Finely Tuned, 2 Billion Token Based Word Embeddings for Portuguese

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Abstract
A distributional semantics model — also known as word embeddings — is a major asset for any language as the research results reported in the literature have consistently shown that it is instrumental to improve the performance of a wide range of applications and processing tasks for that language. In this paper, we describe the development of an advanced distributional model for Portuguese, with the largest vocabulary and the best evaluation scores published so far. This model was made possible by resorting to new languages resources we recently developed: to a much larger training corpus than before and to a more sophisticated evaluation supported by new and more fine-grained evaluation tasks and data sets. We also indicate how the new language resource reported on here is being distributed and where it can be obtained for free under a most permissive license.

Keywords: distributional semantics, word embeddings, word analogy, lexical similarity, conceptual categorization, Portuguese.

1. Introduction
Distributional semantics assumes that the frequency of contexts in which expressions occur helps to capture important syntactic and semantic properties of these expressions (Garvin, 1962). Exploring distributional models has led to advances in a range of natural language processing tasks, from dialog systems (Chen et al., 2014) to question answering (Bordes et al., 2014), among many others.

A distributional model is a major language resource for any language as it is instrumental to enhance the performance of many applications and processing tasks for that language. Recent work concerned with distributional models for Portuguese contributed with the creation and public release of a free distributional model for this language that resorts to a considerably large corpus, for the training, and to a standard analogy test set, for the evaluation and tuning of this model (Rodrigues et al., 2016).

Since then the corpus has been greatly expanded by our group and is now a very large data set, reaching more than 2 billion tokens.

More recently, finer tuning of distributional models for Portuguese became possible with the creation and distribution of a wide range of data sets by our group that support the evaluation of lexical similarity and conceptual categorization tasks, and that are comparable in size and domain to mainstream datasets with the same purpose for other languages (Querido et al., 2017).

The aim of the present paper is to report on the development, and its free distribution, of a more advanced distributional model for Portuguese, with the largest vocabulary and the best evaluation scores published so far, made possible by a much larger training corpus than before and by a more sophisticated evaluation supported by new and more fine-grained evaluation tasks and data sets.

In Section 2, we discuss previous work in the literature related to the construction and application of distributional models of Portuguese. The methods that were used for the development of the new distributional model are presented in Section 3. Section 4 describes the data sets used for this purpose, and Section 5 the experiments undertaken to fine-tune the model. We present and discuss the outcome of this development in Section 6. The paper closes with Section 7, indicating how the resources developed are distributed and can be obtained, and with Section 8 with final remarks.

2. Related Work
Recently, there has been an increased interest in the distributional semantics for Portuguese to support a number of natural language processing tasks, where distributional models tend to be seen as an additional instrumental resource that may help to improve the performance of these tasks. But taking the distributional as our core subject of research, this can alternatively be envisaged under a different perspective. As the development of distributional models is a research topic in itself, applying different models — developed under different design options — in different tasks offers the test bed for the evaluation of these models and of their level of fitness in terms of capturing the essential linguistic information they are meant to encode.

Extrinsic evaluation of these models consists in testing how differences in the design of distributional models induce possible improvements in complex applications or systems where they are embedded. Depending on the level of contribution to the final performance of these systems, it may thus happen that improvements on the models may induce limited to none improvement to those systems. That is why it is important to have also intrinsic evaluation, which is meant to give an indication of the appropriateness of the models irrespectively of their eventual impact to larger systems where they may happen to become embedded.

Recent research on the distributional semantics of Portuguese has focused mainly on its eventual instrumental contribution to a number of language processing tasks, and thus directed more to the extrinsic evaluation of distributional models. Examples of this increased interest include named entity recognition (Hermann and Blunsom, 2014).
The task of lexical similarity now briefly introduce, together with a description of the re-

of distributional models (Querido et al., 2017), which we

ment of these types of data sets for the intrinsic evaluation

In our group, we have recently pioneered also the develop-

ment, most prominently for the English lan-

word analogy task. The respective evaluation data sets have

proposed to complement the assessment supported by the

corpus, achieving 46.2% accuracy in the word analogy task.

This task was one of the first used for the intrinsic evalu-

ation of distributional semantics spaces as its resolution is

considered to be tapping in some crucial way on the un-

derlying syntactic and semantic knowledge encoded in the

semantic vectors.

An evaluation data set for the word analogy task in Por-

guese, LX-4WAnalogies, was first made available by our group, namely Rodrigues et al. (2016), who also de-

dveloped and distributed the first publicly available word

embeddings for Portuguese, LX-DSemVectors, developed

on a 1.7 billion token training corpus and tuned on this

LX-4WAnalogies data set. This distributional model LX-

DSemVectors was obtained with the Skip-Gram neural net-

work from word2vec (Mikolov et al., 2013) and achieves

37.7% accuracy in the word analogy task.

The evaluation data set LX-4WAnalogies was subsequently

used by Hartmann et al. (2017) to fine tune another distri-

butional model for Portuguese. This model was developed with Glove (Pennington et al., 2014) on a 1.4 billion token

corpus, achieving 46.2% accuracy in the word analogy task.

The intrinsic evaluation of distributional models has been

further pursued in the literature, and further tasks have been

proposed to complement the assessment supported by the

word analogy task. The respective evaluation data sets have

been development, most prominently for the English lan-

guage.

In our group, we have recently pioneered also the develop-

ment of these types of data sets for the intrinsic evaluation of
distributional models (Querido et al., 2017), which we

now briefly introduce, together with a description of the re-

spective task.

The task of lexical similarity consists of indicating a score, in

some predefined scale, that represents the level of semantic

similarity between two words that are entered as input. For

example, the word “ice-cream” has a weak to none se-

mantic similarity with the word “whale”, but a strong sim-

ilarity to words such as “gelato” or “sorbet”, and should be

annotated a higher score than the first pair.

The LX-WordSim-353, LX-SimLex-999, and LX-Rare

Word Similarity data sets were developed in our group, they

contain pairs of Portuguese words together with scores represent-
ing their similarity, assigned by human annotators.

The task of conceptual categorization consists in clustering

a set of words into categories taking into account the

semantic relations across those words. For example, given the

words “apple”, “orange”, “sun” and “moon”, the task

would be to cluster the first two words in one group, corre-

sponding to a fruit related category, and the last two words in

a second group, corresponding to an astronomy related
category.

The LX-ESSLLI 2008, LX-Battig and the LX-AP datasets

were also developed in our group for Portuguese. They per-

mit to evaluate the performance of a resolver for conceptual
categorization that consists in clustering the semantic vec-
tors of the words in a predefined number of categories.

Some of these evaluation data sets were already put to use

by Oliveira (2017) who evaluated the word embeddings

also developed in our group, LX-DSemVectors, under these

new tasks by running them over the the LX-SimLex-999,

LX-Rare Words Similarity and LX-WordSim-353 datasets.

Saleiro et al. (2017) have also used data sets for word

similarity to evaluate word embeddings they trained over a

corpus of Tweets. This author also used the Portuguese

word embeddings for Portuguese from the Facebook team

(Bojanowski et al., 2016), with no evaluation however reported in the respective paper, and evaluated them on the

LX-SimLex-999, LX-Rare Words Similarity and LX-

WordSim-353 datasets, obtaining 0.34ρ, 0.34ρ and 0.43ρ,

respectively — these scores are worse than our best model

reported in the present paper, in Section 4.

Against this background, our objectives are twofold: on the

one hand, to take advantage of the larger training data set that we developed (described in detail in Section 4) to
develop an enhanced version of our distributional model, which expectedly would ensure a better capture of the

linguistic properties of Portuguese words given it can be

trained on a substantially larger corpus; on the other hand, and in confluence with the first objective, to take advantage of the additional data sets for intrinsic evaluation we have just distributed in order to support the development a finer
tuned distributional model that more appropriately capture the linguistic properties of the Portuguese words.

3. Methods

For the training of the word embeddings for Portuguese, we resorted to the Skip-Gram model, consisting of a shal-

low neural network that we implemented using the Gensim framework (Rehůrek and Sojka, 2010).

The training of the Skip-Gram model consists on the learn-
ing of a distributional semantics space by predicting the words in the neighborhood for the target word of interest,

using a sliding window over the words in a given corpus.

With the model eventually trained, each word is mapped to a specific vector in the resulting semantic space. By scor-
ing the distance between the vectors corresponding to two

given words along with some metric, typically the cosine
distance, syntactic and semantic properties and relations of these words may be captured and support natural process-
ing tasks and applications.

A Skip-Gram model typically supports tasks with better

performance when it is trained with larger data sets. For the

gathering of the largest possible data set, we used the largest

raw corpora previously gathered for Portuguese and pub-

licly described in (Rodrigues et al., 2016), and expanded it
with new data massively web-crawled mostly from newspapers. For the evaluation and tuning of the resulting distributional semantics space, we resorted to a range of evaluation data sets. These include the analogy test set LX-4WAnalogies already developed and used by (Rodrigues et al., 2016), but also several more, namely the datasets for Portuguese recently made available by (Querido et al., 2017): LX-WordSim-353, LX-SimLex-999, LX-Rare Word Similarity, LX-ESSLLI 2008, LX-Battig and the LX-AP. These evaluation datasets were obtained by translating into Portuguese similar ones existing for English, which have been translated also into other languages (Hassan and Mihalcea, 2009) (Joubarne and Inkpen, 2011) (Camacho-Collados et al., 2015) (Freitas et al., 2016) (Cinková, 2016). Given the latter are mainstream datasets, and that these datasets for Portuguese are the most prominent ones existing for this language, this allows thus to develop word embeddings that are mainstream for Portuguese and are comparable with those in English provided large enough data is available for their training.

In the next Section 4., we present in more detail the datasets we used.

4. Datasets

To the best of our knowledge, the largest raw text corpus ever gathered for the Portuguese language, with 1.7 billion tokens, and publicly described in a publication is presented in (Rodrigues et al., 2016). To this data set, we added now over 500 million tokens, corresponding to almost 25 million new sentences, increasing the vocabulary from 873,909 to 1,172,295 items. These new sentences were mainly gathered in a year time span resorting to the continued crawling of newspaper articles, and the outcome of this crawling was subject to cleaning and tokenization. Table 1 describes the sources of these texts and their respective size.

Once a distributional semantics model is trained with the method described in the previous Section 3., its evaluation can then be accomplished with the support of the evaluation data sets. Next, we provide more information about these datasets, summarized in Table 2.

These corpora can be grouped into three major categories, as summarized in Table 2, namely the ones containing the so-called word analogies, those with pairs with lexical similarity scores and the ones with sets of words supporting conceptual categorization. They are intended to support the evaluation of an equal number of types of natural language processing tasks.

As described above, in the word analogy task, the goal is to complete an analogy with a fourth word, for which only the other three words are given, the accuracy is measured by counting the percentage of given correct answers. The LX-4WAnalogies data set is used to evaluate the performance of resolvers of this word analogy tasks, scored in terms of accuracy. The LX-4WAnalogies contains 17,558 entries of word analogies, each analogy entry containing a set of four words, making a total of 70,232 tokens.

The task of lexical similarity consists of indicating a score representing the level of semantic similarity between two words that are entered as input. The LX-WordSim-353, LX-SimLex-999, and LX-Rare Word Similarity data sets contain pairs of words together with scores representing their similarity, assigned by human annotators.

The LX-WordSim-353 is the smallest of the three similarity data sets, it contains 352 entries, each with two tokens. It follows in size the LX-SimLex-999 with 999 entries and the largest similarity data set, the LX-Rare Word Sim. containing 2,034 entries, both data sets have approximately two million new sentences, increasing the vocabulary from 873,909 to 1,172,295 items.

They are used to evaluate the resolvers of the lexical similarity task, where the cosine distance of the vectors was measured and compared with the original human score, and the Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient metric is calculated over those individual scores. The Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient metric measures the correlation between two rank-ordered scales, in this case, between the resolvers evaluation and the original human score for semantic similarity.

| Corpus              | Tokens | Sentences | Cat. |
|---------------------|--------|-----------|------|
| Libreoffice         | 1,456  | 995       | Term.|
| MSTerminology       | 38,820 | 13,030    | Term.|
| Semanario           | 45,686 | 2,148     | News |
| JmMadeira           | 229,197| 10,280    | News |
| WikipediaIT         | 673,932| 24,723    | Wiki |
| Abola               | 838,439| 29,260    | News |
| TSF                 | 1,432,332| 63,609   | News |
| RegiaoDeLeiria      | 1,528,711| 97,802   | News |
| TMadeira            | 3,015,973| 153,949  | News |
| JornalDoFundao      | 3,285,362| 131,274  | News |
| Sabado              | 4,527,134| 209,848  | News |
| ORegional           | 4,652,416| 203,243  | News |
| OJogo               | 4,822,878| 702,578  | News |
| Euronews            | 5,355,977| 130,672  | News |
| SicNoticias         | 6,088,051| 188,562  | News |
| Lux                 | 7,499,680| 358,975  | News |
| IOnline             | 8,037,427| 332,573  | News |
| Sol                 | 8,288,925| 323,939  | News |
| Visão               | 8,987,410| 274,193  | News |
| Resistir.info       | 13,576,530| 297,266  | News |
| DN                  | 14,664,275| 565,424  | News |
| TV124               | 15,332,649| 609,173  | News |
| OMirante            | 17,683,489| 705,868  | News |
| CorreioManha        | 19,171,780| 930,494  | News |
| Ocasiao             | 23,105,092| 1,158,281| Sales |
| Olterior            | 24,775,869| 793,259  | News |
| UniLeipzig          | 24,933,538| 1,000,000| News |
| JNégoços            | 27,705,401| 791,933  | News |
| Destak              | 28,137,748| 1,148,997| News |
| DinheiroVivo        | 37,108,769| 1,975,316| News |
| JornalDiario        | 43,838,564| 1,924,182| News |
| Expresso            | 47,272,332| 1,893,705| News |
| Zwanne              | 54,238,235| 3,449,424| Forum|
| JRC-acquis          | 75,911,681| 3,684,145| Law  |

Table 1: Novel Portuguese corpora used for the training of word embeddings
Their results are presented in the next Section 3. These four experiments (exp1 to exp4) are described below.

In order to develop the word embeddings for Portuguese, we experimented with different arrangements in terms of the training data set used, taking into account the best practices that have been reported in the literature. We undertook four major experiments where we resorted to the best parameterization setup of the Skip-gram models for Portuguese empirically determined in Rodrigues et al. (2016), even tough with a data set of a different size and composition.

### 5. Experiments

In order to develop the word embeddings for Portuguese, we experimented with different arrangements in terms of the training data set used, taking into account the best practices that have been reported in the literature. We undertook four major experiments where we resorted to the best parameterization setup of the Skip-gram models for Portuguese empirically determined in Rodrigues et al. (2016), which optimizes the performance of the word analogy task. This corresponds to a Skip-gram parameterization that consists of a vector dimension of 400 units, a 10-word window, a learning-rate of 0.025, using 15 negative samples and a total of 5 epochs. The task of conceptual categorization consists in clustering words into categories. Resorting to the LX-ESSLLI 2008, LX-Battig and the LX-AP datasets, it is possible to evaluate the performance of a resolver for conceptual categorization. The LX-ESSLLI 2008 is the smallest of the three conceptual categorization data sets, it contains 44 entries for 6 categories which results in approximately 7 entries per category, each entry is a single word/token. The LX-Battig contains 82 entries for 10 categories, approximately 8 entries per category and 1 word/token per entry. The largest of the categorization data sets, the LX-AP, contains 402 entries for 21 categories, approximately 19 entries per category. Categorization consists in clustering the semantic vectors of the words in a predefined number of categories. The k-means clustering method is applied and resolvers are scored with the purity metric. Purity measures the accuracy obtained by assigning each cluster to the class which is most frequent in the cluster (Christopher et al., 2008).

The task of conceptual categorization consists in clustering words into categories. Resorting to the LX-ESSLLI 2008, LX-Battig and the LX-AP datasets, it is possible to evaluate the performance of a resolver for conceptual categorization. The LX-ESSLLI 2008 is the smallest of the three conceptual categorization data sets, it contains 44 entries for 6 categories which results in approximately 7 entries per category, each entry is a single word/token. The LX-Battig contains 82 entries for 10 categories, approximately 8 entries per category and 1 word/token per entry. The largest of the categorization data sets, the LX-AP, contains 402 entries for 21 categories, approximately 19 entries per category. Categorization consists in clustering the semantic vectors of the words in a predefined number of categories. The k-means clustering method is applied and resolvers are scored with the purity metric. Purity measures the accuracy obtained by assigning each cluster to the class which is most frequent in the cluster (Christopher et al., 2008).

| Data set     | Type       | Evaluation Metric | # Entries | Tokens (avg.) |
|--------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|---------------|
| LX-4WAnalodies | Analogy   | Accuracy          | 17,558    | 70,232 (4)    |
| LX-WordSim-353 | Similarity | Spearman’s rank   | 352       | 715 (2)       |
| LX-SimLex-999  |            |                   | 999       | 2,051 (2.05)  |
| LX-Rare Word Sim. |            |                   | 2,034     | 4,342 (2.13)  |
| LX-ESSLLI 2008  |            |                   | 44 (6 clusters) | 44 (1)       |
| LX-Battig      | Categorization | Purity          | 82 (10 clusters) | 87 (1.06)    |
| LX-AP          |            |                   | 402 (21 clusters) | 442 (1.09)   |

Table 2: Evaluation datasets by type with corresponding evaluation metric

In a fifth experiment (exp5), the number of training epochs was increased from 5 to 30 in order to assess its impact on the accuracy, given that with a higher number of training epochs the distributional semantic space will be fitter and impact the resolver.

A sixth experiment (exp6) was undertaken by increasing the vector dimension from 400 to 500 units in order to assess if the vector dimension is enough for the amount of data or a higher data representation is needed.

In a seventh experiment (exp7), we increased the number of training epochs from 5 to 15 and the negative samples from 15 to 30 in order to assess if repeated negative samples may improve the tasks not related to word analogy.

Given the large training data, the training of the distributional semantics space is an intensive computational and time-consuming task. The time required for the most intensive task was approximately 220 hours (around 9 days). This value was obtained using 15 dedicated CPUs.

In addition to the above four experiments, we carried out three more experiments, which use the same training data as the one used in exp3.

- Third (exp3), we trained a model on the data set that results from the merging of the two datasets used in exp 1 and exp 2. The aim is to assess whether more data support better performance of the analogy resolver.

- Fourth (exp4), a model was trained with the largest possible data set, which contains the whole 1.7 billion token dataset from Rodrigues et al. (2016) plus the 0.5 billion novel dataset we gathered and describe in the present paper. The goal is to make use of the largest amount of data in order to observe if the models gain from it in accuracy.

- First (exp1), we trained a model using the novel 500+ million token data set we collected, described in section 4. This experience aims at getting an initial assessment as to whether these new data are cleaned and fit enough to train the word embeddings, by observing whether the performance results on this task are in line with the respective results previously obtained by Rodrigues et al. (2016), even tough with a data set of a different size and composition.

- Second (exp2) we trained a model using the 1+ billion token sub-data set of the whole 1.7 million token dataset that was previously gathered in Rodrigues et al. (2016). This is a replication of a previous experiment in Rodrigues et al. (2016), only with one difference from it, namely the use of a new and improved version of Gensim (from 0.13.1 to 2.1). The goal here is to make sure that this change is not induce any degradation of the previous level of performance of the best model developed in that previous work.

1Intel Core Processor (Haswell, no TSX) @ 2.50GHz model.
In this Section, we discuss the results obtained with the different experiments described in Section 5, which are summarized in Table 3. Given that the new additional data set originates mainly from the crawling of newspapers, we proceeded with the first experiment (exp 1) in order to assess if this data set (0.5 billion tokens) is suitable for the training of a distributional semantics space. That happens to be the case as the score obtained for exp 1 (33.5% accuracy) is in-line with the best score of the experiments reported in (Rodrigues et al., 2016) (37.7%), for the word analogy task, the only evaluation data set available then.

In the second experiment (exp 2), this state-of-the-art model from Rodrigues et al. (2016) is reproduced with that data set used by them (1 billion tokens) but with the improved version of the Gensim framework. No degradation of the previous performance was observed, with exp 2 bringing even a better result (43.4%) than the one obtained before (37.7%), thus indicating that, when used, this new version of Gensim is responsible for the improvement of the output model.

In the third experiment (exp 3), a new model was trained on the data set used for the state-of-the-art model from Rodrigues et al. (2016) merged with the newly collected data set.

Comparing that new model against the models trained with each one of these two data sets separately (exp 1 and exp 2), a higher accuracy is obtained for almost all evaluation data sets except one, namely LX-WordSim-353 and even in this case with an inferior score by a very thin margin (0.5002 \(\rho\) against 0.5089 \(\rho\)). This confirms our hypothesis that the merged data sets (1.5 billion tokens) would support the development of a more appropriate distributional model.

The fourth experiment (exp 4) also confirms the hypothesis that by using the largest amount of data (2.2 billion tokens), one obtains the best scores in the word analogy task and in the semantic similarity tasks. This model scored a 47.1% accuracy with the LX-4WAnalogies evaluation data set, and 0.5146 \(\rho\), 0.3502 \(\rho\) and 0.3618 \(\rho\), respectively with LX-WordSim-353, LX-SimLex-999 and LX-Rare Word Sim data sets.

It is worth noting that the scores obtained for the conceptual categorization tasks are lower than the ones obtained with some models trained on smaller data sets.

The fifth, sixth and seventh experiment (exp 5, 6 and 7) used the same training data set as exp 3 (1.5 billion).

By increasing the number of training epochs, in exp 5 only one task got an improvement over exp 3, namely the word analogy with 46.5% accuracy, against 45.8% in exp 3. This appears to indicate that the increase of the number of epochs is not bringing a clear advantage to the output model.

In exp 6, by increasing the vector dimension, there was a residual improvement over exp 3 and only on the LX-4WAnalogies (delta of 0.1%), the LX-SimLex-999 (delta of 0.001 \(\rho\)) and LX-Rare Word Sim (delta of 0.0006 \(\rho\)). No clear improvements were thus gained by increasing the vector dimension.

Regarding exp 7, where the negative sampling was increased, the results are identical to the word analogy task and worst for all of the data sets in the semantic similarity tasks, when compared to exp 3. The model obtains an improvement in the conceptual categorization task for the LX-ESSLLI data set, matching the best results obtained in exp 1 with a 0.7045 score. The two other conceptual categorization data sets got a worse result than exp 3 though.

The attempts of re-tuning the parameters with exp 5, 6 and 7 yielded no substantive improvements. This seems to indicate that the parameters tuned in Rodrigues et al. (2016) when using 1 billion tokens by then still deliver pretty good results.

Distributional models for Portuguese previously published in the literature were evaluated only against the word analogy task, with the LX-4WAnalogies data set, scoring 37.7% and 46.2%, respectively by Rodrigues et al. (2016) and Hartmann et al. (2017). Our initial results with the new 2.2 billion token data set under this task, with 47.1% in exp 4, indicate that the model described here is the one with the best score for this task.

The use of larger training data clearly indicates that, as expected, it is a most important factor for the improvement of the scores of the analogy and semantic similarity data sets.

### 7. Resources distributed

All the distributional semantics models whose development is reported in the present paper are distributed at http://github.com/nlx-group under a Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license. These models are termed as LX-DSemVectors 2.2b and users of these language resources should refer to them by citing both the present paper and Rodrigues et al. (2016).
8. Final remarks
In this paper, we presented an advanced distributional model (aka word embeddings) for Portuguese, LX-DSemVectors 2.2b, with the largest vocabulary and the best intrinsic evaluation scores published so far.

This model permits to score 47.1% accuracy in the word analogy task, with the LX-4WAnaloyes data set; 0.5146, 0.3502, 0.3618 in the lexical similarity task, respectively with the evaluation data sets LX-WordSim-353, LX-SimLex-999, and LX-Rare Word Similarity; and a purity of 0.5909, 0.8000 and 0.6438 in the conceptual categorization task, respectively with the LX-ESSLLI 2008, LX-Battig and the LX-AP evaluation data sets.

This model is distributed for free under a most permissive license.

The reproducibility of the results reported in this paper can be verified by using this model and obtaining the evaluation data sets, also available for free and under a most permissive license.

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