LI DIOMS: A Multilingual Linked Idioms Data Set

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Abstract
In this paper, we describe the LI DIOMS data set, a multilingual RDF representation of idioms currently containing five languages: English, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Russian. The data set is intended to support natural language processing applications by providing links between idioms across languages. The underlying data was crawled and integrated from various sources. To ensure the quality of the crawled data, all idioms were evaluated by at least two native speakers. Herein, we present the model devised for structuring the data. We also provide the details of linking LI DIOMS to well-known multilingual data sets such as BabelNet. The resulting data set complies with best practices according to Linguistic Linked Open Data Community.

Keywords: multilingual, idioms, translation

1. Introduction
Recently, the Linguistic Linked Open Data (LLOD) movement has gained significant momentum. According to McCrae et al. (2016), a large number of linguistic data sets have been extracted from various sources and been represented as Linked Data (LD). This new movement was motivated by the novel capabilities of the LD paradigm pertaining to transforming, sharing, and linking linguistic data on the Web (Chiarosc et al., 2012). Resources such as dictionaries and knowledge bases are essential in the development of Natural Language Processing (NLP) systems. However, most of these resources are still bilingual on the LLOD. Thus, becoming worthwhile to develop multilingual knowledge bases by reusing these bilingual contents. Multilingualism is important not only for sharing information across Web but also for learning new concepts from other cultures.

There are many data sets and linguistic resources available at LLOD, however, most of them do not contain much information about Multiword Expressions (MWE). MWE are known to constitute a difficult problem on a number of NLP tasks such as machine translation, language generation, and sentiment analysis/opinion mining. There are different types of MWE, according to Nunberg et al. (1994). MWE are categorized as phrase verbs, compounds, fixed expression, semi-fixed expressions, idioms, slang, and others. This work focuses on idioms, a particular type of MWE.

Most idioms are culture-bound and their senses come from particular concepts of everyday life to a given culture. By definition, idioms are a sequence of words whose meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of words that constitute them (Nunberg et al., 1994). Idioms are generally classified as non-compositional. One of the direct consequences of non-compositionality is the impossibility of translating this kind of word group literally (Nunberg et al., 1994) posing challenges to human translators and to machine translation systems.

In this paper, we propose LI DIOMS, a multilingual linked data set of idioms in five languages. In LI DIOMS, we do not distinguish between idioms sub-categories and thus work on idioms in general by providing lexical and semantic knowledge on a multilingual basis. The selected languages are English, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Russian. This choice of languages intends to show the possibility of correct translations among idioms independent of their language family, syntax or culture. Additionally, one of the goals of LI DIOMS is to support further investigations of similarity among idioms from different languages.

In the following, we begin by presenting the related work (Section 2.) and the data sources that we used for the extraction (Section 3). In Section 4., we give an overview of the model that underlies our data set. Section 5. depicts the creation process that led to the publication of our data set. In Section 6., we present our approach to link LI DIOMS internally and externally. Then, we present usage scenarios for our data set in Section 7. Subsequently, we discuss LLOD quality in subsubsection 7.4.1. and we conclude the paper and provide avenues for future work in Section 8.

2. Related Work
A large number of ontologies have been developed to represent natural language data as LD on the Web of Data. In this context, the well-known ontology lemon (McCrae et al., 2012) was originally developed to model lexical data in mono or multilingual way. Subsequently, a significant amount of effort has been invested in order to improve the support of multilingual contents. To this end, other modules have been extended from lemon for representing multilingual data including (Gracia et al., 2014), which extends some of the lemon properties describing relationships among translations.

Recently, multilingual data sets have been created such as DBnary (Sérasset, 2012), which was released with the

http://linguistics.okfn.org/
main purpose of describing translations among lexical entries. Another resource that describes multilingual content is BabelNet (Navigli and Ponzetto, 2010), which integrates knowledge from various lexical resources, such as WordNet (Miller, 1995). Additionally, BabelNet has adopted the *lemon* structure for representing lexical entries (Ehrmann et al., 2014). Although these resources are linked multilingual data sets, they contain a limited number of idioms described correctly along with their respective translations across languages. This lack of information about MWE and idioms is due to the missing appropriate ontologies and vocabularies for handling this phenomena properly. Despite Lexinfo ontology (Cimiano et al., 2011) contains a certain property just for representing idioms, there are no appropriate classes to reuse this information. Fortunately, the W3C Ontology Lexica Community Group has created an extension of *lemon* called Ontolex in order to not only address this lack of information but also to describe more appropriately linguistic terms (Bosque-Gil et al., 2015). Thus, enabling LIDIOMS to represent a particular type of linguistic unit, that is to say idioms. In the following, we present the data set creation process in more detail.

Additionally, a number of multilingual data sets have been published as Linked Open Data (LOD) in the last years. The well-known knowledge base of DBpedia (Lehmann et al., 2015) is one of first multilingual knowledge bases extracted from Wikipedia. Recently, the Semantic Quran data set has published translations of the Quran in 43 different languages as linked data (Sherif and Ngonga Ngomo, 2015). xLiD-Lexica (Zhang et al., 2014) is a cross-lingual linked data lexica which is constructed by exploiting all language versions of Wikipedia. Terminesp (Bosque-Gil et al., 2015) is another multilingual resource for terms along with their definitions in various languages.

### 3. Data Sources

In this section, we list the data sources from which LIDIOMS originates, where we describe the data collection process of each data source. In addition, we discuss how we ensure the quality of the collected data.

#### 3.1. Data sets

We collected a set of MWE from the online lexical resources: (1) *Phrase finder*, (2) *Memrise*, (3) *Collins* and (4) *Oxford* dictionaries. *Phrase finder* is an online dictionary about idiomatic expressions created by Gary Martins (Martins, 2007) in 1997 for supporting his post-graduate research in computational linguistics. *Memrise* is an online course about idiomatic expressions for achieving a native speaker level. *Collins* and *Oxford* provide high quality lexical resources. Therefore, we use them to guarantee the quality of the idioms definitions and also for gathering some additional idioms. *Memrise* and *Oxford* provided idioms in English, German, Italian, and Russian languages, while the idioms in *Phrase finder* and *Collins* are in English. The Portuguese idioms were initially gathered from *Wikipedia* Portuguese page but because of the limited number of the available Portuguese idioms in *Wikipedia*, we asked four native speakers (one from Portugal and the other three from Brazil) to add more Portuguese idioms.

For the sake of clarity pertaining to the copyrights to use the data, *Memrise* and *Collins* granted us a full permission while the others data providers have a free licence policy when to use the data for research purposes.

#### 3.2. Data Collection process

Using a custom web crawler, we collected the MWE from these aforementioned on-line data sources. Each of the crawled resources has specific pages about each MWE, which ease the configuration of our crawler. Note that, all data sources are bilingual but not necessarily including English as one of the involved languages. For instance, *Oxford* has idiomatic expressions from Italian to Portuguese. We also noticed that most on-line dictionaries does not correctly categorize MWE. For example, in some cases the meaning of MWE can be deduced from the meaning of their components (e.g. “by the book”) while in other cases this is not possible (e.g. “out of the blue”). Therefore, MWE which can be represented by the meaning of their components should not be into the same category as the others with pragmatic meanings (i.e. non-compositional idioms). Collecting the right idioms was a hard task due to the lack of MWE categorization. Thus, we carried out the idiom collection manually where we discarded all the entries that were semantically equivalent to their lexical definitions which means to be not non-compositional. We dubbed this process pragmatically-based selection. The pragmatically-based selection identified only 50% of the MWE retrieved by our crawler as idioms. For instance, the idioms mentioned before “by the book” means “to follow the rules as demand”. The meaning of “book” is “a stuff which contains information, rules, descriptions, and it can be a manual”. Therefore, this MWE is deductible from the meaning of each of its components, the meaning gets “to follow the book’s writing”. Therefore, it is not considered an idiom, in contrast of the idiom “out of the blue” which means “an event that occurs unexpectedly”, the meaning of “blue” is “color” then no relationship exists between “blue” or “out of” with “unexpected happening”.

Moreover, considering that the meaning of idioms may vary according to the geographical location where they are used (Martin, 2007). For example, American idioms which come from The United States of America differ from the British idioms which come from United Kingdom. We consider the location of idioms as an important characteristic to be included in LIDIOMS.

#### 3.3. Data Evaluation

To ensure the quality of the retrieved data, we asked two native speakers and one linguist (per language) to evaluate the extracted idioms and their respective definitions in English. For evaluating an idiom, each native speaker separately evaluated the idioms’ definition. Idioms with accepted definitions by both evaluators are accepted. Also,
 idioms with idioms’ definitions marked as wrong by both evaluators were discarded. In case a mismatch evaluation happens, the idiom was judged by the linguist. This procedure resulted in a manually checked data set containing a large number of idioms as shown in Table 1. The Collection column shows the number of all MWE retrieved by our web crawler. The Filter column shows the number of idioms retrieved based on our pragmatically-based selection, a step which recognizes only idioms among MWE (see Section 3.2). The Total column presents the resulting number of idioms after the manual review process made by the natives and the linguist.

| Language | Collection | Filter  | Total |
|----------|------------|---------|-------|
| English  | 1230       | 600     | 291   |
| Portuguese| 600        | 215     | 114   |
| Italian  | 500        | 284     | 175   |
| German   | 400        | 245     | 130   |
| Russian  | 220        | 150     | 105   |

Table 1: Number of idioms retrieved by step

4. Semantic Representation Model

The representation model of LIDIOMS aims at describing idioms correctly as a sub-type of MWE together with their translations and geographical usage area. For this purpose, LIDIOMS data set is based on Ontolex model. We chose the Ontolex model because it contains the necessary classes to represent MWE and its translations properly. Ontolex also reuses the well-known Lexinfo ontology which has an essential term type called lexinfo:idiom for representing idioms as one type of MWE.

We used the core Ontolex’s classes to model LIDIOMS, where (1) we use the class ontolex:LexicalEntry for representing a lexical entry (i.e. a word, a multi-word expression or an affix), (2) the sub-class ontolex:MultiwordExpression is used to specify a lexical entry as a multi-word expression, (3) the ontolex:LexicalConcept class suits perfectly for representing idioms meaning as its formal definition comprises of “to be a mental abstraction, concept or a thought that can be described by a given collection of senses”. (4) the ontolex:LexicalSense class for lexical sense of an idiom. (5) the ontolex:LexicalSense class describes the written and alternative forms of the entries and (6) ontolex:Lexicon class is used for representing a collection of lexical entries.

For translations, Ontolex uses the vartrans module which connects ontolex:LexicalSense instances among themselves through vartrans:Translation class. The vartrans:Translation uses the property vartrans:category for describing translations and also representing variations of these translations across entries in the same vartrans:category for different languages. The vartrans module was inspired by Gracia et al., 2014 and we also reuse one of its translation categories called trcat:culturalEquivalent which represents a translation between two entries that are not semantically but pragmatically equivalent. Note that a cultural translation of an idiom is not a literal translation, rather it represents the specific cultural semantics of that idiom.

For the geographical area of idioms, we use the lexvo:usedIn class from the Lexvo Ontology de Melo, 2015. The geographical area of an idiom is of great importance because the meaning of an idiom can vary in the same language depending on where it is used (diatopic variation). For instance, the Portuguese idiom “amarra o burro” (its literal translation: “tie the donkey”) means “to relax” in Portugal while in Brazil it means “to advise someone about future problems from one action”. Furthermore, this idiom has also more meanings even within Brazil, for example, “to be angry when someone does not allow you to do something” that is typical for children. In addition, some idioms are not understood in all countries even sharing the same language. For instance, the Portuguese idiom “comprei um mamão” (eng: “buy a lemon”) is used in Brazil but not in Portugal.

In Figure 1, we present a complete example of a translation of two idioms from Portuguese (“custa os olhos da cara”) to English (“arm and a leg”) using vartrans class along with the others descriptions modeled by Ontolex in LIDIOMS.

In order to represent the names of the languages in a unified way, we publish LIDIOMS based on the best practices of the International Organization of Standardization (ISO). Given the fact that Brazilian Portuguese does not have an ISO resource, we chose to use the Brazilian Portuguese DBpedia resource for substituting that missing ISO.

5. RDF Generation

The original idioms were crawled in heterogeneous formats such as CSV, XML, and HTML. To convert the idiom data into RDF, we used OpenRefine together with its RDF extension. The model underlying the RDF conversion relies on the group of patterns to generate linguistic resources as LD recommended by the Best Practices for Multilingual Linked Open Data (BPMLOD) W3C community group.

In spite of our work being multilingual, we followed the patterns for bilingual dictionaries. We were able to use bilingual patterns because we use English as pivot language given that all the target translations are in English. Thus, the multilingual translations were found by inference relying on the reflexivity property of the vartrans:target. For more details about LIDIOMS see Table 2 and visit LIDIOMS GitLab repository.

6. Linking

In this section, we describe how we link idioms in LIDIOMS internally (i.e. within the data set) and externally (i.e. with other data sets).

http://openrefine.org/
http://dbpedia.org/page/Brazilian_
http://openrefine.org/
https://www.w3.org/community/bpmlod/
https://www.w3.org/2015/09/
https://github.com/dice-group/Lidioms
6.1. Internal linking

While most of the definitions of the retrieved idioms were in English (87%), only in a few cases the definition was in another language. We then decided to provide the definitions of all idioms in English regardless of the idioms’ original language. The other 13% of idioms which had the definitions in another language were translated by a native speaker to English. Therefore, the English definitions became our pivot language, i.e. the idioms’ English definitions were used as bridge for the internal linking process across languages. For instance, the “when pigs fly” English idiom has the definition “something that will never happen”. In Portuguese, the idiom “nem que a vaca tussa” has exactly the same lexical definition, but its literal translation would be “nor the cow cough”. Still, it is valid to decide to link these two idioms internally based on their definitions. Figure 2 illustrates the main idea underlying this work, i.e. the provision of indirect translations (represented by dotted line) of idioms through a pivot language.

Note that, some idioms have multiple idiomatic equivalents in other languages while others have none. However, some idioms have definitions with almost equivalent syntactic structures while the semantics of the definitions are very different. For instance, the English idiom “Once in a blue moon” means “something that happens rarely” and another English idiom “When pigs fly” means “something that will never happen”. This kind of phenomena is likely to decrease the quality of an automatic linking process, because current link discovery frameworks (Nentwig et al., 2015) only support syntax-based string similarities. Given the lack of support of semantic-based string similarity functions, the internal linking was carried out manually by the authors and a cross-validation among the natives and linguists were done on this manual internal linking.

Figure 2: An indirect translation excerpt

Table 3 shows the number of direct and indirect translations found for the selected idioms per language.

| Idioms | EN | PT | IT | DE | RU | Total |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Translations | 291 | 114 | 175 | 130 | 105 | 815 |
| Total | 192 | 79 | 73 | 62 | 82 | 488 |

6.2. External linking

Linking LIDIOMS to other external resources is based on the string similarities between LIDIOMS’s resources and the other data sets’ resources. The current version of LIDIOMS is linked to two other data sets in order to ensure reusability and integrability.

The first data set we linked to LIDIOMS is DBnary. We used the algorithms provided in LIMES (Ngomo, 2012;Sherif and Ngonga Ngomo, 2015) framework which are time-efficient to carry out the DBnary linking tasks. The linking was through rdfs:label property using the trigram similarity with acceptance threshold 0.85.
The second data set we linked with LIIDIOMS is BabelNet. The BabelNet linking process was carried out using the BabelNet API to retrieve senses and definitions. While linking, we noticed that BabelNet do not correctly type idioms (more details see Section 7.4.1). We thus linked to BabelNet manually by comparing our skos:definition property with the bn-lemon:definition property of the BabelNet resources. This task was performed by the same group of linguists previously requested.

### 6.3. Linking Quality

In this section, we show and discuss the linking statistics of LIIDIOMS with BabelNet and DBnary. Table 4 presents the number of links per resource and language in the LIIDIOMS data set. Note that all the links were evaluated manually. The Retrieval columns show the number of total idioms collected from a given data set and the Accepted columns present the number of idioms which were matched exactly as an idiom. We also present the precision achieved by the aforementioned link specifications. DBnary has presented a good precision in general. Its lower score only comes from Portuguese and Russian because its API does not handle it instead of LIIDIOMS.

| Languages | LIIDIOMS | BabelNet Retrieval | BabelNet Accepted | BabelNet Precision | DBnary Retrieval | DBnary Accepted | DBnary Precision |
|-----------|----------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| English   | 291      | 600                 | 195               | 0.325             | 362              | 323             | 0.892            |
| Portuguese| 114      | 23                  | 9                 | 0.391             | 26               | 4               | 0.153            |
| Italian   | 175      | 52                  | 33                | 0.634             | 4                | 4               | 1.0              |
| German    | 130      | 27                  | 8                 | 0.296             | 45               | 45              | 1.0              |
| Russian   | 105      | 48                  | 16                | 0.333             | 0                | 0               | 0                |
| Total     | 815      | 750                 | 261               | 437               | 384              |                 |                  |

Table 4: Number of links and precision values obtained between LIIDIOMS and other data sets.

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### 7. Use Cases

In this section, we outline selected application scenarios for our data set. Listing 1, Listing 2 and Listing 3 illustrate different facets of how LIIDIOMS can support translation use cases. LIIDIOMS contains a significant number of instances of concepts, places and translations. Thus, multilingual idioms along with their definitions concerning about a specific information can be easily retrieved from our data set. Moreover, the aligned multilingual representation allows searching for idioms with the same meaning across different languages.

#### 7.1. Gathering idioms by definitions

The first use case for our data set is exploratory in nature. Machine translation agents are commonly in need of expressions that have a certain meaning. Using a simple SPARQL query over LIIDIOMS enables these potential agents to easily find idioms which contain a keyword of choice. For example, Listing 1 shows a SPARQL query for retrieving English, Italian and Russian idioms which contains the verb “to deceive” in their definitions.

```
SELECT ?label ?definition
WHERE {
    ?idiom rdfs:label ?label.
    ?idiom ontolex:isLexicalizedSenseOf ?concept.
    ?concept skos:definition ?definition.
    FILTER ( lang(?label) = "it" || lang(?label) = "en" || lang(?label) = "rus" ).
}
```

Listing 1: Idioms definitions that contains the same verb in (i) English (ii) Italian and (iii) Russian.

#### 7.2. Idioms usage per area

LIIDIOMS provides information about the place of usage of each idiom. For instance, the idiom “it’s raining cats and dogs” has English as its language property and comes from England. By being aware of the place of origin of an idiom, translators are now empowered to translate an idiom to the right idiom for a given target group. Listing 2 shows a SPARQL query which retrieves all idioms from England.

```
SELECT ?idiom ?label
WHERE {
    ?idiom rdfs:label ?label;
    lexvo:usedIn dbr:England .
}
```

Listing 2: All idioms coming from England.

#### 7.3. Translating across languages

Another important use of LIIDIOMS is to retrieve indirect translations. By indirect translation we mean a translation which is based on another translation. Nevertheless, the power of RDF representation of LIIDIOMS enable the induction of indirect translations through the English translations. For example, the SPARQL query in Listing 3 first finds the English translation of the German idiom “Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen”, then it retrieves Russian idioms with equivalent English translations.

```
SELECT ?idiom
WHERE {
    ?idiom rdfs:label "Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen".
    FILTER ( lang("Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen") = "de" )
}
```

Listing 3: Translating across languages
7.4. Third-party uses: Retrieving More Information through Links

LIOMS is linked to other data sets, from which we are able to retrieve additional idiom-related information. For example, [Listing 4] shows a SPARQL query for retrieving a given part-of-speech tag of the English idiom “out of the blue” from the same resource exists in DBnary.

Listing 4: Retrieving data from different resources.

```sparql
SELECT ?pos
WHERE {
    ?idiom rdfs:label "out of the blue"@en;
    owl:sameAs ?ext_idiom.
    SERVICE <http://kaiko.getalp.org/sparql> {http://kaiko.getalp.org/sparql} |
    SELECT ?ext_idiom ?pos
    WHERE { ?ext_idiom dbnary:partOfSpeech ?pos }
}
```

7.4.1. Discussion

A main limitation in the currently available data sets in LLOD is the lack of proper categorization of MWE. For example, neither BabelNet nor DBnary have specific MWE types. For instance, in BabelNet, some idioms were not typed as lexical entries, we were capable of finding exact matches of many idioms which are included in LIOMS but the matches were from other classes such as a film, a book or music album (e.g., “head over heels” is the label of a film[1]). In order to alleviate this problem, we also tried to filter the idioms by bn:lemon:synsetType in BabelNet, however, incorrect types avoided us to link them easily. For example, the idiom “The Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs” is typed as “Named Entity” (see http://babelnet.org/rdf/page/bn03200922n), but it should be a concept. Additionally, [Listing 5] shows an example resource from BabelNet. In Listing 5 the idiom “arm and a leg” is represented as a noun while it should be firstly represented as a MWE or more precisely as an idiom. This lack of accurate categorization of MWE makes linking data sources such as LIOMS with other resources very difficult. In particular, using declarative link discovery frameworks for computing similarities among MWE without the right classification becomes a slow task which leads to links with a low level of precision.

Furthermore, this incomplete categorization exists also in other data sets such as DBpedia and DBnary. We thus regard LIOMS as a first effort towards a better LLOD, where MWEs (especially idioms) are represented as such. We envision that this better representation will lead to qualitative linked-data driven NLP systems, including but not limited to better Machine Translation (MT) applications.

8. Summary

In this paper, we described LIOMS, a multilingual Resource Description Framework (RDF) data set containing idioms represented in five languages. The data set fills an important gap on MWE processing and it can be used as a resource in NLP pipelines. The current version of LIOMS contains 13,889 triples modeling 815 concepts with 488 translations (115 indirect translations) coming from 7 different sources and linked to 645 external resources. LIOMS connects idioms from different languages that have semantically equivalent definitions. To ensure interoperability with other data sets on the LLOD, LIOMS is linked to BabelNet and DBnary.

8.1. Future Work

We are currently working to extend the coverage of LIOMS so that researchers and developers who work on languages not currently present in the data set can benefit from it. Future versions of LIOMS will include idioms from other languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Czech, Finnish, and French. Moreover, to handle diatopic language variation, the current languages of LIOMS are being updated including more fine-grained locations (e.g., cities) as geographical area of use for idioms with more than one meaning even sharing the same country and language. Finally, we plan to improve the automation of the process of internal as well as external linking of idioms by implementing an approach for semantically linking idioms’ definitions.

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[1] http://babelnet.org/rdf/page/s03412613n
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\[15\] http://acoli.cs.uni-frankfurt.de/resources/olia/
\[16\] http://history.fsu.edu/People/Faculty-by-Name/Will-Hanley