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Generic SAO Similarity Measure via Extended Sørensen-Dice Index

X[I](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5718-0047)AOMAN LI^{ID}', CUI WANG^{1,2}, XUEFU ZHANG¹, AND WEI SUN¹

¹ Agricultural Information Institute, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Beijing 100081, China ²School of Information Science and Engineering, Shandong Agriculture and Engineering University, Jinan 250100, China Corresponding authors: Xiaoman Li (lixiaoman@caas.cn) and Xuefu Zhang (zhangxuefu@caas.cn)

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ABSTRACT As an essential component of many Natural Language Processing applications, semantic similarity measure has been studied for decades. Recent research results indicate that the Subject-Action-Object (SAO) structure in sentences is more desirable for describing the technological information, and SAO-based similarity measure outperforms classical text-based ones. The typical approach in the literature to finding the similarity between two SAO structures relies on a term matching technique, which produces the similarity score by the Sørensen-Dice index, i.e., the proportion of the total number of matching terms. However, in this paper, we observe that the entities in the SAO structures usually have a small number of terms, which makes the currently acknowledged methods have a high recurrence rate and poor accuracy. To settle this issue, we extend the Sørensen-Dice index, and present a new unified framework for the SAO similarity measure that can give a higher discrimination. The effectiveness of our measure is evaluated on the basis of patent data sets in the Nano-Fertilizer field. The results show that our measure can significantly improve the accuracy than the currently acknowledged ones. The proposed measure has an excellent flexibility and robustness, and can be easily used for patent similarity measure. In addition, the extended Sørensen-Dice index is of independent interest, and has potential applications for other similarity measures.

INDEX TERMS Similarity measurement, Sørensen-Dice index, semantic information, Subject-Action-Object, computational linguistics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Semantic similarity analysis is an indispensable module for applications in natural language processing (NLP) and related areas [1], such as text mining [2], information retrieval [3], machine learning [4], [5], and patent analysis [6], [7]. The measure of semantic similarity can be defined as a metric assessing the degree to which two texts are similar to each other in terms of meaning. According to the measuring object, we can group the semantic similarity measures into three categories, the similarity between words/terms, the similarity between sentences, and the similarity between documents/paragraphs. The typical approach to finding the similarity between two text segments is to use a simple matching method (e.g., Sørensen-Dice index [8], [9]), and produce a similarity score based on

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the number of units that occur in both input segments [10]. Although such a method has been improved by considering stop-words removal [11], part-of-speech tagging [12], syntactic (word order) information [13], [14], and as well as various weighting and normalization factors [15], measuring sentence similarity [14], [16]–[20] is still challenging due to the ambiguity and variability of linguistic expression.

In linguistic typology, Subject-Action-Object (SAO) is a triple syntactic structure extracted from sentences. The subject entity and object entity are terms or phrases, which are connected by the action entity that is usually verbs. SAO is also denoted by SPO (Subject-Predicate-Object) [21] or SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) [22] in the literature. Owing to the rapid development of the NLP techniques, SAO structure can be efficiently identified, and used to express the semantic information of sentence [23]. Recently, based on the analyses of the SAO structures, a lot of new text-mining approaches

are proposed [24]–[26], and widely used in patent analysis and technological evolution analysis [27].

As the case of measuring the sentences similarity, the typical method of detecting the similarity between two SAO structures is to use the Sørensen-Dice index, and evaluate the proportion of the total number of matching terms that appear in both SAO structures. Here, two terms are said to be matching if their semantic similarity score exceeds some fixed threshold. That is, the underlying term-vs-term similarity scores are compressed into two levels. Such a method is effective, and has been used for patent infringement identification [28]–[31], technological trend identification [25], [32]–[36], strategic technology planning [6], [37], document mapping [38], and etc.

However, as shown by Wang *et al.* [7], the performance of this commonly used method is far from desirable due to the relatively high recurrence rate and poor discrimination. Such a situation is caused by the fact that the number of terms (words or phrases) in the SAO structures is small. In general, in order to improve the efficiency, the collected data needs to be preprocessed, e.g., stop-words removal and transformations from complex sentence to simple sentence. Sometimes, one sentence can be dismembered and recombined into several SAO structures. In our experiment, we find that the action entity is usually just one verb, and the subject entity and object entity rarely has more than five words. In order to better demonstrate the causality, we consider following extreme situation, where all the entities in the SAO structures have just one word. Thus, according to the aforementioned method, the similarity score between the corresponding entities (including subject entity, action entity, and object entity) in SAO structures is just 0 (unmatched) or 1 (matched). We note that the overall similarity score between two SAO structures is calculated by averaging the similarity scores between corresponding entities. Then, the final similarity score can only be one of four discrete values, i.e., 0 , $1/3$, $2/3$, and 1. Apparently, for such a situation, the typical similarity measure in the literature must lead to a relatively high recurrence rate and poor discrimination.

A. OUR CONTRIBUTION

In this paper, we revisit the measure of similarity between two SAO structures.

• We observe that the currently acknowledged Sørensen-Dice index is not desirable for the case where the number of terms is small. To address this issue, we extend the Sørensen-Dice index by reducing the information loss of underlying term-vs-term similarity. In particular, the acknowledged Sørensen-Dice index can just support two-levels compression, while our extended one can support arbitrary levels compression. Based on the extended Sørensen-Dice index, we presented a unified framework for the SAO similarity measure in a modular way, which can give a higher discrimination.

• The experiments are conducted based on the patent data sets in the Nano-Fertilizer field. The results show that our extended Sørensen-Dice index can dramatically reduce the recurrence rate, and our proposed SAO similarity measure can significantly improve the accuracy and F-measure compared with the acknowledged one. The application of our SAO similarity measure to the patent similarity analysis is also demonstrated.

B. ORGANIZATION

Sec. [II](#page-1-0) introduce the related works. Our extended Sørensen-Dice index is shown by Sec. [III.](#page-2-0) The unified framework for SAO similarity measure is given in Sec. [IV.](#page-3-0) The experiment and evaluation are presented by Sec. [V.](#page-5-0) In Sec. [VI,](#page-8-0) we conclude our work and discuss the potential application of our proposed method.

II. RELATED WORKS

A. WORD SEMANTIC SIMILARITY

The metrics of semantic similarity between words are mainly grouped into two categories [10]. One is corpus-based measures that determine the semantic similarity using the information exclusively gained from a large corpus, a collection of written or spoken material assembled for the purpose of studying linguistic structures, frequencies, etc. Among the corpus-based measures, word relationships are derived analyzing the co-occurrence distribution in a corpus, e.g., latent semantic analysis [39] and PMI-IR algorithm [40], turning words (or terms) as high-dimensional vectors by wikipedia-based technique, e.g., Explicit Semantic Analysis [41], and using the web and search engine, e.g., Google Distance [42].

The other is knowledge-based measures, which quantify the degree of semantic similarity using information drawn from semantic network. There are several well-known measures with relatively high computational efficiency, e.g., Leacock and Chodorow [43], Wu and Palmer [44], Resnik [45], Jiang and Conrath [46] and Lin [47]. In particular, Leacock-Chodorow and Wu-Palmer are based on path and depth in the taxonomy, while Resnik, Jiang-Conrath and Lin are based on information content. A short description of these measures can be found in Sec. [IV-A.](#page-4-0)

B. SENTENCE SEMANTIC SIMILARITY

Measures for detecting semantic similarity between two sentences usually utilize linguistic knowledge such as semantic relations between words and their syntactic composition. Mandreoli *et al.* [13] propose a method based on a purely syntactic approach for searching similarities within sentences. The semantic measure, given by Mihalcea *et al.* [10], combines word semantic similarity scores with word specificity scores, but the syntax structure of sentences is ignored. Li *et al.* [14] present an algorithm that takes account of semantic information and word order information. The semantic similarity of two sentences is calculated using

information from a structured lexical database and from corpus statistics. Based on dynamic time warping, Liu *et al.* [48] propose a similarity measure that takes into account the semantic information, word order and the contribution of different parts of speech in a sentence. Quan *et al.* [19] combine syntactic information, semantic features, and attention weight mechanism together, and propose an efficient framework for sentence similarity.

C. SAO SEMANTIC SIMILARITY

SAO is a syntactic structure that expresses the semantic relationship between things, i.e., how the entity subject (S) of a sentence relates to the entity object (O) of a sentence through an entity action (A) [7]. Subjects can represent ''solutions'', actions can represent either the ''effect'' or the ''influence'' of the solution, and objects can represent the ''invention problem'' [49].

SAO structures can be efficiently identified and extracted using the method given by [23]. In particular, Yang *et al.* [23] introduce term clumping, and design a co-word algorithm (considering the co-occurrence with keywords) to identify SAO core components. Based on syntax-tree, they construct a hierarchical SAO extraction model, and perform the SAO cleaning and consolidation function.

Using the SAO structures to exploit the technological content of patents has significant advantages over traditional patent features [7], [50]. Hence, there is an increasing interest in studying the SAO semantic similarity metric, which has been widely used for various patent analyses, e.g., patent infringement identification [28]–[31].

Currently, the SAO-vs-SAO similarity is measured by first evaluating the entity-vs-entity similarity with the Sørensen-Dice index, and then calculating the final similarity score using weighted average. Such a method is acknowledged and widely used in [6], [25], [28]–[38]. However, as we observe in Sec. [III,](#page-2-0) the entities in the SAO structures has small number of terms, which will lead to the fact that the current acknowledged measure has a high recurrence rate and poor discrimination.

D. PATENT SIMILARITY ANALYSIS

The research on analyzing patent similarity has a long history. The similarity measures can be divided into three categories, co-classification analysis, citation analysis, and keyword-based analysis. The co-classification analysis [51] relies on the patent classification codes, e.g., IPC codes, and does not involve the content information of a patent. Citation analysis relies on a patent citation network [52]. Keyword-based analysis is the most widely used method for measuring patent similarity, please refer to [53], [54]. In particular, text matching is used to measuring the technological similarity between patents [54]. SAO-based analysis is an extension of the keyword-based analysis that involves the relationships between entities. Various methodologies including co-word analysis, SAO structures, bibliographic coupling, co-citation analysis, and self-citation links are compared by [38]. The results show that the two former ones tend to describe rather semantic similarities that differ from knowledge flows as expressed by the citation-based methodologies.

III. EXTENDED SØRENSEN-DICE INDEX

A. SØRENSEN-DICE INDEX

The Sørensen-Dice index that is independently proposed by Dice [8] and Sørensen [9], is a statistic used to gauge the similarity of two samples. Originally, this index was intended for discrete data. Given two sets, *X* and *Y* , the original Sørensen-Dice index is defined as

$$
SD_{\text{Original}} = \frac{2|X \cap Y|}{|X| + |Y|}
$$
 (1)

where $|X|$ ($|Y|$, resp.) is the cardinality of the set X (*Y* , resp.), i.e., the number of elements in the set. That is, the Sørensen-Dice index is equal to twice the ratio of the number of elements appearing in both sets to the sum of the number of elements in each set. We remark that in the context the sets will be instantiated by entities in SAO structure, and the elements will be instantiated by terms or words accordingly.

B. ACKNOWLEDGED SØRENSEN-DICE INDEX FOR SAO STRUCTURES

When measuring the semantic similarity between two SAO structures, direct adoption of the original Sørensen-Dice index as the metric will ignore the semantic relations between words, and result into universally low scores, poor discrimination and accuracy. This is due to the inherent flexibility of natural language enabling to express similar meanings using quite different sentences in terms of structure and word content. Thus, the SAO semantic similarity is usually measured by the following acknowledged Sørensen-Dice index exploiting the information of the underlying semantic similarity among elements in sets [7].

Given two sets $X = \{x_1, \ldots, x_m\}$ and $Y = \{y_1, \ldots, y_n\}$, and the similarity scores $\text{Sim}(x_i, y_i)$ between x_i and y_i (0 \leq Sim(*x_i*, *y_i*) ≤ 1), where $i \in \{1, ..., m\}$ and $y \in \{1, ..., n\}$, the widely used Sørensen-Dice index for SAO structures is defined $by¹$ $by¹$ $by¹$

$$
SD_{Acknowledged} = \frac{2\sum_{k=1}^{\min(m,n)} F(x_k, y_k)}{|X| + |Y|}
$$
 (2)

where the matching function $F(x_k, y_k)$ indicates two terms x_k and y_k are matching or not, and $\sum_{k=1}^{\min(m,n)} F(x_k, y_k)$ essentially counts the number of the matching terms between *X* and *Y*. In detail, $F(x_k, y_k)$ is given by

$$
F(x_k, y_k) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } R \le \text{Sim}(x_k, y_k) \le 1 \\ 0 & \text{if } 0 \le \text{Sim}(x_k, y_k) < R \end{cases} \tag{3}
$$

¹In Sec. [III,](#page-2-0) we assume the elements in sets are well ordered.

Remark: We note that above acknowledged index [\(2\)](#page-2-2) is essentially the generalization of the original Sørensen-Dice index [\(1\)](#page-2-3). In particular, $|X \cap Y|$ in [\(2\)](#page-2-2) can also be interpreted as the number of the matching terms, i.e., $\sum_{k=1}^{\min(m,n)} F(x_k, y_k)$, where $F(x_k, y_k)$ is equal to 1 if $x_k = y_k$, and 0 otherwise.

C. OUR EXTENDED SØRENSEN-DICE INDEX FOR SAO STRUCTURES

We remark that the acknowledged Sørensen-Dice index in [\(2\)](#page-2-2) is not desirable for the sets with small amount of elements. For example, assume the set *X* has just single element, i.e., $|X| = 1$. Then, according to [\(2\)](#page-2-2), the similarity score between *X* and *Y* can only be either 0 or $2/(|X|+|Y|)$. Thus, such a semantic similarity measure has a quite lower discrimination.

The entities of SAO structure extracted from sentences, e.g., in the patent text, usually have small amount of terms. In particular, most of the ''Action'' entities have only single terms. This might be the key reason why the current widely used SAO similarity measure brings a relatively high recurrence rate, and poor accuracy.

We note that the acknowledged Sørensen-Dice index essentially gives a conversion from the term-vs-term (or element-vs-element) similarity to the entity-vs-entity (setvs-set) similarity. However, the information loss during the conversion is very high, which is the key reason for the lower discrimination. In [\(3\)](#page-2-4), the domain and codomain of the matching function are $[0, 1]$ and $\{0, 1\}$, respectively. That is, the original term-vs-term similarity is compressed into two levels, 0 (unmatched) and 1 (matched). In the view of information theory, the entropy is also decreasing heavily. For example, assume the original term-vs-term similarity with precision 0.01 obeys the uniform distribution over the discrete set $\{0.01 * [(100 * x)] : x \in [0, 1]\}$, with Shannon entropy $\log 101 \approx 6.66$. Let the threshold value *R* be 0.5. Thus, the value of the matching function obeys the uniform distribution over $\{0, 1\}$, with Shannon entropy $log(2) = 1$. That is, roughly speaking, a lot of information is compressed using the current matching function.

To solve this, we extend the Sørensen-Dice index by modifying the matching function to make support multiple-level compression and reduce the information loss. Given R_0 = $0 \lt R_1 \lt R_2 \lt \ldots \lt R_t = 1$, the modified matching function can be defined by

$$
\widetilde{F}(x_k, y_k) = \begin{cases}\nw_1 & \text{if } R_0 \le \text{Sim}(x_k, y_k) < R_1 \\
w_2 & \text{if } R_1 \le \text{Sim}(x_k, y_k) < R_2 \\
\vdots & \\
w_t & \text{if } R_{t-1} \le \text{Sim}(x_k, y_k) \le R_t\n\end{cases} \tag{4}
$$

Then, accordingly, our extended Sørensen-Dice index will be

SD_{Our} =
$$
\frac{2 \sum_{k=1}^{\min(m,n)} \widetilde{F}(x_k, y_k)}{|X| + |Y|}
$$
 (5)

FIGURE 1. SAO structure with entities "Subject", "Action", and "Object".

FIGURE 2. Overall procedure for measuring the similarity between two SAO structures.

1) FLEXIBILITY

Essentially, the modified matching function divides the interval [0, 1] into *t* subintervals and assigns fixed weights accessing the matching degree for these subintervals. We note that if we set $t = 2$, $w_1 = 0$ and $w_t = 1$, then our extended Sørensen-Dice index will be totally the same as the acknowledged one in Sec. [III-B.](#page-2-5) For the aforementioned example with uniform distribution, the Shannon entropy will be log *t*. If we choose $t \geq 3$, apparently, the information loss will be reduced.

2) ROBUSTNESS

One may argue that if we directly choose the termvs-term similarity score $Sim(x_k, y_k)$ as the matching function $\tilde{F}(x_k, y_k)$, there will be no information loss for the matching function. However, we note that the underlying term-vs-term semantic similarity score is usually not precise enough, due to incomplete corpus. In fact, there exists even no domain thesaurus for some frontier field, which results in that many excellent word-vs-word semantic similarity measure will not work. As we have pointed, our extended matching function is essentially a compressing function. Thus, with this function, some noises (errors) existing in the underlying term-vs-term similarity score can be eliminated (corrected). We also remark that the Sørensen-Dice index is sometimes not the final similarity score, e.g., as an intermedium for our SAO similarity measure. Thus, eliminating noises in time can avoid error accumulation. Thus, our extended Sørensen-Dice index can also help improve the robustness of similarity measure systems.

IV. A UNIFIED FRAMEWORK FOR SAO SIMILARITY MEASURE

In this section, using the extended Sørensen-Dice index presented in Sec. [III,](#page-2-0) we give a unified framework for SAO

similarity measure. A SAO structure consists of three entities including ''Subject'', ''Action'', and ''Object'', see Fig. [1.](#page-3-1) Every entity is composed of several terms, which refer to words or phrases.

Given two SAO structures, we can quantify the degree of similarity by four steps, see Fig. [2.](#page-3-2) First, we calculate the term-vs-term similarity. Next, using the term-vs-term similarity scores, we reorder the terms in the entities. Then, with the extended Sørensen-Dice index, we can calculate the entity-vs-entity similarity scores. Finally, the SAOvs-SAO similarity can be measured by a weighted average method.

A. TERM-VS-TERM SIMILARITY

The semantic similarity between terms/words has been well studied, and there are a relatively large number of metrics that have been proposed in the literature [1], [10], [55]. Below, we present five measures that have excellent performance and relatively high computational efficiency in NLP application. We remark that although we just select following five termvs-term measures to test the effectiveness of our methods, the other term-vs-term measures can also work well with this framework.

We note that most term-vs-term similarity measures are defined for concepts, 2 but they can be easily turned into a word-to-word similarity metric by selecting for any given pair of words those two meanings that lead to the highest conceptvs-concept similarity [10]. In the following, we give a short description for each of these five metrics. These metrics use the WordNet [56] as a knowledge source. WordNet 3 3 is a large lexical database for English, where Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are grouped into sets of cognitive synonyms (synsets), each expressing a distinct concept. Synsets are interlinked by means of conceptual-semantic and lexical relations. Let c_1 and c_2 be two concepts.

Leacock and Chodorow [43]: This measure of Leacock-Chodorow Similarity is in basis of the shortest path that connects the concepts and the maximum depth of the taxonomy in which the concepts occur. The similarity is quantified by

$$
\text{Sim}_{lch}(c_1, c_2) = -\log \frac{length(c_1, c_2)}{2D} \tag{6}
$$

where *length* is the length of the shortest path between two concepts using node-counting, and *D* is the maximum depth of the taxonomy.

Wu and Palmer [44]: The Wu-Palmer Similarity is based on the depth of the two concepts in the taxonomy and that of their Least Common Subsumer (LCS, most specific ancestor node). The similarity score is given by

$$
\text{Sim}_{\text{wup}}(c_1, c_2) = \frac{2 \times \text{depth}(\text{LCS})}{\text{depth}(c_1) + \text{depth}(c_2)} \tag{7}
$$

Resnik [45]: The Resnik similarity is based on the information content of the LCS. The similarity is identified by

$$
\text{Sim}_{res}(c_1, c_2) = -\log \Pr[\text{LCS}] \tag{8}
$$

where Pr [*c*] is the probability of encountering an instance of concept *c* in a large corpus.

Jiang and Conrath [46]: The Jiang-Conrath Similarity is based on the information content of the LCS and that of the two input Synsets. The similarity score is given by

$$
\text{Sim}_{jcn}(c_1, c_2) = \frac{1}{2 \log \Pr[\text{LCS}] - \log (\Pr[c_1] \cdot \Pr[c_2])} \quad (9)
$$

Lin [47]: The Lin Similarity is based on the same elements as the Jiang-Conrath Similarity. The similarity score is given by

$$
Sim_{lin}(c_1, c_2) = \frac{2 \log Pr[LCS]}{\log (Pr[c_1] \cdot Pr[c_2])}
$$
 (10)

Remark: We note that the ranges of the similarity scores for measures Leacock-Chodorow, Resnik and Jiang-Conrath are not [0, 1]. We use the following normalization method suggested by [57] to make the ranges between 0 and 1,

$$
\text{Sim}_{norm}(c_1, c_2) = \frac{\text{Sim}(c_1, c_2)}{\text{Sim}(c_1, c_1) * \text{Sim}(c_2, c_2)}
$$

B. TERM SORTING

Before evaluating the degree of similarity between entities, we need to adjust the order of terms in entities for the subsequent term matching. The goal of term sorting is to achieve a globally optimal term matching, i.e., the sum of the term-vs-term similarity scores between the corresponding terms with the same position in entities is maximum.

Let $E_1 = \{ \text{Term}_1^1, \ldots, \text{Term}_m^1 \}$ $(E_2 = \{ \text{Term}_1^2, \ldots, \text{Term}_n^2 \},$ resp.) be an entity with *m* (*n*, resp.) terms. Without loss of generality, we assume $m \geq n$. Then, mathematically, we need to search for a permutation of $\{1, \ldots, n\}$ such that the following objective function reaches the maximum value,

$$
f(E_1, E_2) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \text{Sim}(\text{Term}_i^1, \text{Term}_i^2),
$$

where $\text{Sim}(\text{Term}_i^1, \text{Term}_i^2)$ is the similarity score between Term¹_{*i*} and Term²^{*i*} obtained by Sec. [IV-A.](#page-4-0)

We note that this problem can be considered as a combinatorial optimization problem of finding the maximum-weight matching in the weighted bipartite graphs, for which many algorithms have been proposed, e.g., the Hungarian method [58]. In this paper, considering the number of terms in entities is not large, we will adopt an efficient greedy algorithm to solve this problem, which gives a nearly optimal solution. The algorithm is illustrated by Algorithm [1.](#page-5-1)

 2 Concept in this paper refers to a particular sense of a given word.

³More details about WordNet can be found at https://wordnet.princeton. edu/.

C. ENTITY-VS-ENTITY SIMILARITY

After sorting the terms in entities, we can quantify the degree of similarity between entities by using our extended Sørensen-Dice index in Sec. [III-C.](#page-3-3)

Specifically, the similarity score between two entities *E*¹ and E_2 is calculated by

$$
\text{Sim}(E_1, E_2) = \frac{2 \sum_{k=1}^{\min(m, n)} \widetilde{F}(\text{Term}_k^1, \text{Term}_k^2)}{m + n}
$$
 (11)

where the matching function \tilde{F} is given by [\(4\)](#page-3-4).

D. WEIGHTED AVERAGE

Finally, starting from the similarity between entities, we can identify the degree of similarity between two SAO structures with weighted average.

Let SAO_i ($i \in \{1, 2\}$) be a SAO structure with entities S_i ("Subject"), A_i ("Action"), and O_i ("Object"). Note that subjects and objects are nouns, actions are verbs. Thus, A_1 can only match A_2 , S_1 (O_1) can match S_2 or O_2 . With weighted average, the similarity score between $SAO₁$ and $SAO₂$ can be evaluated by

$$
Sim(SAO1, SAO2) = max (Comb1, Comb2) (12)
$$

where

Comb₁ =
$$
\alpha_1 Sim(S_1, S_1) + \alpha_2 Sim(A_1, A_2) + \alpha_3 Sim(O_1, O_2),
$$

Comb₂ = $\alpha_1 Sim(S_1, O_1) + \alpha_2 Sim(A_1, A_2) + \alpha_3 Sim(O_1, S_2),$

TABLE 1. The patents used in the experiments.

No.	Patent number	No.	Patent number	No.	Patent number
1	CN108046929A	16	CN108358700A	31	CN108484329A
2	CN108101666A	17	CN108358703A	32	CN108503043A
3	CN108142059A	18	CN108358710A	33	CN108503429A
4	CN108147925A	19	CN108424225A	34	CN108516884A
5	CN108191520A	20	CN108424300A	35	CN108530160A
6	CN108249989A	21	CN108440162A	36	CN108530202A
7	CN108264422A	22	CN108440206A	37	CN108530210A
8	CN108285400A	23	CN108440210A	38	CN108530212A
9	CN108314486A	24	CN108456062A	39	CN108546161A
10	CN108314540A	25	CN108456063A	40	CN108558504A
11	CN108314541A	26	CN108456083A	41	CN108558512A
12	CN108314556A	27	CN108456115A	42	CN108558515A
13	CN108329088A	28	CN108484295A	43	CN108558524A
14	CN108329151A	29	CN108484298A	44	CN108586082A
15	CN108341706A	30	CN108484309A	45	CN108623399A

and α_1 , α_2 and α_3 are non-negative weight coefficients such that $\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 + \alpha_3 = 1$.

Remark: We note that Verb (or Action) is usually a single word, Subject and Object are usually a noun-phrase. But, the most-right noun in a noun-phrase can generally represent the noun-phrase. Thus, for most cases, our method can be simplified by removing step 1 and step 2. But, in some cases (e.g., ecological fertilizer vs. composite fertilizer), the left adjective plays a more important role in evaluating the similarity between two noun-phrases. This paper focuses on a unified and generic framework for SAO similarity measure that can apply more complicated cases. Therefore, the step 1 and step 2 are necessary.

V. EVALUATION AND RESULTS

To evaluate the effectiveness of our semantic similarity measure, we perform several experiments using the computer with Intel(R) Core(TM) i5-4210U processor 4GHz and 8GHz RAM. The programming language used is Python2.7. The knowledge source WordNet used in the term-vs-term similarity measures is loaded by NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit).

A. DATA COLLECTION AND PREPROCESSING

As one of the most important and effective ways to protect technological achievements, patent documents contain a lot of new scientific and technological information. As we have showed in the introduction, the measure of semantic similarity between the SAO structures is widely used in patent analysis. Therefore, in our experiments, we choose the patent documents as data sets. In particular, we downloaded 45 patent documents in the Nano-Fertilizer field published in 2018 from the Derwent Innovation Index patent database, where Nano-Fertilizer is a new fertilizer constructed by nano material and pharmaceutical microencapsulation technology, and has a landmark application in agriculture [59]. The patent numbers are given by Table [1.](#page-5-2)

We remark that the SAO structures can be extracted from any description in textual format including title, abstract, claims, and description sections of a patent document. But,

in this paper, considering the title and the abstract are precise and have been regarded as the most meaningful part in a patent document, we follow prior works, e.g., [7], and just extract SAO structures from the title and abstract. The SAO extractor is designed by following a standard procedure, as given by [7]. For the sentences in the abstract, we perform a syntactic analysis using the Stanford parser, and every entities in the SAO structure are elaborately determined. Thus, 1126 SAO structures are collected from the 45 patents in Table [1.](#page-5-2) Finally, we clean the SAO structures by removing meaningless stop words, extraneous parts of speech, etc.

B. THE SEMANTIC SIMILARITY MEASURES BETWEEN THE SAO STRUCTURES

1) TERM-VS-TERM SIMILARITY

In the experiments, the term-vs-term similarity measures presented in [IV-A,](#page-4-0) including Leacock-Chodorow, Wu-Palmer, Resnik, Jiang-Conrath, and Lin, can be directly implemented using the NLTK WordNet. Note that these five measures are used to quantify the degree of simialrity from different aspects. The Leacock-Chodorow and Wu-Palmer similarity measures are based on the path and depth in the taxonomy, while the Resnik, Jiang-Conrath, and Lin similarity measures are based on an information content dictionary from the WordNet corpus. Except Wu-Palmer, the other four similarity measures require the concepts having the same part of speech (POS). The Resnik, Jiang-Conrath, and Lin similarity measures can not apply to the concepts with the *adjective* and *adverb* POS. The experiments in [10] show that the best performance can be achieved by combing these measures with a simple average. Therefore, in this paper, we take the average of similarity scores obtained using above five measures as the final scores indicating the similarity between terms.

2) ENTITY-VS-ENTITY SIMILARITY

To show the effectiveness of our extended Sørensen-Dice index, we perform similarity measures for 101 entities randomly selected from the 1126 SAO structures, please refer to Table 6 in the Appendix. In particular, we take the first entity as the target entity, and the remaining as the entities to be compared. That is, the similarity will be evaluated among 100 pairs of entities.

For simplicity, in our extended Sørensen-Dice index, we set $R_i - R_{i-1} = \frac{1}{t}$ (*i* ∈ {1, ..., *t*}), i.e., the internal [0, 1] is divided into *t* subintervals with equal length indicating different levels. The weight *wⁱ* corresponding to the *i*-th subintervals is set to be $\frac{R_{i-1}+R_i}{2}$. Our method for entity-vs-entity similarity is implemented with level $t = 3, 4, 5, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 100$. For a comprehensive comparison, we also conduct the acknowl-edged similarity measure in [\(2\)](#page-2-2) with threshold $R =$ 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, 0.9. The recurrence rate is calculated by

$$
P_{recurr} = \frac{N - N_{diff}}{N} \tag{13}
$$

TABLE 2. The recurrence rate comparison for the entity-vs-entity similarity.

where *N* is the total experiment number, and *Ndiff* is the number of different similarity scores.

The recurrence rate comparisons between our method and the acknowledged method for the entity-vs-entity similarity are given by Table [2.](#page-6-0) We can find that the recurrence rate is significantly reduced with our method. This is consistent with our theoretical analysis in Sec. [III,](#page-2-0) which shows that our extended Sørensen-Dice index can reduce the loss of the underlying term-vs-term similarity information, and further reduce the recurrence rate. We remark that the concrete value of recurrence rate is also highly influenced by the total experiment number *N*. If the similarity score has a precision of two decimal figures, then the recurrence rate is at least $\frac{N-100}{N}$ when $N > 100$. Thus, the recurrence rate can not be very low, e.g., approximately approaching 0. From Table [2,](#page-6-0) we can see that even though we set the level to be 100, corresponding the precision 0.01, the recurrence rate is still 0.4. We also remark that the lower recurrence rates do not always increase the accuracy, please see Sec. [V-B3](#page-7-0) for details.

To further reveal the relationship between our method with different levels and the acknowledged method with different thresholds, we calculate the Pearson correlation factor among all the obtained similarity scores. As shown by Table [3,](#page-7-1) the Pearson correlation factors among different levels from $t = 3$ to $t = 100$ for our method is at least 0.964. In particular, for the levels from $t = 5$ to $t = 100$, the Pearson correlation factors can reach at least 0.991. For the levels $t > 20$, the Pearson correlation factors can reach maximum 1. That is, our extended Sørensen-Dice index with more levels makes no sense since they essentially give the same similarity metric. Fig. [3](#page-7-2) shows the entity-vs-entity similarity scores using our method with levels $t = 5, 20$ and 100.

From Table [3,](#page-7-1) we can see the similarity scores using the acknowledged method with different thresholds have some certain positive correlation, although lower than our method with different levels. The lowest Pearson correlation factor is 0.443 between thresholds $R = 0.1$ and $R = 0.6$. While the maximum Pearson correlation factor is 1 between thresholds $R = 0.8$ and $R = 0.9$. That is, the acknowledged

TABLE 3. Pearson correlation factor among the entity-vs-entity similarity scores using our method with different levels and the acknowledged method with different thresholds.

						$R=0.1$ $R=0.2$ $R=0.3$ $R=0.4$ $R=0.5$ $R=0.6$ $R=0.7$ $R=0.8$ $R=0.9$ $t=3$ $t=4$ $t=5$							$t=10$	$t = 20$		$t=30$ $t=40$ $t=50$ $t=100$		
$R = 0.1$	1.000	0.938	0.780	0.637	0.535	0.443	0.438	0.462	0.462 0.682 0.737 0.739 0.768 0.780						0.782	0.785	0.784	0.786
$R = 0.2$	0.938	1.000	0.804	0.654	0.532	0.480	0.473	0.492			$0.492 \begin{array}{l} 0.690 & 0.753 & 0.769 & 0.784 & 0.793 \end{array}$				0.795	0.799	0.798	0.799
$R = 0.3$	0.780	0.804	1.000	0.782	0.658	0.592	0.587	0.599			$0.599 + 0.837$ 0.819 0.809 0.847			0.848	0.851	0.851	0.850	0.852
$R = 0.4$	0.637	0.654	0.782	1.000	0.842	0.786	0.781	0.788		$0.788 + 0.912$	0.890	0.931	0.916	0.917	0.917	0.917	0.917	0.917
$R = 0.5$	0.535	0.532	0.658	0.842	1.000	0.898	0.884	0.853		$0.853 + 0.864$	0.907	0.880	0.894	0.883	0.884	0.881	0.881	0.881
$R = 0.6$	0.443	0.480	0.592	0.786	0.898	1.000	0.982	0.937		$0.937 + 0.875$	0.877	0.890	0.883	0.874	0.871	0.869	0.870	0.868
$R = 0.7$	0.438	0.473	0.587	0.781	0.884	0.982	1.000	0.948		0.948 ± 0.882	0.875	0.886	0.881	0.873	0.868	0.867	0.868	0.866
$R = 0.8$	0.462	0.492	0.599	0.788	0.853	0.937	0.948	1.000		1.000 ± 0.872	0.889	0.896	0.886	0.883	0.880	0.879	0.879	0.878
$R = 0.9$	0.462	0.492	0.599	0.788	0.853	0.937	0.948	1.000			1.000 ± 0.872 0.889 0.896 0.886 0.883				0.880		0.879 0.879	0.878
$t=3$	0.682	0.690	0.837	0.912	0.864	0.875	0.882	0.872			$0.872 + 1.000$ 0.958 0.966 0.968			0.967	0.966	0.965	0.965 0.964	
$t=4$	0.737	0.753	0.819	0.890	0.907	0.877	0.875	0.889		$0.889 + 0.958$	1.000	0.979	0.986	0.985	0.984	0.984	0.983	0.983
$t = 5$	0.739	0.769	0.809	0.931	0.880	0.890	0.886	0.896		$0.896 + 0.966$	0.979	1.000	0.993	0.992	0.991	0.991	0.991	0.991
$t = 10$	0.768	0.784	0.847	0.916	0.894	0.883	0.881	0.886		$0.886 \div 0.968$	0.986	0.993	1.000	0.999	0.998	0.998	0.998	0.998
$t = 20$	0.780	0.793	0.848	0.917	0.883	0.874	0.873	0.883			0.883 $\begin{array}{cc} 0.967 & 0.985 & 0.992 & 0.999 \end{array}$			1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
$t = 30$	0.782	0.795	0.851	0.917	0.884	0.871	0.868	0.880			0.880 0.966 0.984 0.991 0.998			1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
$t = 40$	0.785	0.799	0.851	0.917	0.881	0.869	0.867	0.879		$0.879 + 0.965$	0.984	0.991	0.998	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
$t = 50$	0.784	0.798	0.850	0.917	0.881	0.870	0.868	0.879		$0.879 + 0.965$	0.983	0.991	0.998	1.000	.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
$t = 100$	0.786	0.799	0.852	0.917	0.881	0.868	0.866	0.878		$0.878 + 0.964$	0.983	0.991	0.998	1.000	.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

FIGURE 3. Entity-vs-entity similarity with our method.

method with thresholds $R = 0.8$ and $R = 0.9$ can essentially give the same similarity scores. Overall, the acknowledged method is more sensitive to the parameter change than our method. Thus, our method has a better robustness. Fig. [4](#page-7-3) shows the entity-vs-entity similarity scores using the acknowledged method with thresholds $R = 0.1, 0.4$ and 0.9.

Table [3](#page-7-1) also shows the Person correlation factors between our method with differ levels and the acknowledged method with different thresholds, please see the bottom left or top right of the table. We can see that the minimum is 0.682 and the maximum is 0.917. Thus, generally, our method is positively correlated with the acknowledged method. This is because that our extended Sørensen-Dice index is essentially the generalization of the acknowledged one, which can be seen as the our method with two levels, i.e., $t = 2$.

FIGURE 4. Entity-vs-entity similarity with acknowledged method.

3) SAO-VS-SAO SIMILARITY

For the 1126 SAO structures extracted in Sec. [V-A,](#page-5-3) we choose the first SAO structure as a target SAO structure, and take the other 1125 ones as the SAO structures to be compared. Thus, 1125 pairs of SAO structures are prepared. First, these pairs are manually labelled by three human annotators who are familiar with expertise in the field of Nano-Fertilizer, and together determine if the two SAO structures in a pair are semantically equivalent $("1")$ or not $("0")$. We take these manual classification as the actual class of these pairs of SAO structures. Then, using the method presented in Sec. [IV,](#page-3-0) we calculate the similarity scores among the 1125 pairs of SAO structures, and then identify them by "1" ("0", resp.) when the similarity score exceeds (does not exceed, resp.) a threshold of 0.5. In addition, we also label these pairs with the acknowledged method, which is the same as our method except using the acknowledged Sørensen-Dice index

		Our method		
Level	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F-measure
$t = 3$	0.878	0.860	0.926	0.892
$t = 4$	0.876	0.875	0.898	0.887
$t = 5$	0.900	0.890	0.931	0.910
$t = 10$	0.887	0.889	0.905	0.897
$t = 20$	0.889	0.894	0.902	0.898
$t = 30$	0.890	0.893	0.905	0.899
$t = 40$	0.885	0.891	0.898	0.895
$t = 50$	0.887	0.891	0.902	0.896
$t=100$	0.887	0.891	0.902	0.896
		Acknowledged method		
Threshold	Accurate	Precision	Recall	F -measure
$R = 0.1$	0.550	0.547	0.997	0.706
$R = 0.2$	0.553	0.549	0.984	0.705
$R = 0.3$	0.572	0.563	0.946	0.706
$R = 0.4$	0.810	0.789	0.887	0.835
$R = 0.5$	0.588	0.858	0.287	0.430
$R = 0.6$	0.535	0.922	0.156	0.266
$R = 0.7$	0.531	0.927	0.146	0.252
$R = 0.8$	0.511	0.905	0.110	0.196
$R = 0.9$	0.511	0.905	0.110	0.196

TABLE 4. Performance comparisons between similarity measures for the SAO structures.

(see Sec. [III-B\)](#page-2-5) to quantify the degree of the entity-vs-entity similarity. Table 7 shows the concrete similarity scores derived by human annotators, our method with $t = 5$, and the acknowledged method with $R = 0.4$. The complete similarity scores by our method and the acknowledged method with other parameters are posted at [https://github.](https://github.com/l-x-m/SAO-similarity-measure) [com/l-x-m/SAO-similarity-measure](https://github.com/l-x-m/SAO-similarity-measure), where the data sets and python script are also provided.

We evaluate the results in terms of accuracy, representing the percentage of correctly identified true or false classifications. We also measure precision, recall and F-measure, calculated with respect to the true values in the classifications. The F-measure is the weighted average of precision and recall, and can be calculated by

$$
F-measure = \frac{2 \times Precision \times Recall}{Precision + Recall}
$$
 (14)

As shown by Table [4,](#page-8-1) the maximum accuracy and F-measure using our method can reach 90% and 91%, respectively, with level $t = 5$. While the highest accuracy and F-measure of the currently acknowledged method the can only attain 81% and 83.5%, respectively, with threshold $R = 0.4$. That is, using our extended Sørensen-Dice index for SAO similarity measure can significantly improve the accuracy and F-measure than the currently acknowledged one. We also remark that our method also has an excellent robustness, and the accuracy and F-measure vary little with the change of the level *t*. But the accuracy and F-measure of the currently acknowledged method is sensitive to the threshold *R*, as shown by Table [4.](#page-8-1)

We note that the lowest recurrence rate for our method is achieved with highest level $t = 100$ (see Table [2\)](#page-6-0), but the

highest accuracy is obtained with level $t = 5$. That is, lower loss of the underlying term-vs-term similarity information does not always bring into higher accuracy. This is due to the fact that the underlying term-vs-term similarity is not always accurate enough, i.e., there are some noises, especially when the data comes from some specific field. We also note that lower level *t* can reduce the influences of noises in the underlying term-vs-term similarity. Therefore, there is a balance between reductions of the information loss and noise influences. In our experiments, optimal balance can be achieved by setting $t = 5$.

C. APPLICATION TO MEASURING PATENT SIMILARITY

Patent has been proved to be one of the most important and effective ways to protect technological inventions. The rapid increase of the patent number has called for the development of sophisticated patent analysis tools, of which many are based on patent similarity identification techniques. In particular, patent similarity analysis has been used for infringement identification [28]–[31], technological trend identification [25], [32]–[36], strategic technology planning [6], [37], document mapping [38], and etc.

With our SAO-vs-SAO similarity measure, we can easily evaluate the similarity between two patents. We view the SAO structure as a term, and the patent as a new entity composed of several SAO structures. Then, using the same method in the entity-vs-entity similarity measure, we first sort the SAO structures in the patents, and then utilize our extended Sørensen-Dice index to calculate the similarity score of two patents. Setting the level to be 5, i.e., $t = 5$, we calculate the similarity scores between the first patent and the remaining patents. The results are given by Table [5.](#page-8-2)

VI. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, we observe that the currently acknowledged SAO similarity measure has a relatively high recurrence rate and poor discrimination, which is caused by the fact that the entities in the SAO structure always have a small amount of terms. To settle such issues, we extend the Sørensen-Dice index by reducing the information loss of

TABLE 6. The entities selected from the SAO structures.

underlying term-vs-term similarity. Based on that, we present a unified framework for the SAO similarity measure, which can give a higher discrimination. The effectiveness of our measure is evaluated on the basis of data sets from the Derwent Innovation Index patent database. The experiment results show that our measure can significantly improve the accuracy and F-meaure than the currently acknowledged ones.

The proposed SAO measure is generic and modular, and has an excellent flexibility and robustness. With this unified SAO measure, patent similarity metric can be easily established, which can be further used for various patent analyses, including patent infringement identification, technological trend identification, strategic technology planning, and etc. In addition, the extended Sørensen-Dice index is of independent interest, and has potential applications for other similarity measures, e.g., Jaccard index, Szymkiewicz-Simpson index, and etc.

APPENDIX

See tables 6 and 7.

TABLE 7. Similarity scores between the first SAO structure and the remaining structures with Nos. from 2 to 1126. The Hum. column shows the scores
derived by human annotators. The Ours column shows the scores calculated b the acknowledged method with $R=0:4.$

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TABLE 7. Continued.

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XIAOMAN LI received the bachelor's degree in information management and information system from the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, in 2015. She is currently pursuing the degree with the Agricultural Information Institute, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. Her research interests include patent analysis, technology evolution and prediction, text mining, and natural language processing.

CUI WANG received the master's degree in computer software and theory from Shandong University, in 2011. She is currently pursuing the degree with the Agricultural Information Institute, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. She is also a Lecturer with the School of Information Science and Engineering, Shandong Agriculture and Engineering University. Her research interests include rating systems, agricultural data analysis, and machine learning.

XUEFU ZHANG received the Ph.D. degree from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in 2006. He is currently a Researcher with the Agricultural Information Institute, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. His main research interests include information visualization, knowledge organization and retrieval, strategic information research, and patent technology mining.

WEI SUN received the Ph.D. degree from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in 2010. She is currently an Associate Researcher with the Agricultural Information Institute, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences. Her main research interests include information visualization and patent technology mining.

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