

## PAPER

## Correcting Syntactic Annotation Errors Based on Tree Mining\*

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**SUMMARY** This paper provides a new method to correct annotation errors in a treebank. The previous error correction method constructs a pseudo parallel corpus where incorrect partial parse trees are paired with correct ones, and extracts error correction rules from the parallel corpus. By applying these rules to a treebank, the method corrects errors. However, this method does not achieve wide coverage of error correction. To achieve wide coverage, our method adopts a different approach. In our method, we consider that if an infrequent pattern can be transformed to a frequent one, then it is an annotation error pattern. Based on a tree mining technique, our method seeks such infrequent tree patterns, and constructs error correction rules each of which consists of an infrequent pattern and a corresponding frequent pattern. We conducted an experiment using the Penn Treebank. We obtained 1,987 rules which are not constructed by the previous method, and the rules achieved good precision.

**key words:** error correction, synchronous tree substitution grammar, *FREQT*

## 1. Introduction

It is inevitable for annotated corpora to contain errors caused by manual or semi-manual annotation process. Thus, detecting and correcting errors in annotated corpora are important tasks. Many studies suggested methods of detecting or correcting errors in POS-tag or dependency annotation [2]–[7]. On the other hand, there is little work on error correction in phrase structure treebank while there are several methods of detecting annotation errors in a treebank [8]–[15].

One exception is the work of Kato and Matsubara [16]. Their method constructs a *pseudo parallel corpus* where incorrect parse trees are paired with correct ones, and extracts error correction rules from the parallel corpus. The rules transform incorrect tree patterns to correct ones. By applying these rules to a treebank, the method corrects errors. However, this method does not achieve wide coverage of error correction.

To solve this problem, we propose another approach to construct error correction rules. Our method does not construct a pseudo parallel corpus. In our method, we consider that an infrequent tree pattern which can be transformed to

a frequent one is an annotation error pattern. Based on a tree mining technique, our method seeks such infrequent patterns efficiently. The method constructs error correction rules by pairing the infrequent tree patterns with the frequent ones. We conducted an experiment using the Penn Treebank [17]. We obtained 1,987 rules which are not constructed by the previous method, and the rules achieved good precision.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 introduces the previous method of correcting errors in a treebank. Section 3 explains our method which is based on tree mining. Section 4 reports experimental results using the Penn Treebank.

## 2. Previous Work

Kato and Matsubara [16] proposed a method of correcting annotation errors in a treebank. Their method is based on *synchronous tree substitution grammar* (STSG) [18]. An STSG defines a tree-to-tree mapping, and consists of rules each of which is defined as a pair of trees called *elementary trees*. The one tree is called a *source*, and the other is called a *target*. Figure 1 shows an example of STSG rule. The rule transforms the structure which matches the source into the target's structure. To correct annotation errors in a treebank, the method constructs STSG rules which transform incorrect structures to correct ones and applies them to the treebank.

The STSG rules are constructed as follows:

1. Make a *pseudo parallel corpus*, which is a collection of pairs of partial parse trees which cover a same word sequence.
2. Extract STSG rules which represent a correspondence in the pseudo parallel corpus.

To select useful rules for error correction, they define a score function. Let  $\langle \tau_s, \tau_t \rangle$  be a rule whose source is  $\tau_s$  and whose target is  $\tau_t$ . The score of  $\langle \tau_s, \tau_t \rangle$  is defined as follows:

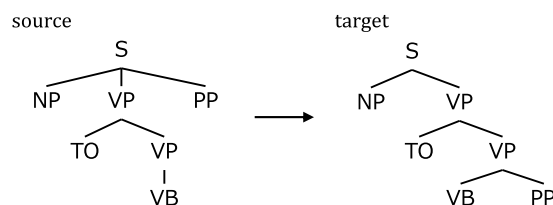


Fig. 1 Example of STSG rule

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$$Score(\langle \tau_s, \tau_t \rangle) = \frac{f(\tau_t)}{f(\tau_s) + f(\tau_t)}$$

where  $f(\tau)$  is the frequency of an elementary tree  $\tau$  in a treebank. They assume that the frequency of an incorrect parse tree in a treebank is very low. The lower  $f(\tau_s)$  is, the higher  $Score(\langle \tau_s, \tau_t \rangle)$  is. STSG rules with high scores are useful for error correction.

For example, let us consider a treebank which includes the parse trees shown in Fig. 2. The parse tree (a) is correct, but (b) and (c) include a same annotation error. In (a) and (b), the word sequence “to sell at the same time” has different partial parse trees enclosed within the dotted line. The method makes a pair of these partial parse trees and extracts the STSG rule shown in Fig. 1 from the pair. Applying this rule to the treebank, we can correct the error in (b). Moreover, the error in (c) can be corrected by this rule.

However, this method has a problem. It can not extract any rule from a partial parse tree assigned to a word sequence which occurs only once in a treebank. Thus, an-

notation errors included in only such partial parse tree can not be corrected by the method. Let us consider another case where the treebank does not include (b). In (c), the word sequence “to trade on Nasdaq” has incorrect partial parse tree. But, the method can not make a pair of partial parse trees enclosed within the dotted lines in (a) and (c). This is because these partial parse trees have different word sequences. This means that it constructs no rule. As the result, the method fails to correct the annotation error in (c).

### 3. Correcting Errors by Tree Mining

To solve the problem described in Sect. 2, we adopt a different approach. Our method does not construct a pseudo parallel corpus. STSG rules are constructed based on a tree mining technique.

#### 3.1 Definition

In this section, we give some definitions.

##### 3.1.1 Derivation Tree

In our method, a parse tree is represented by a *derivation tree*. Figure 3 shows the derivation tree corresponding to the partial parse tree enclosed within the dotted line in Fig. 2 (a). A derivation tree for a parse tree is defined as follows: for each inner node  $v$  of a parse tree, there exists a node  $v'$  which corresponds to  $v$ .  $v'$  preserves the parent-child relations on  $v$ . The label of  $v'$  is the following grammar rule:

$$l(v) \rightarrow l(c_1) l(c_2) \dots l(c_n)$$

where  $l(v)$  is the label of  $v$  and  $c_1, c_2, \dots, c_n$  are the children of  $v$ . We label the edge between  $v'$  and  $c'_i$  with  $i$  in order to indicate that a grammar rule  $l(c'_i)$  is applied to the  $i$ -th element of the right-hand side of  $l(v')$ .

##### 3.1.2 Pattern

We define a *pattern* as a connected subgraph included in a tree. Figure 4 shows examples of patterns.  $\tau_1, \tau_2$  and  $\tau_3$  are included in the derivation tree shown in Fig. 3. A pattern with  $k$  nodes is called a  $k$ -pattern.

In a derivation tree pattern, if no grammar rule is applied to an element in the right-hand side of a grammar rule

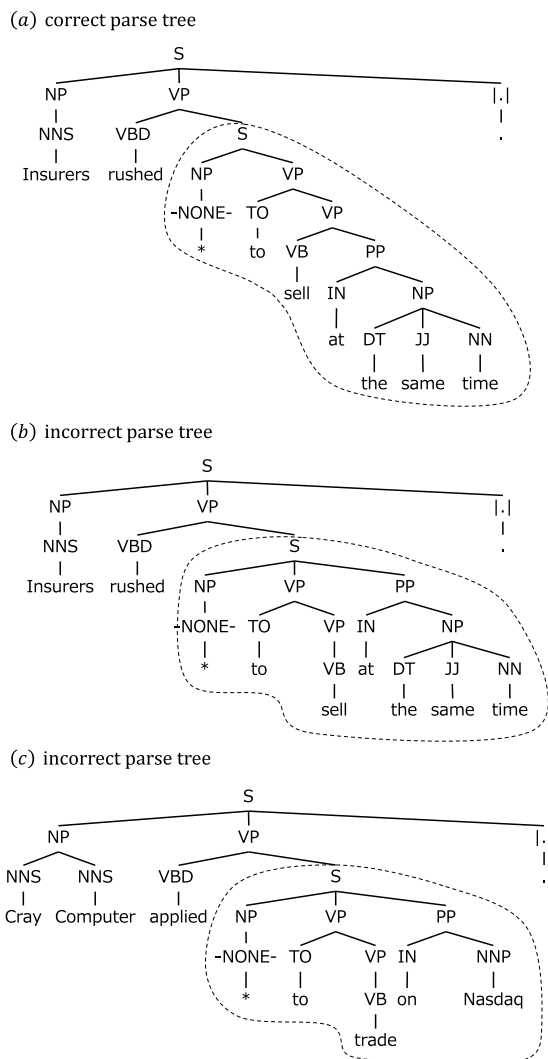


Fig. 2 Examples of parse trees

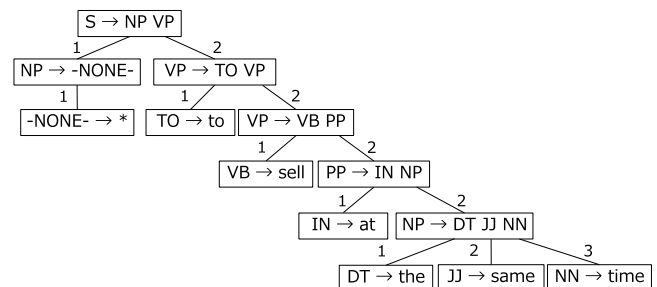


Fig. 3 Derivation tree

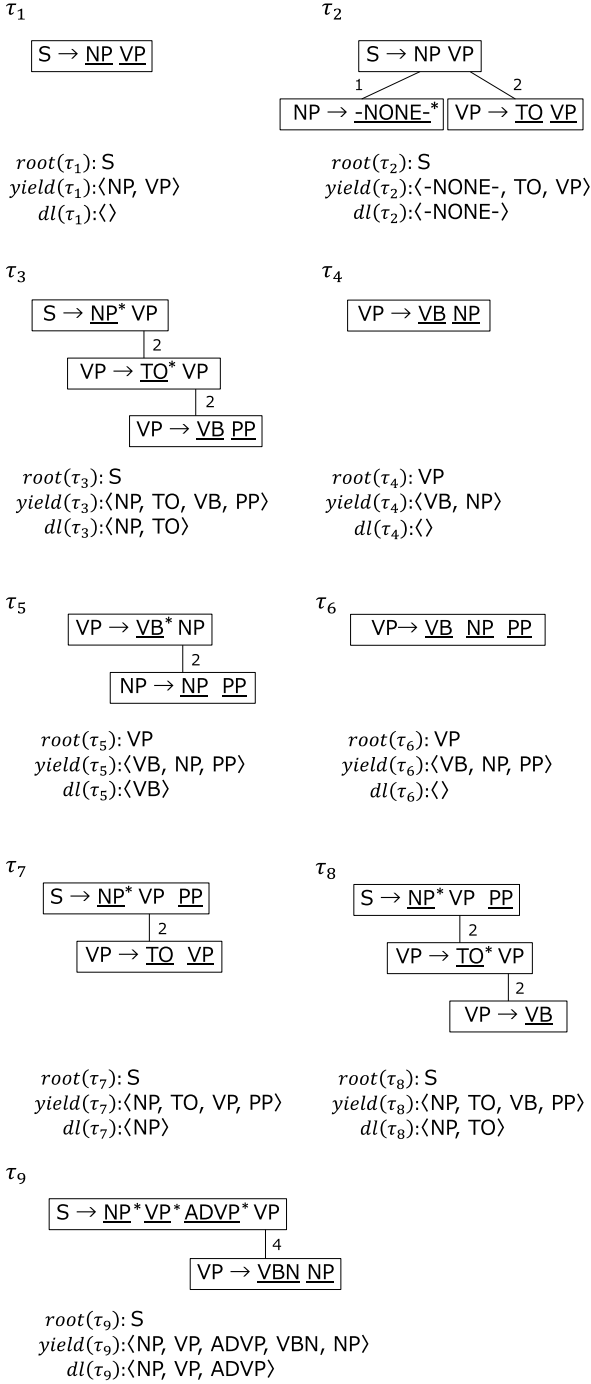


Fig. 4 Examples of patterns

assigned to a node, we call such element a *leaf element*. A leaf element corresponds to a leaf node of the original parse tree pattern. In Fig. 4, leaf elements are underlined.

### 3.1.3 Error Correction Rule

As described in Sect. 2, Kato and Matsubara [16] assume that the frequency of an incorrect pattern is very low. According to this assumption, we consider that an infrequent pattern which can be transformed to a frequent one is an an-

notation error pattern. Our method seeks such patterns in a treebank and constructs STSG rules which transform them to the corresponding frequent ones.

The following formula represents whether or not two patterns  $\tau$  and  $\tau'$  can be transformed to each other:

$$\text{Trans}(\tau, \tau') \equiv (\text{root}(\tau) = \text{root}(\tau') \wedge \text{yield}(\tau) = \text{yield}(\tau'))$$

where  $\text{root}(\tau)$  is the left-hand side of the grammar rule of  $\tau$ 's root and  $\text{yield}(\tau)$  is the list of  $\tau$ 's leaf element.  $\tau_3$  and  $\tau_8$  shown in Fig. 4 can be transformed to each other since  $\text{Trans}(\tau_3, \tau_8)$  is satisfied.

We say that a pattern  $\tau$  is frequent if  $f(\tau) \geq \sigma$  where  $\sigma$  is a threshold. Let  $T$  be a treebank. Let  $P(T)$  be the set of all patterns in  $T$  and  $F(T)$  be the set of frequent patterns in  $T$ . The following set  $\text{Rule}(T)$  is the set of rules our method constructs from  $T$ :

$$\text{Rule}(T) = \{ \langle \tau_s, \tau_t \rangle \in P(T) \times P(T) \mid \tau_s \notin F(T) \wedge \tau_t \in F(T) \wedge \text{Trans}(\tau_s, \tau_t) \}$$

## 3.2 Outline of Our Method

If we enumerated all tree patterns included in a treebank, we could easily obtain any kind of rules which can be extracted from the treebank. However, such naive method is intractable because it requires an exponential computational complexity. To construct rules efficiently, our method avoids the enumeration of patterns which do not contribute to error correction by using a tree mining technique.

The procedure of our method is as follows:

1. Enumerate frequent patterns in a treebank by using a tree mining algorithm FREQT [19].
2. Seek infrequent patterns which can be transformed to frequent ones.
3. Construct STSG rules which transform infrequent patterns to frequent ones.

## 3.3 FREQT

In this section, we explain FREQT [19], which is the basis of our method. FREQT efficiently enumerates all frequent patterns in a tree set. Figure 5 shows the algorithm of FREQT. First, FREQT creates the set  $\mathcal{F}_1$  of all frequent 1-patterns by traversing a treebank  $T$ . Next, the algorithm generates candidate 2-patterns by expanding each frequent 1-pattern  $\tau \in \mathcal{F}_1$  by attaching a new node. For each candidate 2-pattern  $\tau'$ , if  $f(\tau') \geq \sigma$ ,  $\tau'$  is added to  $\mathcal{F}_2$ . The algorithm iteratively expands frequent  $(k-1)$ -patterns, and adds frequent  $k$ -patterns to  $\mathcal{F}_k$ . By continuing this process until no pattern is generated, FREQT enumerates all frequent patterns.

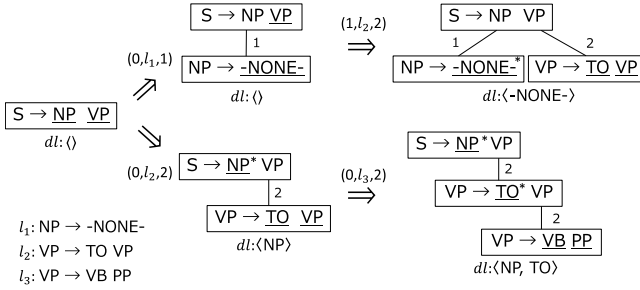
FREQT uses the rightmost expansion technique. FREQT expands a pattern by attaching a new node  $v$  to a

**Algorithm FREQT****Input:** A threshold  $\sigma > 0$ , a treebank  $T$ .**Output:** The set  $\mathcal{F}$  of all frequent patterns in  $T$ .

```

1:  $\mathcal{F}_1 := \emptyset$ 
2: for each 1-pattern  $\tau$  which appears in  $T$  do
3:   if  $f(\tau) \geq \sigma$  then
4:      $\mathcal{F}_1 := \mathcal{F}_1 \cup \{\tau\}$ 
5:  $k := 2$ 
6: while  $\mathcal{F}_{k-1} \neq \emptyset$  do
7:    $\mathcal{F}_k := \emptyset$ 
8:   for each  $\tau \in \mathcal{F}_{k-1}$  do
9:     for each  $\tau'$  s.t.  $\tau \Rightarrow \tau'$  do
10:      if  $f(\tau') \geq \sigma$  then
11:         $\mathcal{F}_k := \mathcal{F}_k \cup \{\tau'\}$ 
12:    $k := k + 1$ 
13: Return  $\mathcal{F} = \mathcal{F}_1 \cup \mathcal{F}_2 \cup \dots \cup \mathcal{F}_{k-1}$ .

```

**Fig. 5** Algorithm of FREQT**Fig. 6** Examples of expansions

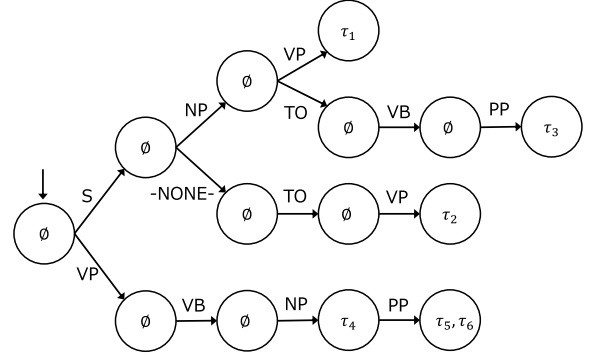
node  $v'$  on the *rightmost branch* of the pattern as a rightmost child of  $v'$ . The rightmost branch of a pattern is defined as the path starting from the root to the *rightmost leaf*. When  $l$  is the label of  $v$ ,  $v'$  is the  $p$ -th parent of the rightmost leaf and the label of new edge between  $v$  and  $v'$  is  $i$ , we call a generated pattern  $\tau'$  the  $(p, l, i)$ -expansion of  $\tau$  and we write  $\tau \Rightarrow \tau'$ . For example, in Fig. 4,  $\tau_8$  is the  $(0, VP \rightarrow VB, 2)$ -expansion of  $\tau_7$ . The rightmost expansion technique enables FREQT to enumerate all candidate patterns without overlapping. Figure 6 shows examples of expansions.

### 3.4 Constructing Error Correction Rules

After calculating  $F(T)$  by FREQT, our method seeks infrequent source patterns by expanding infrequent patterns. For an infrequent pattern  $\tau_s$ , if there exists some  $\tau_t \in F(T)$  s.t.  $Trans(\tau_s, \tau_t)$ , our method constructs the rule  $\langle \tau_s, \tau_t \rangle$ .

#### 3.4.1 Efficient Enumeration of Infrequent Source Patterns

To seek infrequent source patterns efficiently, we focus on leaf elements of patterns. In our method, pattern expansion proceeds by applying grammar rule to leaf elements from left to right. Once a leaf element is skipped, it never has a grammar rule. We call such element a *determined leaf*. In Figs. 4 and 6, determined leaves are marked with an asterisk. Our method expands a pattern  $\tau$  only if  $\tau$  satisfies the following condition:

**Fig. 7** Example of transducer

$$\exists \tau_t (\tau_t \in F(T))$$

$$\wedge root(\tau) = root(\tau_t)$$

$$\wedge dl(\tau) \text{ is a prefix of } yield(\tau_t))$$

(1)

where  $dl(\tau)$  is the list of determined leaves of a pattern  $\tau$ . Here,  $\alpha \cdot \beta$  is the list generated by concatenating a list  $\beta$  to a list  $\alpha$ . The condition (1) is rewritten as follows:

$$root(\tau) \cdot dl(\tau) \in prefix(L)$$

(2)

where  $L$  is the set defined as follows:

$$L = \{\alpha \mid \exists \tau_t \in F(T), \alpha = root(\tau_t) \cdot yield(\tau_t)\}$$

and  $prefix(L)$  is the set of prefixes of  $L$ 's elements. If a pattern  $\tau$  does not satisfy the condition (2),  $\tau$  does not contribute to constructing  $Rule(T)$ . This is because for any  $\tau'$  s.t.  $\tau \Rightarrow^* \tau'$ , there is no target pattern  $\tau_t \in F(T)$  which satisfies  $Trans(\tau', \tau_t)$ . For example, let us assume  $F(T) = \{\tau_1, \tau_2, \dots, \tau_6\}$  in Fig. 4. Here,  $root(\tau_7) \cdot dl(\tau_7)$  is  $\langle S, NP \rangle$ . This is a prefix of  $root(\tau_3) \cdot yield(\tau_3) = \langle S, NP, TO, VB, PP \rangle$ . Thus  $root(\tau_7) \cdot dl(\tau_7) \in prefix(L)$ . By expanding  $\tau_7$ , we can obtain  $\tau_8$ .  $\tau_8$  can be transformed to  $\tau_3$ , that is,  $\tau_7$  contributes to constructing  $Rule(T)$ . On the other hand,  $root(\tau_9) \cdot dl(\tau_9)$  is  $\langle S, NP, VP, ADVP \rangle$ . This is not included in  $prefix(L)$ . For any  $\tau'_9$  s.t.  $\tau_9 \Rightarrow^* \tau'_9$ ,  $root(\tau'_9) \cdot yield(\tau'_9)$  are in the form of  $\langle S, NP, VP, ADVP, \dots \rangle$ . This means that  $Trans(\tau'_9, \tau_t)$  does not hold for any pattern  $\tau_t \in F(T)$ , that is,  $\tau_9$  does not contribute to constructing  $Rule(T)$ .

Our method checks whether or not a pattern satisfies the condition (2) by using a transducer. We make a deterministic transducer  $TD = (\Sigma, Q, q_0, \delta, O)$  which accepts  $L$ . Figure 7 shows the transducer when  $F(T)$  is  $\{\tau_1, \tau_2, \dots, \tau_6\}$  in Fig. 4.  $Q$  is the set of states contained in  $TD$ . Each state corresponds to an element of  $prefix(L)$ . The initial state  $q_0$  corresponds to an empty list. An input symbol is a word or a label in the treebank.  $\Sigma$  is for the set of input symbols. Let  $q_\alpha$  be a state which corresponds to a list  $\alpha \in prefix(L)$ . The transition function  $\delta : Q \times \Sigma \rightarrow Q$  is defined as follows:

$$\delta(q_\alpha, a) = \begin{cases} q_{\alpha \cdot a} & (\alpha \cdot a \in prefix(L)) \\ \text{undefined} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

If  $\delta(q_0, root(\tau) \cdot dl(\tau)) \in Q$ , a pattern  $\tau$  satisfies the condition

**Algorithm** Create error correction rules**Input:** A threshold  $\sigma > 0$ , a treebank  $T$ .**Output:** The set *Rule* of error correction rules.

```

1: Calculate the set  $\mathcal{F}$  of all frequent patterns in  $T$  by FREQT.
2: Make a transducer  $TD = (\Sigma, Q, q_0, \delta, O)$  from  $\mathcal{F}$ .
3:  $C_1 := \emptyset$ 
4:  $Rule := \emptyset$ 
5: for each 1-pattern  $\tau$  which appears in  $T$  do
6:   if  $q := \delta(q_0, root(\tau)) \in Q$  then
7:      $C_1 := C_1 \cup \{\langle \tau, q \rangle\}$ 
8:   if  $f(\tau) < \sigma$  then
9:     for each  $\tau_i \in O(\delta(q, yield(\tau)))$  do
10:       $Rule := Rule \cup \{\langle \tau, \tau_i \rangle\}$ 
11:  $k := 2$ 
12: while  $C_{k-1} \neq \emptyset$  do
13:    $C_k := \emptyset$ 
14:   for each  $\langle \tau, q \rangle \in C_{k-1}$  do
15:     for each  $\tau'$  s.t.  $\tau'$  is the  $(p, l, i)$ -expansion of  $\tau$  and  $f(\tau') > 0$  do
16:       if  $q' := \delta(q, new\_dl(\tau, p, i)) \in Q$  then
17:          $C_k := C_k \cup \{\langle \tau', q' \rangle\}$ 
18:       if  $f(\tau') < \sigma$  then
19:         for each  $\tau_i \in O(\delta(q', yield(\tau')/dl(\tau')))$  do
20:            $Rule := Rule \cup \{\langle \tau', \tau_i \rangle\}$ 
21:    $k := k + 1$ 
22: Return Rule.

```

**Fig. 8** Algorithm of creating error correction rules

(2). For a state  $q \in Q$ ,  $TD$  outputs a set of frequent patterns. The output function  $O : Q \rightarrow 2^{F(T)}$  is defined as follows:

$$O(q) = \{\tau \in F(T) \mid \delta(q_0, root(\tau) \cdot yield(\tau)) = q\}$$

For all  $\tau_i \in O(\delta(q_0, root(\tau) \cdot yield(\tau)))$ ,  $Trans(\tau, \tau_i)$  holds.

Figure 8 shows the algorithm of creating error correction rules. In the first step, the algorithm adds 1-patterns which satisfy the condition (2) to a set  $C_1$  (lines 5 – 7). For each pattern  $\tau$  in  $C_k$ ,  $C_k$  keeps the state  $q$  s.t.  $q = \delta(q_0, root(\tau) \cdot dl(\tau))$ . Then, for each pattern  $\tau$  in  $C_1$ , if  $\tau$  is infrequent, the algorithm creates error correction rules from  $\tau$  (lines 8 – 10). In the subsequent steps, the algorithm creates  $C_k$  ( $k \geq 2$ ) by expanding patterns in  $C_{k-1}$  (lines 14 – 17). Here,  $new\_dl(\tau, p, i)$  is a function which calculates a list of leaf elements which newly become determined leaves in the  $(p, l, i)$ -expansion of  $\tau$ . That is, when a pattern  $\tau'$  is the  $(p, l, i)$ -expansion of  $\tau$ ,  $dl(\tau') = dl(\tau) \cdot new\_dl(\tau, p, i)$  holds. Therefore, the following equation holds:

$$\delta(q_0, root(\tau') \cdot dl(\tau')) = \delta(q, new\_dl(\tau, p, i))$$

where  $q = \delta(q_0, root(\tau) \cdot dl(\tau))$ . Like the first step, for each pattern  $\tau'$  in  $C_k$ , if  $\tau'$  is infrequent, the algorithm creates error correction rules from  $\tau'$  (lines 18 – 20). Here,  $\alpha/\beta$  is the list s.t.  $\alpha = \beta \cdot \alpha/\beta$ .

Figure 9 shows the algorithm of  $new\_dl(\tau, p, i)$ .  $v.RME$  is the label of the edge which connects a node  $v$  and the rightmost child of  $v$ . If  $v$  has no child,  $v.RME$  is 0.  $L(v).RHS(i)$  is the  $i$ -th element of the right-hand side of  $v$ 's label.  $|L(v).RHS|$  is the number of elements of the right-hand side of  $v$ 's label. For example, in Fig. 4,  $\tau_8$  is the  $(0, VP \rightarrow VB, 2)$ -expansion of  $\tau_7$ . So,  $new\_dl(\tau_7, 0, 2) = \langle TO \rangle$  and  $dl(\tau_8) = dl(\tau_7) \cdot new\_dl(\tau_7, 0, 2) = \langle NP, TO \rangle$ .

**Algorithm**  $new\_dl(\tau, p, i)$ 

```

1:  $NDL := \langle \rangle$ 
2:  $v :=$  the rightmost leaf of  $\tau$ 
3: for  $j := 0$  to  $p - 1$  do
4:   for  $k := v.RME + 1$  to  $L(v).RHS$  do
5:      $NDL := NDL \cdot L(v).RHS(k)$ 
6:    $v := v.parent$ 
7: for  $j := v.RME + 1$  to  $i - 1$  do
8:    $NDL := NDL \cdot L(v).RHS(j)$ 
9: Return  $NDL$ .

```

**Fig. 9** Algorithm of  $new\_dl(\tau, p, i)$ **Table 1** The number of rules which two methods obtained

	our method		
	obtained	not obtained	total
K&M	392	3,946	4,338
	1,987		
total	2,379		6,325

**4. Experiment**

We performed an experiment to evaluate our method. We applied our method to 49,208 sentences in the Wall Street Journal section of the Penn Treebank [17]. We implemented our method in Java. The experiment was run on a PC (Intel core i7 3.40GHz) with 8GB main memory, running Windows 7 Professional. The threshold  $\sigma$  was set to 100. We obtained 2,379 rules. This took about 34 minutes<sup>†</sup>. Table 1 shows the number of rules which were obtained by our method and Kato and Matsubara's method. Our method obtained 1,987 rules which Kato and Matsubara's method did not. This means that our method increases the coverage of error correction. On the other hand, 3,946 rules can not be obtained by our method. However, this is not disadvantageous since we can use all rules together.

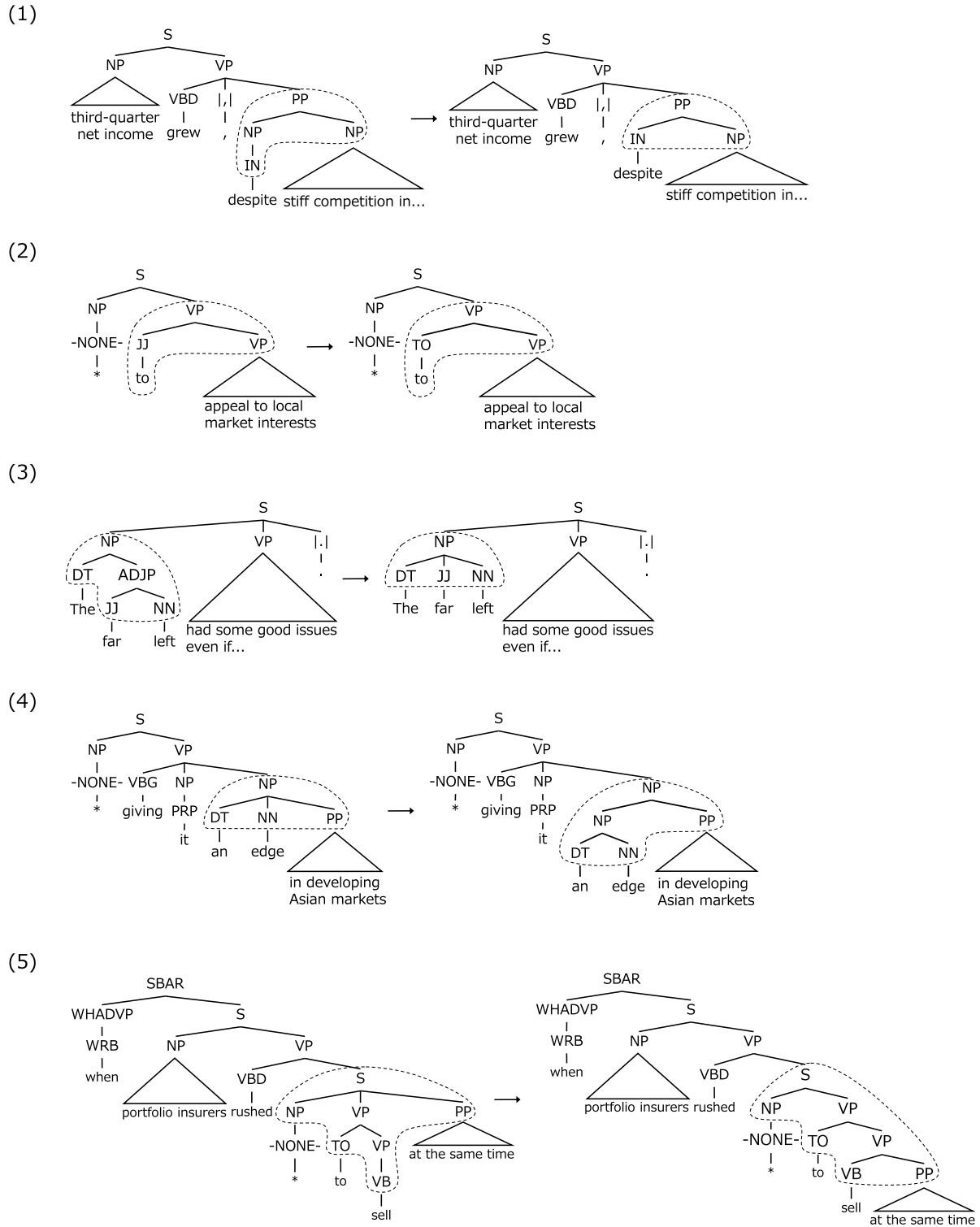
To measure the precision of the rules which our method obtains, we applied the rules to the WSJ section<sup>††</sup>. Because it is time-consuming and expensive to evaluate all the rules, we only evaluated the rules with the 300 highest scores. A person (not the authors) manually checks whether or not each rule corrects errors. The precision  $p$  is measured in the same way as [16]:

$$p = \frac{\# \text{ of the positions where an error is corrected}}{\# \text{ of the positions to which some rule is applied}}$$

The number of the positions to which 300 rules are applied is 605. The number of the positions where an error is corrected is 466. Therefore, the precision of our method is 77.0%. The precision of the previous method [16] is 71.6%. We measured the precision of each rule. The precision of 196 rules reached 100%. 155 of the 196 rules could not

<sup>†</sup>A naive method which enumerates all patterns could not work.

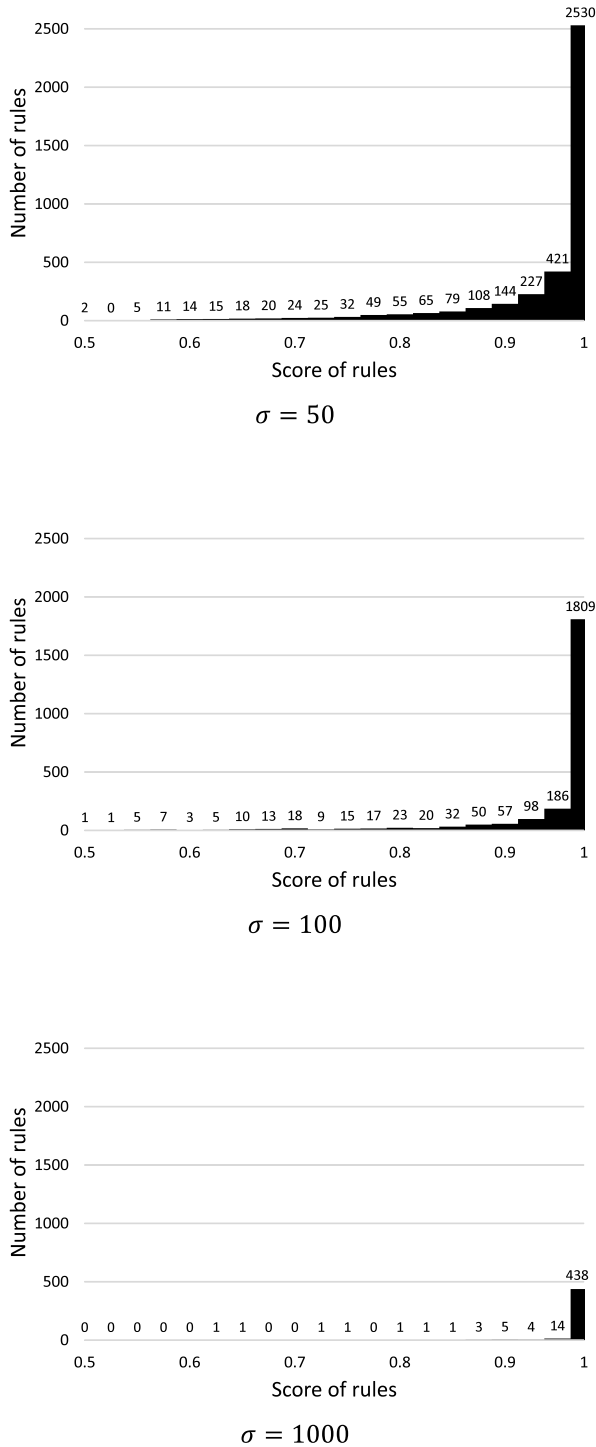
<sup>††</sup>It is difficult to measure the recall of our method because it requires the treebank which includes no error.



**Fig. 10** Examples of correcting syntactic annotation errors

be obtained by Kato and Matsubara's method. Those results show that our method can obtain the useful error correction rules which the previous method can not obtain and therefore increases the coverage of error correction. Figure 10 shows some examples of correcting errors which our

method corrects but the previous method does not. The partial parse trees enclosed within the dotted lines are sources and targets. Rule (1) deletes a useless node NP. Rule (2) replaces a label JJ with the correct label TO. Rule (3)-(5) corrects structural annotation errors.



**Fig. 11** The distributions of rules for scores when the threshold  $\sigma$  is varied

Figure 11 shows the distribution of the rules for scores when the threshold  $\sigma$  is varied. These graphs show that our method tends to obtain rules with high scores. This tendency became stronger in the case where the threshold  $\sigma$  was set to a high value, while the total number of obtained rules decreased.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we proposed a new method of correcting annotation errors in a treebank. Our method is based on tree mining. An experiment showed that our method can obtain rules which the previous method can not obtain. The proposed method and the previous one are complementary. That is, by both methods, we can expect to achieve wider coverage of error correction.

If a source pattern has several target patterns, our method simply transforms the source to the most frequent target. Furthermore, there exist cases where source patterns do not include errors. To improve the precision, we will explore how to select a correct target and how to identify whether or not an occurrence of a source pattern includes errors.

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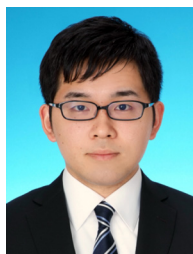


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