Commentary

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Repurposing Models for Chemical Property Predictions: The Power of Transfer Learning

Basilio Jose*

Department of Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, University of Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain

Corresponding author: Basilio Jose, Department of Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, University of Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain, E-mail: basiliojose@uso.sp

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Description

Vapor pressure, a critical physicochemical property, underpins a myriad of industrial and environmental processes. From optimizing refining operations in the petrochemical sector to modeling the dispersion of pollutants in environmental studies, the precise quantification of vapor pressure is indispensable. Despite its importance, measuring vapor pressure, especially in relation to its temperature-dependent behavior, presents formidable challenges due to the diverse properties of chemical compounds. This issue becomes particularly pronounced when addressing compounds with high boiling points or limited experimental data, necessitating innovative methodologies to overcome these hurdles. Conventional techniques for vapor pressure measurement involve intricate, resource-intensive procedures that require specialized equipment and significant time investments. These methods, while reliable, are often impractical for large-scale applications or for substances with boiling points exceeding 200 ℃. The scarcity of experimental data for such compounds adds another layer of complexity, hampering efforts in high-throughput screening-an essential tool in drug discovery and materials science. Additionally, the availability, stability and safety concerns associated with certain compounds further complicate experimental measurements. Several early methods sought to address these challenges. Utilized a group contribution method to predict vapor pressure at specific temperatures, laying the groundwork for later advancements. Their approach demonstrated the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in surpassing traditional models like Estimation Program Interface (EPI) Suite for predicting thermodynamic properties, thus facilitating high-throughput screening.

The emergence of computational techniques

In recent years, the integration of computational methods, particularly those based on Machine Learning (ML), has revolutionized vapor pressure prediction. ML models, which excel at identifying patterns in large datasets, offer a promising alternative to traditional experimental techniques. Group contribution methods have historically played a pivotal role in computational vapor pressure estimation. These methods rely on manually curated groupings, emphasizing the importance of accurate molecular representation in predictive models. Despite these advancements, predicting vapor pressure remains challenging, particularly when experimental data is scarce. In such contexts, transfer learning has emerged as a transformative approach.

Transfer learning: Bridging data gaps

Transfer learning, a technique where a model trained for one task is repurposed for another, has gained significant traction across scientific domains. Its application is particularly valuable when data availability for the target property is limited. By leveraging features learned from a related property, transfer learning can enhance prediction accuracy for the property of interest. In the context of vapor pressure prediction, the close relationship between boiling point and vapor pressure serves as an ideal foundation for transfer learning. Both properties are influenced by the strength of intermolecular forces, suggesting that models trained on boiling point data can effectively predict vapor pressure. A practical application involves training a model on a dataset with abundant boiling point information. The model learns feature representations relevant to intermolecular interactions, which can then be transferred to predict vapor pressure. This strategy not only mitigates data scarcity issues but also capitalizes on the physical correlation between the properties, leading to more robust and accurate predictions.

Implications and future directions

The shift toward computational methods for vapor pressure prediction marks a paradigm change in chemical and materials sciences. By combining traditional insights with advanced machine learning techniques, researchers can overcome longstanding challenges associated with experimental measurements. The integration of transfer learning further amplifies this potential, enabling the accurate prediction of properties even in data-limited scenarios. Future research should focus on expanding the applicability of these models across diverse chemical classes and refining algorithms to enhance predictive accuracy. The development of open-source tools and collaborative frameworks will also play a vital role in democratizing access to these methodologies, fostering innovation across industries. The prediction of vapor pressure,

especially its temperature-dependent behavior, stands at the intersection of traditional science and innovative technology. As computational methods continue to evolve, they promise to unlock new frontiers in understanding and utilizing chemical properties, pprepare advancements in industrial processes, environmental modeling and beyond.