorize a whole text document regardless of its length and to provide the semantic relationship of words.

We use the existing implementation of Doc2Vec in Gensim library (Řehůřek and Sojka, 2010). Before training, the text is tokenized and all stop-words are removed using NLTK. The setup on Doc2Vec model is kept in default with a dimensionality to 100 for vector size, negative sampling of 5 words and train for 30 epochs. We train model for each dataset separately. Thus there are 10 different Doc2Vec models corresponding to the datasets. Cosine similarity is again applied to these dense document vectors from the Doc2Vec model to get the similarity scores between documents.

### 3.5 Universal Sentence Encoder

The next approach we experienced is using the Universal Sentence Encoder (USE) (Yang et al., 2019a) model for multi-languages. The USE model was trained based on the Transformer architecture (Vaswani et al., 2017) for over 16 languages which shows a very good performance for various semantic textual similarity tasks. However, this model does not support Finnish.

Reimers and Gurevych (2020) introduced a novel way to transfer knowledge of a sentence encoder model from one language to another. On that paper, DistilMBERT (Sanh et al., 2019) model, a distilled version of BERT (Devlin et al.,

2018) trained on 104 different languages<sup>4</sup>, was selected as student model. It is then adapted to USE model (Yang et al., 2019a) (as a teacher model) to support 50+ languages including Finnish. The pre-trained model was published with the name “distiluse-base-multilingual-cased-v2” in the Sentence-Transformers library (Reimers and Gurevych, 2019).

We applied the pre-trained model without any modifications. The maximum length support for the text is 512 tokens. The whole document is encoded automatically by the model and output as a dense vector. With the collected vectors we are able to compare the similarity between documents using cosine similarity.

### 3.6 Enrich TF-IDF by Word Embeddings (TFW2V)

The following part of this paper moves on to describe our modified version of TF-IDF algorithm. As introduced in section TF-IDF 3.2, this algorithm is very simple to compare similarity of documents. However, it also has many drawbacks. Firstly, the position of words in text is completely ignored. Secondly, because of relying on the lexical features, it skips semantic relationship of words. For example, with the synonyms or plural form of words, TF-IDF treats them as separated features without any linking. This will have a huge impact on morphologically rich languages such as Finnish, which contains many inflectional forms for all words and their compounds (see Duong et al. 2021a) even when lematization is applied. To overcome the issues, we propose a new algorithm that uses a word embeddings model to enrich the TF-IDF result. The details of the algorithm are presented in pseudo code 1.

0.05	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.05
The	quick	brown	fox	jumps	over
The	cat	sat	on	the	mat
0.05	0.4	0.3	0.05	0.05	0.15

Figure 1: The two texts have the words **Fox** and **Cat** with high TF-IDF weights. At the same time, they have semantic similarity in the Word2Vec model, so that the documents can be linked. Same is applied to the words **Jumps** and **Sat**

The general idea of the algorithm can be ex-

<sup>4</sup>Provided through the Transformers Python library (Wolf et al., 2019) <https://huggingface.co/distilbert-base-multilingual-cased>

plained as follows. We train a word embeddings model from the same corpus, so the words or terms of documents have semantic relationships. The word embeddings model can be used to measure the similarity of two terms. Turning now to TF-IDF output, the terms or features of a document contain the important information with higher weights. These important terms of two documents can be semantically linked by using a trained word embeddings model. An example is shown in the figure 1 to better explain.

The level of similarity between two group features is used to give additional reward on the final similarity score between a pair of documents. For example, if document A has important features (term1, term3, term8) and document B has important features (term2, term5, term9), the similarity score between document A and B can be added a small portion from the semantic similarity score between two features group. Similar to AvgWV section 3.3, the Word2Vec (W2V) model was used for word embeddings. The model was trained in 20 epochs using the Gensim library with a vector size of 128, skip-gram method, negative windows of 5 for each sample dataset.

To determine how much reward should be added to the TF-IDF similarity score, we design three parameters: **MinWeight**, **MaxTerm** and **Alpha**. Let take a look at the algorithm 1. Given a list of features (terms with weights) from a document and a list of similar documents as the result from TF-IDF, we want to change the result or re-rank it. Firstly, the features are sorted in the descending order of weight. The **MinWeight** parameter is used to filter important features, higher it is, less features are kept for comparison (lower bound). In some cases, the number of features considered as essential is too high, and we want to trim them to a certain number by the **MaxTerm** number (upper bound). For the list of similar documents, we apply the same process. After that, we get the similarity score between given features and compared features by W2V model. Note that, the W2V model generated by Gensim provides a method to compute similarity score of two set of words by averaging vectors for each set<sup>5</sup>. Next, the new similarity score is calculated by the following formula:

$$NewScore = \frac{WVScore \times Alpha + SimScore}{1 + Alpha}$$

<sup>5</sup>[https://radimrehurek.com/gensim/models/keyedvectors.html#gensim.models.keyedvectors.KeyedVectors.n\\_similarity](https://radimrehurek.com/gensim/models/keyedvectors.html#gensim.models.keyedvectors.KeyedVectors.n_similarity)

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**Algorithm 1** Enrich TF-IDF

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```
procedure ENRICHTFIDF(Features, SimDocs, W2V, MinWeight, MaxTerm, Alpha)  
  sort Features(TermID, Weight) in DESC order of Weight  
  filter Features have Weight < MinWeight  
  trim Features to MaxTerm if length Features > MaxTerm  
  for SimFeatures, SimScore in SimDocs do  
    sort SimFeatures(TermID, Weight) in DESC order of Weight  
    filter SimFeatures have Weight < MinWeight  
    trim SimFeatures to MaxTerm if length SimFeatures > MaxTerm  
    WVScore = W2V.calculate_similarity(Features, SimFeatures)  
    NewScore = (WVScore × Alpha + SimScore)/(1 + Alpha)  
    save NewScore  
  end for  
end procedure
```

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Where the **SimScore** is the similarity score from TF-IDF, **WVScore** is the similarity score from W2V model for the important features, and **Alpha** is the parameter to decide how W2V similarity influences the current score. When **Alpha** is equal to 0, it has no effect, and when it is set to 1, the new score is the average of the two scores. Larger **Alpha** will have a higher recall which is bound to link an increasing number of unexpected documents together, while a smaller number yields a more conservative end result. In our experiments, we empirically set *MinWeight* = 0.08, *MaxLength* = 20 and *Alpha* = 0.1. These parameters are consistent for all datasets. Finally, the results are re-ranked for the new similarity scores.

## 4 Evaluation

Turning now to the evaluation, as previously stated, we have 10 independent datasets for benchmarking. All the experimented parameters from the models are applied consistently for those datasets. We assess the performance of the 5 methods TF-IDF, AvgWV, Doc2Vec, USE and TFW2V by three criteria: Top-N Precision, Top-N BLEU score and Top-N ranking loss. We will explain those metrics in the following sections of the paper.

### 4.1 Ground Truth

The ground truth for evaluation is created by the tags attached to articles. Because the tags are manually labeled by human authors to illustrate the content of articles, comparing the similarity between sets of tags can reflect the similarity of articles. There are many ways to measure similarity of two sets, such as counting overlapping tags. In

machine translation, BLEU score (Papineni et al., 2002) is a popular method to evaluate the translated sentence quality. BLEU method calculates the similarity between two sets of words, very close to our case. The difference is only that two sentences in machine translation have N-grams dependence while similarity of two sets of tags are not relied on the position of tags. We use a simplified version of BLEU score, which is calculating score for unigrams without considering other higher order N-grams. After having BLEU scores for all document pairs, we sort them in descending order for evaluation.

### 4.2 Top-N Precision

The first metric is Top-N Precision. The metric can be presented as in the Top-N documents predicted as the most similar to a given one, i.e. how many documents are correctly ranked. For instance, given a document with top 100 similar documents, there are 40 documents that are ranked correctly in the top 100, the precision for it is 40%. The precision is calculated for all 2000 documents and averaged for each dataset. The formula below is to calculate the precision, where the  $D_{pred}$  is a set of predicted documents,  $D_{real}$  is a set of ground truth, and  $N$  is the number of documents for Top-N:

$$Precision = \frac{\sum D_{pred} \cap D_{real}}{N}$$

In the figure 2, the precision for Top-30 is presented. For all the 10 datasets in figure 2, the TFW2V model outperforms the other models clearly with an **26.09%** average (avg) accuracy. The Doc2Vec model has the lowest accuracy (**12.70%** avg). While the USE model shows

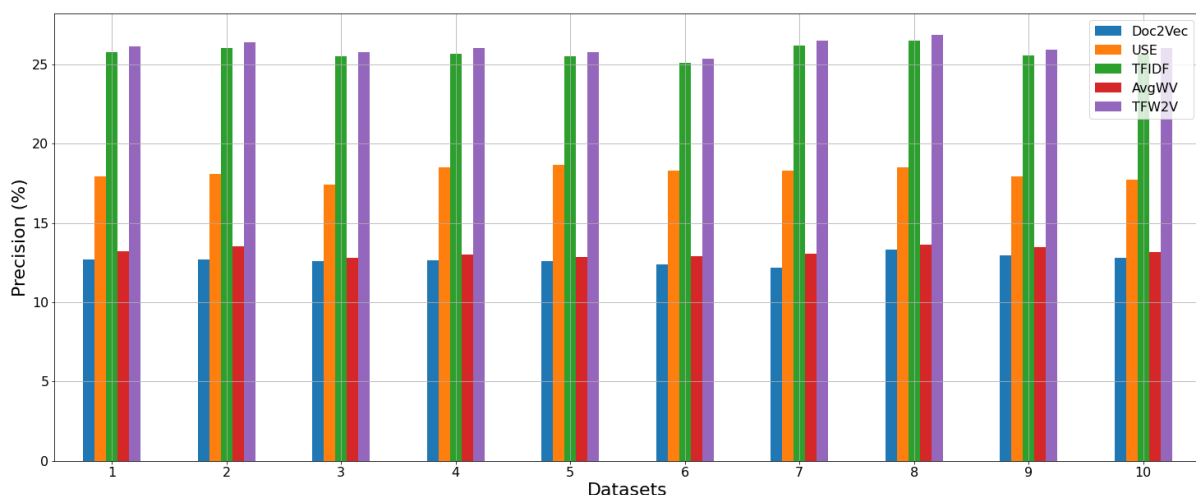


Figure 2: Precision accuracy for all datasets on Top-30 similarity. Higher is better.

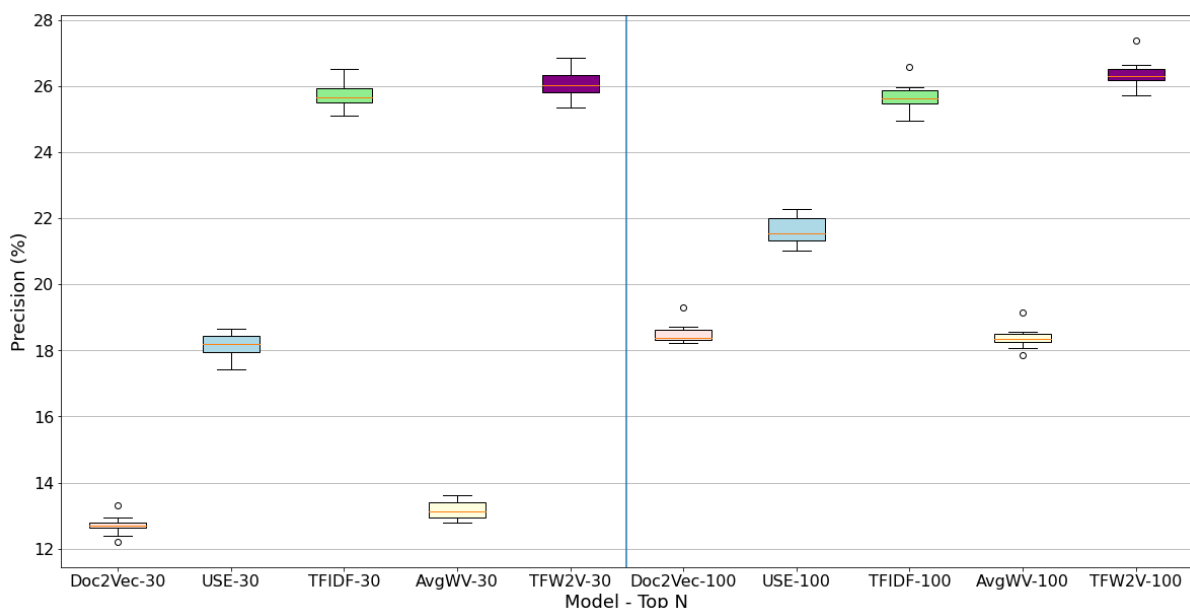


Figure 3: Precision accuracy for all datasets on Top-30 and Top-100 similarity. Higher is better.

much better results compared to Doc2Vec (**18.15%** avg), it is still inferior to TF-IDF (**25.76%** avg). The AvgWV is approximately comparable with Doc2Vec with slightly better numbers (**13.17%** avg). Similar results also take place for the Top-100, where the TFW2V surpassed the other models in every dataset. Therefore, to have a better visualization, we use boxplot to illustrate not only the difference between models, but also the Top-N variants.

The figure 3 demonstrates the precision for both Top-30 and Top-100 results. It is interesting that the results from Doc2Vec (**18.51%** avg), AvgWV (**18.38%** avg) and USE (**21.64%** avg) are significantly improved for the Top-100. This can be

explained as the more relaxing the boundary, the higher the chance a document is predicted correctly in the Top-N list. However, the TF-IDF result has not improved. Despite depending on the TF-IDF results, TFW2V-100 still shows a slight increase (**26.41%** avg) compared to Top-30 results.

### 4.3 Top-N BLEU score

The next metric is Top-N BLEU score to measure how relevant a group of similar documents is to a given document. The way to conduct this metric is very similar to calculating the BLEU score for ranking in the Ground Truth section 4.1. We calculate the BLEU score on a unigram level for the tags of a given document against the Top-N similar

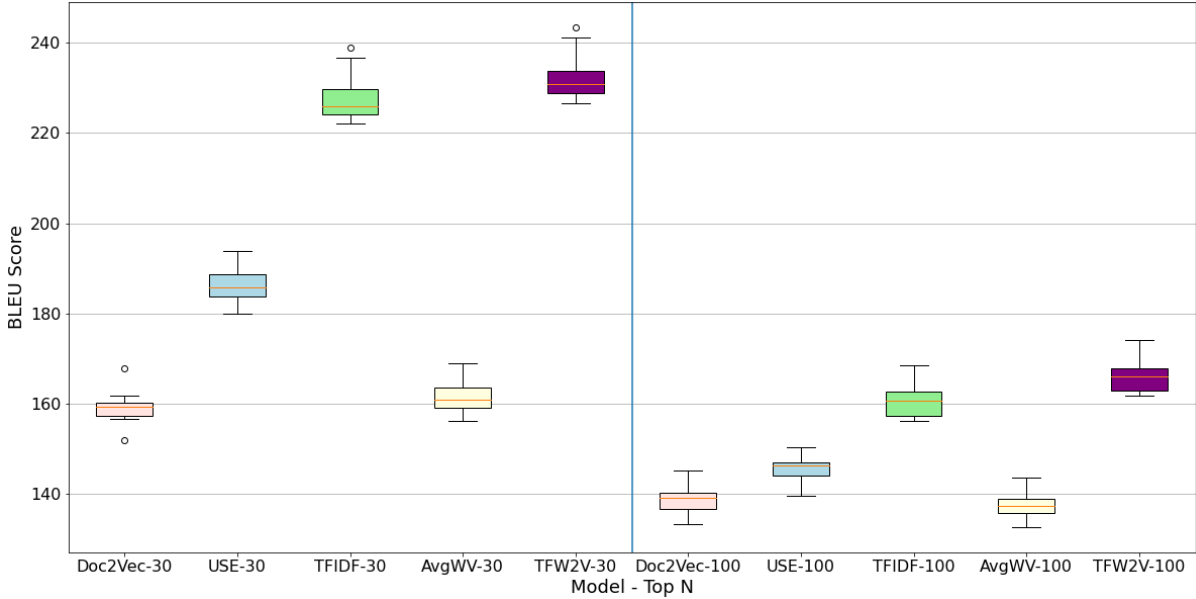


Figure 4: Sum of BLEU scores for 2k documents in each dataset. All datasets are evaluated for Top-30 and Top-100 similarity. Higher is better.

documents tags. These scores are then averaged for N similar documents. From there, we sum all the averaged BLEU scores for 2000 documents in a dataset. The averaged BLEU score is calculated as follow:

$$Score = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N BLEU(T, T_i)}{N}$$

where  $T$  is the tags from a given document and  $T_i$  is the tags from similar documents and  $N$  is the number of Top-N. From the results we observed, the TFW2V model again outperforms the other models in all datasets. The boxplot in figure 4 shows the precise expression of performances for all models. We can see, Doc2Vec still remains less effective, around **160** for Top-30 and **139** for Top-100 on average. Similar numbers to Doc2Vec come from AvgWV method. The USE model results (**186** and **145**) are still lower compared to TF-IDF (**228** and **160**). Our proposed model TFW2V showed the improvement to TF-IDF with **233** and **166** scores on both Top-30 and Top-100 respectively.

The overall result for Top-30 is higher than Top-100. This is understandable as the more documents in Top-N there are, the more irrelevant ones making to the list will make the average scores decrease.

#### 4.4 Top-N Ranking loss

The final metric we want to introduce is Top-N Ranking loss. This metric reflects how far a predicted position of similar documents is to the real

order in ground truth for the Top-N. For example, in Top-30, we compare 30 predicted document orders to their real orders. If a predicted document has the position 5 and its real position is 45, the loss between the two orders is 40. Thus, the average loss for all documents is calculated using the Mean Absolute Error (MAE) function. The MAE loss is then divided for the length of the dataset (length of max rank) for normalization. The formula below is for calculating MAE loss between two positions  $P$  (ground truth) and  $\hat{P}$  (prediction) for each document in Top-N with  $S$  is the length of the dataset.

$$Loss = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N |P_i - \hat{P}_i|}{N \times S}$$

We got the result for this metric illustrated in figure 5. This time, both Doc2Vec and AvgWV models show the highest loss at Top-30 with loss around **0.29**. Interestingly, they are a bit better than the USE model at Top-100 (**0.30** vs **0.31**). TF-IDF is still obviously impressive compared to the previous ones with **0.24** for Top-30 and **0.29** for Top-100. Though, TFW2V is continuing to achieve the best result with the lowest losses of **0.23** and **0.28** for Top-30 and Top-100 respectively. This also indicates that the TFW2V model gives less irrelevant documents in Top-N than the other models.

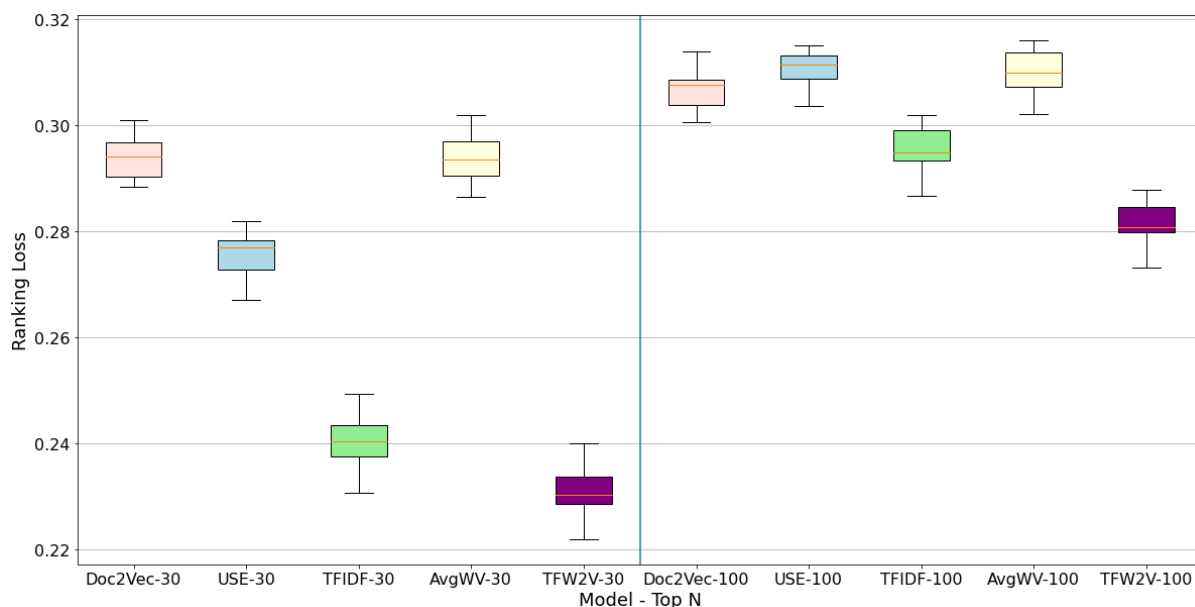


Figure 5: MAE Ranking loss for all datasets on Top-30 and Top-100 similarity. Lower is better.

## 5 Conclusion

In summary, we have presented a simple method to improve the TF-IDF algorithm by using a word embeddings model. The proposed method outperforms the more complex models like Doc2Vec and USE. We also compared it to a popular method AvgWV which use the same combination of TF-IDF and Word2Vec but in different way. It is very obvious that our proposed approach is surpassing the AvgWV model. The weakness of AvgWV is that it's hard to control the averaged vector representation of a document when all words and their TF-IDF weights are taken into account. Additionally, the impact from word vectors could come to too strong in some cases, which create the bias in the final decision.

In our method TFW2V, we can control the effect of word embedding model on the similarity score. At the same time, not all the words are considered into the enhancing process but the important ones. Thus, it is more stable, flexible and controllable to apply in various purposes. For example, in the document retriever system, the parameters can be set to get the relevant result as priority. On the other hand, in a recommender system, the parameters can be adjusted to get more creative result, thus it can look up for the under-discovered articles.

It is clearly observable that with a morphologically rich language like Finnish, TF-IDF still works very effectively. However, by combining it with a Word2Vec model and our algorithm 1, the result

is significantly enhanced. The method is entirely unsupervised and works well with a small dataset like in our experiment with only 2000 samples.

In the future work, we will experiment this method for more languages and different lengths of document. The source code of this project will be provided as a Python library<sup>6</sup> which is easy to install and apply for any DH research. The lack of dependency on neural language models trained on massive amounts of data makes our approach applicable in scenarios where such amounts of text are unfeasible to obtain.

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