

# Re-structuring, Re-labeling, and Re-aligning for Syntax-Based Machine Translation

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*This article shows that the structure of bilingual material from standard parsing and alignment tools is not optimal for training syntax-based statistical machine translation (SMT) systems. We present three modifications to the MT training data to improve the accuracy of a state-of-the-art syntax MT system: re-structuring changes the syntactic structure of training parse trees to enable reuse of substructures; re-labeling alters bracket labels to enrich rule application context; and re-aligning unifies word alignment across sentences to remove bad word alignments and refine good ones. Better structures, labels, and word alignments are learned by the EM algorithm. We show that each individual technique leads to improvement as measured by BLEU, and we also show that the greatest improvement is achieved by combining them. We report an overall 1.48 BLEU improvement on the NIST08 evaluation set over a strong baseline in Chinese/English translation.*

## 1. Background

Syntactic methods have recently proven useful in statistical machine translation (SMT). In this article, we explore different ways of exploiting the structure of bilingual material for syntax-based SMT. In particular, we ask what kinds of tree structures, tree labels, and word alignments are best suited for improving end-to-end translation accuracy. We begin with structures from standard parsing and alignment tools, then use the EM algorithm to revise these structures in light of the translation task. We report an overall +1.48 BLEU improvement on a standard Chinese-to-English test.

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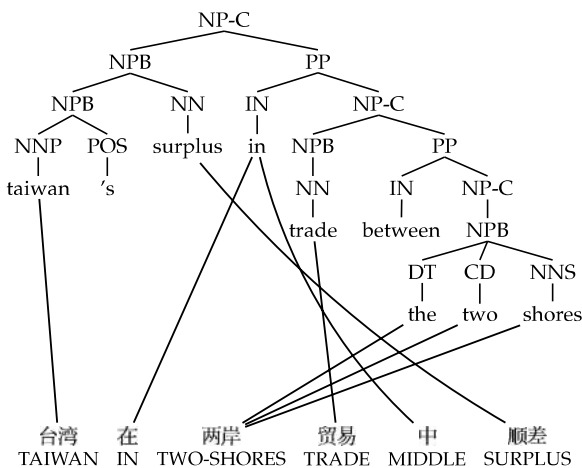
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We carry out our experiments in the context of a string-to-tree translation system. This system accepts a Chinese string as input, and it searches through a multiplicity of English tree outputs, seeking the one with the highest score. The string-to-tree framework is motivated by a desire to improve target-language grammaticality. For example, it is common for string-based MT systems to output sentences with no verb. By contrast, the string-to-tree framework forces the output to respect syntactic requirements—for example, if the output is a syntactic tree whose root is S (sentence), then the S will generally have a child of type VP (verb phrase), which will in turn contain a verb. Another motivation is better treatment of function words. Often, these words are not literally translated (either by themselves or as part of a phrase), but rather they control what happens in the translation, as with case-marking particles or passive-voice particles. Finally, much of the re-ordering we find in translation is syntactically motivated, and this can be captured explicitly with syntax-based translation rules. Tree-to-tree systems are also promising, but in this work we concentrate only on target-language syntax. The target-language generation problem presents a difficult challenge, whereas the source sentence is fixed and usually already grammatical.

To prepare training data for such a system, we begin with a bilingual text that has been automatically processed into segment pairs. We require that the segments be single sentences on the English side, whereas the corresponding Chinese segments may be sentences, sentence fragments, or multiple sentences. We then parse the English side of the bilingual text using a re-implementation of the Collins (1997) parsing model, which we train on the Penn English Treebank (Marcus, Santorini, and Marcinkiewicz 1993). Finally, we word-align the segment pairs according to IBM Model 4 (Brown et al. 1993). Figure 1 shows a sample (tree, string, alignment) triple.

We build two generative statistical models from this data. First, we construct a smoothed *n*-gram language model (Kneser and Ney 1995; Stolcke 2002) out of the English side of the bilingual data. This model assigns a probability  $P(e)$  to any candidate translation, rewarding translations whose subsequences have been observed frequently in the training data.

Second, we build a syntax-based translation model that we can use to produce candidate English trees from Chinese strings. Following previous work in noisy-channel



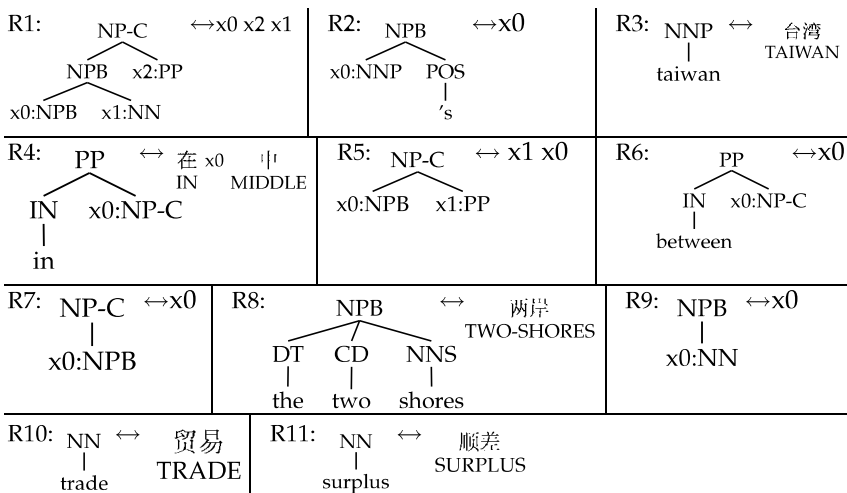
**Figure 1**  
A sample learning case for the syntax-based machine translation system described in this article.

SMT (Brown et al. 1993), our model operates in the English-to-Chinese direction—we envision a generative top-down process by which an English tree is gradually transformed (by probabilistic rules) into an observed Chinese string. We represent a collection of such rules as a tree transducer (Knight and Graehl 2005). In order to construct this transducer from parsed and word-aligned data, we use the GHKM rule extraction algorithm of Galley et al. (2004). This algorithm computes the unique set of **minimal rules** needed to explain any sentence pair in the data. Figure 2 shows all the minimal rules extracted from the example (tree, string, alignment) triple in Figure 1. Note that rules specify rotation (e.g., R1, R5), direct translation (R3, R10), insertion and deletion (R2, R4), and tree traversal (R9, R7). The extracted rules for a given example form a **derivation tree**.

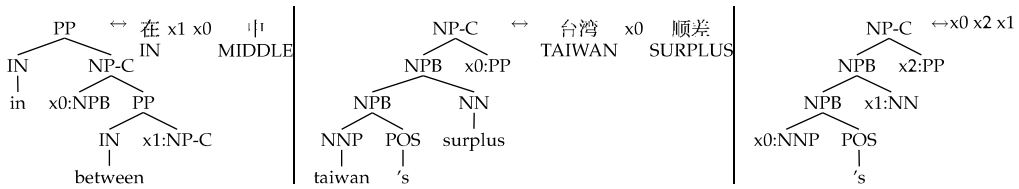
We collect all rules over the entire bilingual corpus, and we normalize rule counts in this way:  $P(rule) = \frac{count(rule)}{count(LHS-root(rule))}$ . When we apply these probabilities to derive an English sentence  $e$  and a corresponding Chinese sentence  $c$ , we wind up computing the joint probability  $P(e, c)$ . We smooth the rule counts with Good-Turing smoothing (Good 1953).

This extraction method assigns each unaligned Chinese word to a default rule in the derivation tree. We next follow Galley et al. (2006) in allowing unaligned Chinese words to participate in multiple translation rules. In this case, we obtain a **derivation forest** of minimal rules. Galley et al. show how to use EM to count rules over derivation forests and obtain Viterbi derivation trees of minimal rules. We also follow Galley et al. in collecting **composed rules**, namely, compositions of minimal rules. These larger rules have been shown to substantially improve translation accuracy (Galley et al. 2006; DeNeefe et al. 2007). Figure 3 shows some of the additional rules.

With these models, we can decode a new Chinese sentence by enumerating and scoring all of the English trees that can be derived from it by rule. The score is a weighted product of  $P(e)$  and  $P(e, c)$ . To search efficiently, we employ the CKY dynamic-programming parsing algorithm (Yamada and Knight 2002; Galley et al. 2006). This algorithm builds English trees on top of Chinese spans. In each cell of the CKY matrix, we store the non-terminal symbol at the root of the English tree being built up. We also



**Figure 2**  
Minimal rules extracted from the learning case in Figure 1 using the GHKM procedure.



**Figure 3**  
Additional rules extracted from the learning case in Figure 1.

store English words that appear at the left and right corners of the tree, as these are needed for computing the  $P(e)$  score when cells are combined. For CKY to work, all transducer rules must be broken down, or binarized, into rules that contain at most two variables—more efficient search can be gained if this binarization produces rules that can be incrementally scored by the language model (Melamed, Satta, and Wellington 2004; Zhang et al. 2006). Finally, we employ **cube pruning** (Chiang 2007) for further efficiency in the search.

When scoring translation candidates, we add several smaller models. One model rewards longer translation candidates, off-setting the language model’s desire for short output. Other models punish rules that drop Chinese content words or introduce spurious English content words. We also include lexical smoothing models (Gale and Sampson 1996; Good 1953) to help distinguish good low-count rules from bad low-count rules. The final score of a translation candidate is a weighted linear combination of  $\log P(e)$ ,  $\log P(e, c)$ , and the scores from these additional smaller models. We obtain weights through minimum error-rate training (Och 2003).

The system thus constructed performs fairly well at Chinese-to-English translation, as reflected in the NIST06 common evaluation of machine translation quality.<sup>1</sup>

However, it would be surprising if the parse structures and word alignments in our bilingual data were somehow perfectly suited to syntax-based SMT—we have so far used out-of-the-box tools like IBM Model 4 and a Treebank-trained parser. Huang and Knight (2006) already investigated whether different syntactic labels would be more appropriate for SMT, though their study was carried out on a weak baseline translation system. In this article, we take a broad view and investigate how changes to syntactic structures, syntactic labels, and word alignments can lead to substantial improvements in translation quality on top of a strong baseline. We design our methods around problems that arise in MT data whose parses and alignments use some Penn Treebank-style annotations. We believe that some of the techniques will apply to other annotation schemes, but conclusions here are limited to Penn Treebank-style trees.

The rest of this article is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the corpora and model configurations used in our experiments. In each of the next three sections we present a technique for modifying the training data to improve syntax MT accuracy: tree re-structuring in Section 3, tree re-labeling in Section 4, and re-aligning in Section 5. In each of these three sections, we also present experiment results to show the impact of each individual technique on end-to-end MT accuracy. Section 6 shows the improvement made by combining all three techniques. We conclude in Section 7.

<sup>1</sup> [http://nist.gov/speech/tests/mt/2006/doc/mt06eval.official\\_results.html](http://nist.gov/speech/tests/mt/2006/doc/mt06eval.official_results.html).

## 2. Corpora for Experiments

For our experiments, we use a 245 million word Chinese/English bitext, available from LDC. A re-implementation of the Collins (1997) parser runs on the English half of the bitext to produce parse trees, and GIZA runs on the entire bitext to produce M4 word alignments. We extract a subset of 36 million words from the entire bitext, by selecting only sentences in the mainland news domain. We extract translation rules from these selected 36 million words. Experiments show that our Chinese/English syntax MT systems built from this selected bitext give as high BLEU scores as from the entire bitext.

Our development set consists of 1,453 lines and is extracted from the NIST02–NIST05 evaluation sets, for tuning of feature weights. The development set is from the newswire domain, and we chose it to represent a wide period of time rather than a single year. We use the NIST08 evaluation set as our test set. Because the NIST08 evaluation set is a mix of newswire text and Web text, we also report the BLEU scores on the newswire portion.

We use two 5-gram language models. One is trained on the English half of the bitext. The other is trained on one billion words of monolingual data. Kneser–Ney smoothing (Kneser and Ney 1995) is applied to both language models. Language models are represented using randomized data structures similar to those of Talbot and Osborne (2007) in decoding for efficient RAM usage.

To test the significance of improvements over the baseline, we compute paired bootstrap p-values (Koehn 2004) for BLEU between the baseline system and each improved system.

## 3. Re-structuring Trees for Training

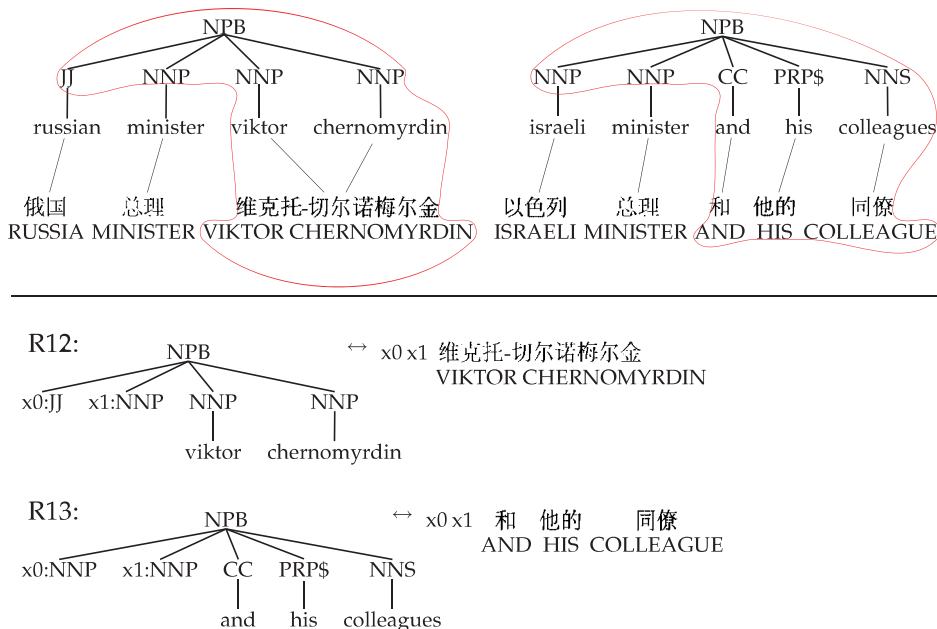
Our translation system is trained on Chinese/English data, where the English side has been automatically parsed into Penn Treebank-style trees. One striking fact about these trees is that they contain many flat structures. For example, base noun phrases frequently have five or more direct children. It is well known in monolingual parsing research that these flat structures cause problems. Although thousands of rewrite rules can be learned from the Penn Treebank, these rules still do not cover the new rewrites observed in held-out test data. For this reason, and to extract more general knowledge, many monolingual parsing models are **markovized** so that they can produce flat structures incrementally and horizontally (Collins 1997; Charniak 2000). Other parsing systems binarize the training trees in a pre-processing step, then learn to model the binarized corpus (Petrov et al. 2006); after parsing, their results are flattened back in a post-processing step. In addition, Johnson (1998b) shows that different types of tree structuring (e.g., the Chomsky adjunction representation vs. the Penn Treebank II representation) can have a large effect on the parsing performance of a PCFG estimated from these trees.

We find that flat structures are also problematic for syntax-based machine translation. The rules we learn from tree/string/alignment triples often lack sufficient generalization power. For example, consider the training samples in Figure 4. We should be able to learn enough from these two samples to translate the new phrase

维克托-切尔诺梅尔金 和他的 同僚

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN AND HIS COLLEAGUE

into its English equivalent *victor chernomyrdin and his colleagues*.



**Figure 4** Learning translation rules from flat English structures.

However, the learned rules R12 and R13 do not fit together nicely. R12 can translate 维克托-切尔诺梅尔金 into an English base noun phrase (NPB) that includes *viktor chernomyrdin*, but only if it is preceded by words that translate into an English JJ and an English NNP. Likewise, R13 can translate 和 他的 同僚 into an NPB that includes *and his colleagues*, but only if preceded by two NNPs. Both rules want to create an NPB, and neither can supply the other with what it needs.

If we re-structure the training trees as shown in Figure 5, we get much better behavior. Now rule R14 translates 维克托-切尔诺梅尔金 into a free-standing NPB. This gives rule R15 the ability to translate 和 他的 同僚, because it finds the necessary NPB to its left.

Here, we are re-structuring the trees in our MT training data by **binarizing** them. This allows us to extract better translation rules, though of course an extracted rule may have more than two variables. Whether the rules themselves should be binarized is a separate question, addressed in Melamed, Satta, and Wellington (2004) and Zhang et al. (2006). One can decide to re-structure training data trees, binarize translation rules, or do both, or do neither. Here we focus on English tree re-structuring.

In this section, we explore the generalization ability of simple re-structuring methods like left-, right-, and head-binarization, and also their combinations. Simple binarization methods binarize syntax trees in a consistent fashion (left-, right-, or head-) and thus cannot guarantee that all the substructures can be factored out. For example, consistent right binarization of the training examples in Figure 4 makes available R14, but misses R15. We therefore also introduce a **parallel re-structuring** method in which we binarize both to the left and right at the same time, resulting in a binarization forest. We employ the EM algorithm (Dempster, Laird, and Rubin 1977) to learn the binarization bias for each tree node in the corpus from the parallel alternatives.

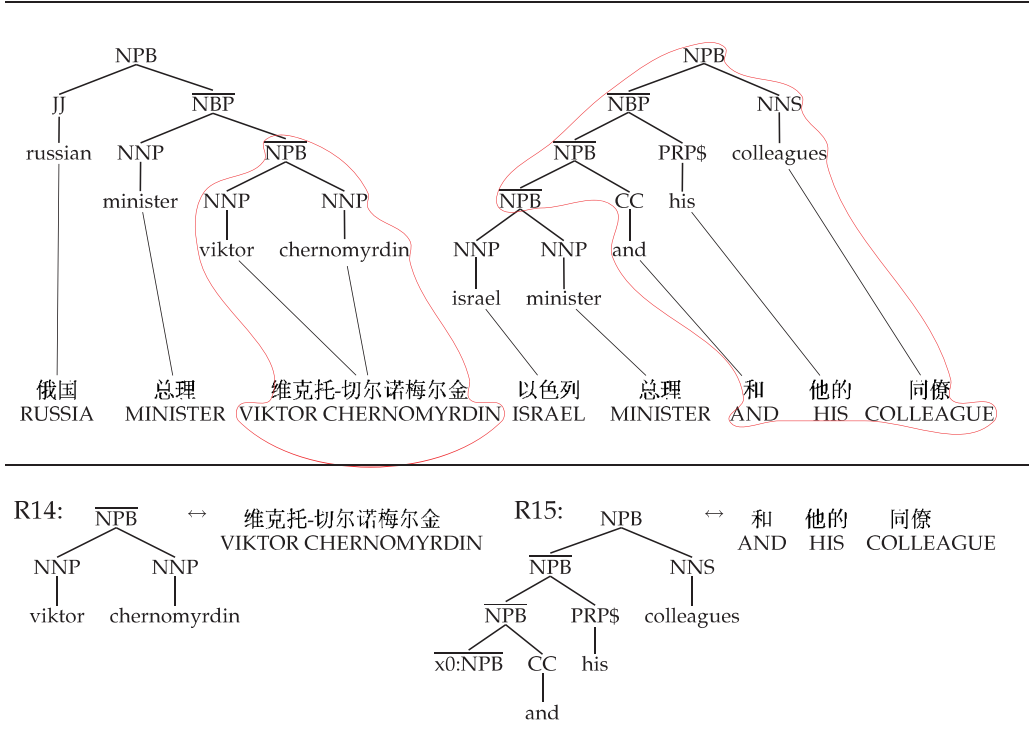


Figure 5 Learning translation rules from binarized English structures.

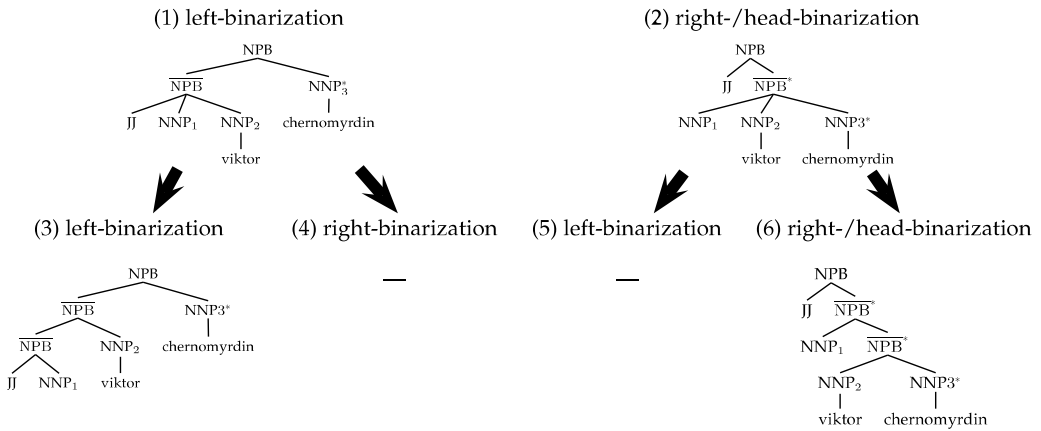
### 3.1 Some Concepts

We now explain some concepts to facilitate the descriptions of the re-structuring methods. We train our translation model on **alignment graphs** (Galley et al. 2004). An alignment graph is a tuple of a source-language sentence  $f$ , a target-language parse tree that yields  $e$  and translates from  $f$ , and the word alignments  $a$  between  $e$  and  $f$ . The graphs in Figures 1, 4, and 5 are examples of alignment graphs.

In the alignment graph, a node in the parse tree is called **admissible** if rules can be extracted from it. We can extract rules from a node if and only if the yield of the tree node is consistent with the word alignments—the  $f$  string covered by the node is contiguous but not empty, and the  $f$  string does not align to any  $e$  string that is not covered by the node. An admissible tree node is one where rules overlap. Figure 6 shows different binarizations of the left tree in Figure 4. In this figure, the  $\overline{NPB}$  node in tree (1) is not admissible because the  $f$  string, V-C, that the node covers also aligns to  $NNP_3$ , which is not covered by the  $\overline{NPB}$ . Node  $\overline{NPB}$  in tree (2), on the other hand, is admissible.

A set of sibling tree nodes is called **factorizable** if we can form an admissible new node dominating them. In Figure 6, sibling nodes  $NNP_1$ ,  $NNP_2$ , and  $NNP_3$  are factorizable because we can factorize them out and form a new node  $\overline{NPB}$ , resulting in tree (2). Sibling tree nodes  $JJ$ ,  $NNP_1$ , and  $NNP_2$  are not factorizable. Not all sibling nodes are factorizable, so not all sub-phrases can be acquired and syntactified. Our main purpose is to re-structure parse trees by factorization such that syntactified sub-phrases can be employed in translation.

With these concepts defined, we now present the re-structuring methods.



**Figure 6** Left, right, and head binarizations on the left tree in Figure 4. Tree leaves of nodes JJ and NNP<sub>1</sub> are omitted for convenience. Heads are marked with \*. New nonterminals introduced by binarization are denoted by X-bars.

### 3.2 Binarizing Syntax Trees

We re-structure parse trees by binarizing the trees. We are going to binarize a tree node  $n$  that dominates  $r$  children  $n_1, \dots, n_r$ . Binarization is performed by introducing new tree nodes to dominate a subset of the children nodes. We allow ourselves to form only one new node at a time to avoid over-generalization. Because labeling is not the concern of this section, we re-label the newly formed nodes as  $\bar{n}$ .

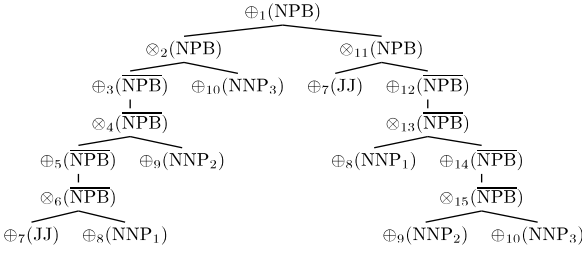
**3.2.1 Simple Binarization Methods.** The **left binarization** of node  $n$  (e.g., the NPB in tree (1) of Figure 6) factorizes the leftmost  $r - 1$  children by forming a new node  $\bar{n}$  (i.e., the  $\overline{\text{NPB}}$  in tree (1)) to dominate them, leaving the last child  $n_r$  untouched; and then makes the new node  $\bar{n}$  the left child of  $n$ . The method then recursively left-binarizes the newly formed node  $\bar{n}$  until two leaves are reached. We left-binarize the left tree in Figure 4 into Figure 6 (1).

The **right binarization** of node  $n$  factorizes the rightmost  $r - 1$  children by forming a new node  $\bar{n}$  (i.e., the  $\overline{\text{NPB}}$  in tree (2)) to dominate them, leaving the first child  $n_1$  untouched; and then makes the new node  $\bar{n}$  the right child of  $n$ . The method then recursively right-binarizes the newly formed node  $\bar{n}$ . For instance, we right-binarize the left tree in Figure 4 into Figure 6 (2) and then into Figure 6 (6).

The **head binarization** of node  $n$  left-binarizes  $n$  if the head is the first child; otherwise, it right-binarizes  $n$ . We prefer right-binarization to left-binarization when both are applicable under the head restriction because our initial motivation was to generalize the NPB-rooted translation rules. As we show in experiments, binarization of other types of phrases contributes to translation accuracy as well.

Any of these simple binarization methods is easy to implement, but each in itself is incapable of giving us all the factorizable sub-phrases. Binarizing all the way to the left, for example, from unbinarized tree to tree (1) and to tree (3) in Figure 6, does not enable us to acquire a substructure that yields NNP<sub>2</sub>, NNP<sub>3</sub>, and their translational equivalences. To obtain more factorizable sub-phrases, we need to **parallel-binarize** in both directions.





**Figure 7**  
Packed forest obtained by packing trees (3) and (6) in Figure 6.

3.2.2 *Parallel Binarization.* Simple binarizations transform a parse tree into another single parse tree. Parallel binarization transforms a parse tree into a binarization forest, packed to enable dynamic programming when we extract translation rules from it.

Borrowing terms from parsing semirings (Goodman 1999), a packed forest is composed of additive forest nodes ( $\oplus$ -nodes) and multiplicative forest nodes ( $\otimes$ -nodes). In the binarization forest, a  $\otimes$ -node corresponds to a tree node in the unbinarized tree or a new tree node introduced during tree binarization; and this  $\otimes$ -node composes several  $\oplus$ -nodes, forming a one-level substructure that is observed in the unbinarized tree or in one of its binarized tree. A  $\oplus$ -node corresponds to alternative ways of binarizing the same tree node and it contains one or more  $\otimes$ -nodes. The same  $\oplus$ -node can appear in more than one place in the packed forest, enabling sharing. Figure 7 shows a packed forest obtained by packing trees (3) and (6) in Figure 6 via the following tree parallel binarization algorithm.

We use a memoization procedure to recursively parallel-binarize a parse tree. To parallel-binarize a tree node  $n$  that has children  $n_1, \dots, n_r$ , we employ the following steps:

- If  $r \leq 2$ , parallel-binarize tree nodes  $n_1, \dots, n_r$ , producing binarization  $\oplus$ -nodes  $\oplus(n_1), \dots, \oplus(n_r)$ , respectively. Construct node  $\otimes(n)$  as the parent of  $\oplus(n_1), \dots, \oplus(n_r)$ . Construct an additive node  $\oplus(n)$  as the parent of  $\otimes(n)$ . Otherwise, execute the following steps.
- Right-binarize  $n$ , if any contiguous<sup>2</sup> subset of children  $n_2, \dots, n_r$  is factorizable, by introducing an intermediate tree node labeled as  $\bar{n}$ . We recursively parallel-binarize  $\bar{n}$  to generate a binarization forest node  $\oplus(\bar{n})$ . We also recursively parallel-binarize  $n_1$ , forming a binarization forest node  $\oplus(n_1)$ . We form a multiplicative forest node  $\otimes_R$  as the parent of  $\oplus(n_1)$  and  $\oplus(\bar{n})$ .
- Left-binarize  $n$  if any contiguous subset of  $n_1, \dots, n_{r-1}$  is factorizable and if this subset contains  $n_1$ . Similar to the previous right-binarization, we introduce an intermediate tree node labeled as  $\bar{n}$ , recursively parallel-binarize  $\bar{n}$  to generate a binarization forest node  $\oplus(\bar{n})$ , recursively

2 For practical purposes we factorize only subsets that cover contiguous spans to avoid introducing discontinuous constituents. In principle, the algorithm works fine without this condition.

parallel-binarize  $n_r$  to generate a binarization forest node  $\oplus(n_r)$ , and then form a multiplicative forest node  $\otimes_L$  as the parent of  $\oplus(\bar{n})$  and  $\oplus(n_r)$ .

- Form an additive node  $\oplus(n)$  as the parent of the two already formed multiplicative nodes  $\otimes_L$  and  $\otimes_R$ .

The (left and right) binarization conditions consider any subset to enable the factorization of small constituents. For example, in the left tree of Figure 4, although the JJ, NNP<sub>1</sub>, and NNP<sub>2</sub> children of the NPB are not factorizable, the subset JJ NNP<sub>1</sub> is factorizable. The binarization from this tree to the tree in Figure 6 (1) serves as a relaying step for us to factorize JJ and NNP<sub>1</sub> in the tree in Figure 6 (3). The left-binarization condition is stricter than the right-binarization condition to avoid spurious binarization, that is, to avoid the same subconstituent being reached via both binarizations.

In parallel binarization, nodes are not always binarizable in both directions. For example, we do not need to right-binarize tree (2) because NNP<sub>2</sub> and NNP<sub>3</sub> are not factorizable, and thus cannot be used to form sub-phrases. It is still possible to right-binarize tree (2) without affecting the correctness of the parallel binarization algorithm, but that will spuriously increase the branching factor of the search for the rule extraction, because we will have to expand more tree nodes.

A special version of parallel binarization is the **parallel head binarization**, where both the left and the right binarization must respect the head propagation property at the same time. Parallel head binarization guarantees that new nodes introduced by binarization always contain the head constituent, which will become convenient when head-driven syntax-based language models are integrated into a bottom-up decoding search by intersecting with the trees inferred from the translation model.

Our re-structuring of MT training trees is realized by tree binarization, but this does not mean that our re-structuring method can factor out phrases covered only by two (binary) constituents. In fact, a nice property of parallel binarization is that for any factorizable substructure in the unbinarized tree, we can always find a corresponding admissible  $\oplus$ -node in the parallel-binarized packed forest, and thus we can always extract that phrase. A leftmost substructure like the lowest  $\overline{\text{NPB}}$ -subtree in tree (3) of Figure 6 can be made factorizable by several successive left binarizations, resulting in the  $\oplus_5(\overline{\text{NPB}})$ -node in the packed forest in Figure 7. A substructure in the middle can be factorized by the composition of several left- and right-binarizations. Therefore, after a tree is parallel-binarized, to make the sub-phrases available to the MT system, all we need to do is to extract rules from the admissible nodes in the packed forest. Rules that can be extracted from the original unstructured tree can be extracted from the packed forest as well.

Parallel binarization results in parse forests. Thus translation rules need to be extracted from training data consisting of (e-forest, **f**, **a**)-tuples.

### 3.3 Extracting Translation Rules from (e-forest, **f**, **a**)-tuples

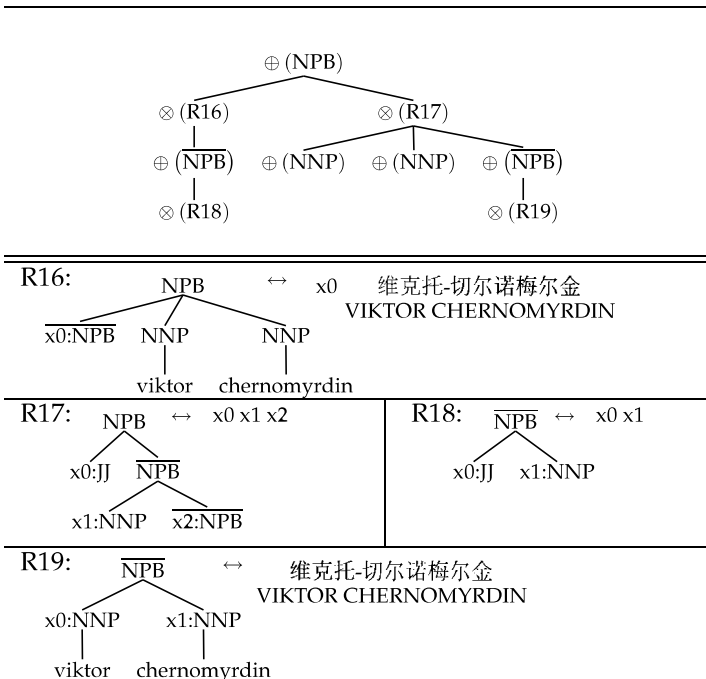
Our algorithm to extract rules from (e-forest, **f**, **a**)-tuples is a natural generalization of the (e-parse, **f**, **a**)-based rule extraction algorithm in Galley et al. (2006). A similar problem is also elegantly addressed in Mi and Huang (2008) in detail. The forest-based rule extraction algorithm takes as input a (e-forest, **f**, **a**)-triple, and outputs a derivation forest (Galley et al. 2006), which consists of overlapping translation rules. The algorithm recursively traverses the e-forest top-down, extracts rules only at admissible e-forest

nodes, and transforms e-forest nodes into synchronous derivation-forest nodes via the following two procedures, depending on which condition is met.

- Condition 1: If we reach an additive e-forest node, for each of its children, which are multiplicative e-forest nodes, we go to condition 2 to recursively extract rules from it to obtain a set of multiplicative derivation-forest nodes, respectively. We form an additive derivation-forest node, and take these newly produced multiplicative derivation-forest nodes (by going to condition 2) as children. After this, we return the additive derivation-forest node.

For instance, at node  $\oplus_1(\text{NPB})$  in Figure 7, for each of its children, e-forest nodes  $\otimes_2(\text{NPB})$  and  $\otimes_{11}(\text{NPB})$ , we go to condition 2 to extract rules on it, to form multiplicative derivation forest nodes,  $\otimes(\text{R16})$  and  $\otimes(\text{R17})$  in Figure 8.

- Condition 2: If we reach a multiplicative e-forest node, we extract a set of rules rooted at it using the procedure in Galley et al. (2006); and for each rule, we form a multiplicative derivation-forest node, and go to condition 1 to form the additive derivation-forest nodes for the additive frontier e-forest nodes of the newly extracted rule, and then make these additive derivation-forest nodes the children of the multiplicative derivation-forest node. After this, we return a set of multiplicative derivation-forest nodes, each corresponding to one rule extracted from the multiplicative e-forest node we just reached.



**Figure 8**  
A synchronous derivation forest built from a (e-forest, *f*, *a*) triple. The e-forest is shown in Figure 7.

For example, at node  $\otimes_{11}$ (NPB) in Figure 7, we extract a rule from it and form derivation-forest node  $\otimes$ (R17) in Figure 8. We then go to condition 1 to obtain, for each of the additive frontier e-forest nodes (in Figure 7) of this rule, a derivation-forest node, namely,  $\oplus$ (NNP),  $\oplus$ (NNP), and  $\oplus$ (NPB) in Figure 8. We make these derivation-forest  $\oplus$ -nodes the children of derivation-forest node  $\otimes$ (R17).

This procedure transforms the packed e-forest in Figure 7 into a packed synchronous derivation in Figure 8. This algorithm is an extension of the extraction algorithm in Galley et al. (2006), in the sense that we have an extra condition (1) to relay rule extraction on additive e-forest nodes.

The forest-based rule extraction algorithm produces much larger grammars than the tree-based one, making it difficult to scale to very large training data. From a 50M-word Chinese-to-English parallel corpus, we can extract more than 300 million translation rules, while the tree-based rule extraction algorithm gives approximately 100 million. However, the restructured trees from the simple binarization methods are not guaranteed to give the best trees for syntax-based machine translation. What we desire is a binarization method that still produces single parse trees, but is able to mix left binarization and right binarization in the same tree. In the following, we use the EM algorithm to learn the desirable binarization on the forest of binarization alternatives proposed by the parallel binarization algorithm.

### 3.4 Learning How to Binarize Via the EM Algorithm

The basic idea of applying the EM algorithm to choose a re-structuring is as follows. We perform a set  $\{\beta\}$  of binarization operations on a parse tree  $\tau$ . Each binarization  $\beta$  is the sequence of binarizations on the necessary (i.e., factorizable) nodes in  $\tau$  in pre-order. Each binarization  $\beta$  results in a restructured tree  $\tau_\beta$ . We extract rules from  $(\tau_\beta, \mathbf{f}, \mathbf{a})$ , generating a translation model consisting of parameters (i.e., rule probabilities)  $\theta$ . Our aim is to first obtain the rule probabilities that are the maximum likelihood estimate of the training tuples, and then produce the Viterbi binarization tree for each training tuple.

The probability  $P(\tau_\beta, \mathbf{f}, \mathbf{a})$  of a  $(\tau_\beta, \mathbf{f}, \mathbf{a})$ -tuple is what the basic syntax-based translation model is concerned with. It can be further computed by aggregating the rule probabilities  $P(r)$  in each derivation  $\omega$  in the set of all derivations  $\Omega$  (Galley et al. 2004). That is,

$$P(\tau_\beta, \mathbf{f}, \mathbf{a}) = \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \prod_{r \in \omega} P(r) \quad (1)$$

The rule probabilities are estimated by the inside–outside algorithm (Lari and Young 1990; Knight, Graehl, and May 2008), which needs to run on derivation forests. Our previous sections have already presented algorithms to transform a parse tree into a binarization forest, and then transform the  $(e\text{-forest}, \mathbf{f}, \mathbf{a})$ -tuples into derivation forests (e.g., Figure 8), on which the inside–outside algorithm can then be applied.

In the derivation forests, an additive node labeled as  $A$  dominates several multiplicative nodes, each corresponding to a translation rule resulting from either left binarization or right binarization of the original structure. We use rule  $r$  to either refer to a rule or to a multiplicative node in the derivation forest. We use  $root(r)$  to represent the root label of the rule, and  $parent(r)$  to refer to the additive node that is the parent

of the node corresponding to the  $r$ . Each rule node (or multiplicative node) dominates several other additive children nodes, and we present the  $i^{th}$  child node as  $child_i(r)$ , among the total number of  $n$  children. For example, in Figure 8, for the rule  $r$  corresponding to the left child of the forest root (labeled as NPB),  $parent(r)$  is NPB, and  $child_1(NPB) = r$ . Based on these notations, we can compute the inside probability  $\alpha(A)$  of an additive node labeled as  $A$  and the outside probability  $\beta(B)$  of an additive forest node labeled as  $B$  as follows.

$$\alpha(A) = \sum_{r \in \{child(A)\}} P(r) \times \prod_{i=1 \dots n} \alpha(child_i(r)) \tag{2}$$

$$\beta(B) = \sum_{r: B \in \{child(r)\}} P(r) \times \beta(parent(r)) \times \prod_{C \in \{child(r)\} - \{B\}} \alpha(C) \tag{3}$$

In the expectation step, the contribution of each occurrence of a rule in a derivation-forest to the total expected count of that rule is computed as

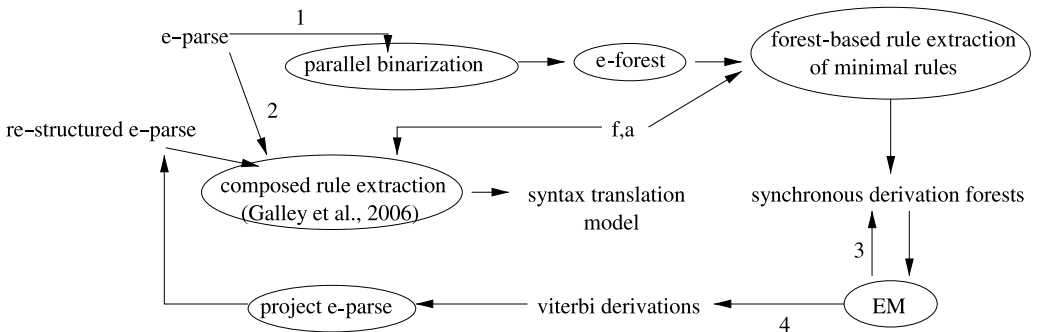
$$\beta(parent(r)) \times P(r) \times \prod_{i=1 \dots n} \alpha(child_i(r)) \tag{4}$$

In the maximization step, we use the expected counts of rules,  $\#r$ , to update the probabilities of the rules.

$$P(r) = \frac{\#r}{\sum_{rule\ q: root(q)=root(r)} \#q} \tag{5}$$

Because it is well known that applying EM with tree fragments of different sizes causes overfitting (Johnson 1998a), and because it is also known that syntax MT models with larger composed rules in the mix significantly outperform rules that minimally explain the training data (minimal rules) in translation accuracy (Galley et al. 2006), we use minimal rules to construct the derivation forests from (e-binarization-forest,  $f$ ,  $a$ )-tuples during running of the EM algorithm, but, after the EM re-structuring is finished, we build the final translation model using composed rules for MT evaluation.

Figure 9 is the actual pipeline that we use for EM binarization. We first generate a packed e-forest via parallel binarization. We then extract minimal translation rules from



**Figure 9** Using the EM algorithm to choose re-structuring.

the (e-forest,  $\mathbf{f}$ ,  $\mathbf{a}$ )-tuples, producing synchronous derivation forests. We run the inside–outside algorithm on the derivation forests until convergence. We obtain the Viterbi derivations and project the English parses from the derivations. Finally, we extract composed rules using Galley et al. (2006)’s (e-tree,  $\mathbf{f}$ ,  $\mathbf{a}$ )-based rule extraction algorithm.

When extracting composed rules from (e-parse,  $\mathbf{f}$ ,  $\mathbf{a}$ )-tuples, we use an “ignoring- $\bar{X}$ -node” trick to the rule extraction method in Galley et al. (2006) to avoid breaking the local dependencies captured in complex rules. The trick is that new nodes introduced by binarization are not counted when computing the rule size limit unless they appear as the rule roots. The motivation is that newly introduced nodes break the local dependencies, deepening the parses. In Galley et al., a composed rule is extracted only if the number of internal nodes it contains does not exceed a limit, similar to the phrase length limit in phrase-based systems. This means that rules extracted from the restructured trees will be smaller than those from the unstructured trees, if the  $\bar{X}$  nodes are deleted from the rules. As shown in Galley et al., smaller rules lose context, and thus give lower translation accuracy. Ignoring  $\bar{X}$  nodes when computing the rule sizes preserves the unstructured rules in the resulting translation model and adds substructures as bonuses.

### 3.5 Experimental Results

We carried out experiments to evaluate different tree binarization methods in terms of translation accuracy for Chinese-to-English translation. The baseline syntax MT system was trained on the original, non-restructured trees. We also built one MT system by training on left-binarizations of training trees, and another by training on EM-binarizations of training trees.

Table 1 shows the results on end-to-end MT. The bootstrap p-values were computed for the pairwise BLEU comparison between the EM binarization and the baseline. The results show that tree binarization improves MT system accuracy, and that EM binarization outperforms left binarization. The results also show that the EM re-structuring significantly outperforms ( $p < 0.05$ ) the no re-structuring baseline on the NIST08 eval set.

The MT improvement by tree re-structuring is also validated by our previous work (Wang, Knight, and Marcu 2007), in which we reported a 1 BLEU point gain from EM binarization under other training/testing conditions; other simple binarization methods were examined in that work as well, showing that simple binarizations also improve MT accuracy, and that EM binarization consistently outperforms the simple binarization methods.

**Table 1**

Translation accuracy versus binarization algorithms. In this and all other tables reporting BLEU performance, statistically significant improvements over the baseline are highlighted.  $p$  = the paired bootstrap p-value computed between each system and the baseline, showing the level at which the two systems are significantly different.

EXPERIMENT	NIST08		NIST08-NW	
	BLEU	$p$	BLEU	$p$
no binarization (baseline)	29.12	—	35.33	—
left binarization	29.35	0.184	35.46	0.360
EM binarization	<b>29.74</b>	0.010	<b>36.12</b>	0.016

**Table 2**  
# admissible nodes, # rules versus re-structuring methods.

RE-STRUCTURING METHOD	# ADMISSIBLE NODES (M)	# RULES (M)
no binarization	13	76.0
left binarization	17.2	153.4
EM binarization	17.4	154.8

We think that these improvements are explained by the fact that tree re-structuring introduces more admissible trees nodes in the training trees and enables the forming of additional rules. As a result, re-structuring produces more rules. Table 2 shows the number of admissible nodes made available by each re-structuring method, as well as by the baseline. Table 2 also shows the sizes of the resulting grammars.

The EM binarization is able to introduce more admissible nodes because it mixes both left and right binarizations in the same tree. We computed the binarization biases learned by the EM algorithm for each nonterminal from the binarization forest of parallel head binarizations of the training trees (Table 3). Of course, the binarization bias chosen by left-/right-binarization methods would be 100% deterministic. One noticeable message from Table 3 is that most of the categories are actually biased toward left-binarization. The reason might be that the head sub-constituents of most English categories tend to be on the left.

Johnson (1998b) argues that the more nodes there are in a treebank, the stronger the independence assumptions implicit in the PCFG model are, and the less accurate the estimated PCFG will usually be—more nodes break more local dependencies. Our experiments, on the other hand, show MT accuracy improvement by introducing more admissible nodes. This initial contradiction actually makes sense. The key is that we use composed rules to build our final MT system and that we introduce the “ignoring- $\bar{X}$ -node” trick to preserve the local dependencies. More nodes in training trees weaken the accuracy of a translation model of minimal rules, but boost the accuracy of a translation model of composed rules.

**Table 3**  
Binarization bias learned by the EM re-structuring method on the model 4 word alignments.

nonterminal	left-binarization (%)	right-binarization (%)
NP	98	2
NPB	1	99
VP	95	5
PP	86	14
ADJP	67	33
ADVP	76	24
S	94	6
S-C	17	83
SBAR	93	7
QP	89	11
WHNP	98	2
SINV	94	6
CONJP	69	31

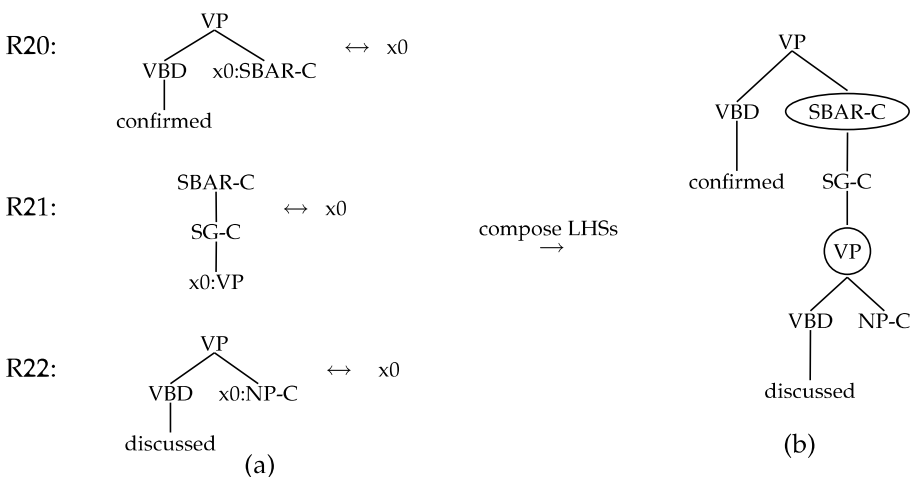
### 4. Re-Labeling Trees for Training

The syntax translation model explains (e-parse, f, a)-tuples by a series of applications of translation rules. At each derivation step, which rule to apply next depends only on the nonterminal label of the frontier node being expanded. In the Penn Treebank annotation, the nonterminal labels are too coarse to encode enough context information to accurately predict the next translation rule to apply. As a result, using the Penn Treebank annotation can license ill-formed subtrees (Figure 10). This subtree contains an error that induces a VP as an SG-C when the head of the VP is the finite verb *discussed*. The translation error leads to the ungrammatical "... confirmed discussed ...". This translation error occurs due to the fact that there is no distinction between finite VPs and non-finite VPs in Penn Treebank annotation. Monolingual parsing suffers similarly, but to a lesser degree.

Re-structuring of training trees enables the reuse of sub-constituent structures, but further introduces new nonterminals and actually reduces the context for rules, thus making this "coarse nonterminal" problem more severe. In Figure 11, R23 may be extracted from a construct like S(S CC S) via tree binarization, and R24 may be extracted from a construct like S(NP NP-C VP) via tree binarization. Composing R23 and R24 forms the structure in Figure 11(b), which, however, is ill-formed. This wrong structure in Figure 11(b) yields ungrammatical translations like *he likes reading she does not like reading*. Tree binarization enables the reuse of substructures, but causes over-generation of trees at the same time.

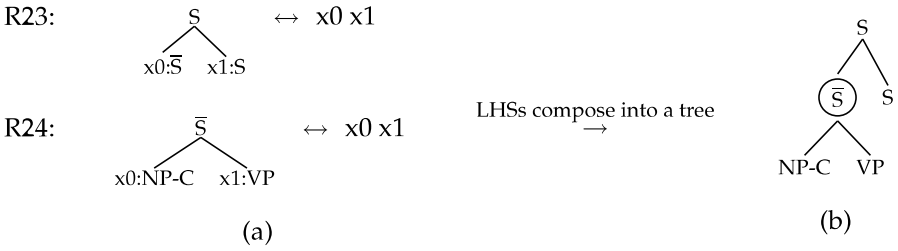
We solve the coarse-nonterminal problem by refining/re-labeling the training tree labels. Re-labeling is done by enriching the nonterminal label of each tree node based on its context information.

Re-labeling has already been used in monolingual parsing research to improve parsing accuracy of PCFGs. We are interested in two types of re-labeling methods: Linguistically motivated re-labeling (Klein and Manning 2003; Johnson 1998b) enriches the labels of parser training trees using parent labels, head word tag labels, and/or sibling labels. Automatic category splitting (Petrov et al. 2006) refines a nonterminal



**Figure 10** MT output errors due to coarse Penn Treebank annotations. Oval nodes in (b) are rule overlapping nodes. Subtree (b) is formed by composing the LHSs of R20, R21, and R22.





**Figure 11** Tree binarization over-generalizes the parse tree. Translation rules R23 and R24 are acquired from binarized training trees, aiming for reuse of substructures. Composing R23 and R24, however, results in an ill-formed tree. The new nonterminal  $\bar{S}$  introduced in tree binarization needs to be refined into different sub-categories to prevent R23 and R24 from being composed. Automatic category splitting can be employed for refining the  $\bar{S}$ .

by classifying the nonterminal into a fine-grained sub-category, and this sub-classing is learned via the EM algorithm. Category splitting is realized by several splitting-and-merging cycles. In each cycle, the nonterminals in the PCFG rules are split by splitting each nonterminal into two. The EM algorithm is employed to estimate the split PCFG on the Penn Treebank training trees. After that, 50% of the new nonterminals are merged based on some loss function, to avoid overfitting.

**4.1 Linguistic Re-labeling**

In the linguistically motivated approach, we employ the following set of rules to re-label tree nodes. In our MT training data:

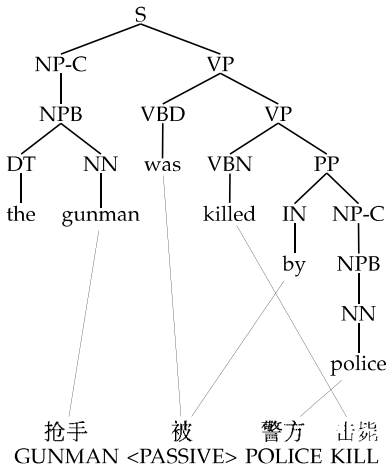
- SPLIT-VP: annotates each VP nodes with its head tag, and then merges all finite VP forms to a single VPF.
- SPLIT-IN: annotates each IN node with the combination of IN and its parent node label. IN is frequently overloaded in the Penn Treebank. For instance, its parent can be PP or SBAR.

These two operations re-label the tree in Figure 12(a1) to Figure 12(b1). Example rules extracted from these two trees are shown in Figure 12(a2) and Figure 12(b2), respectively. We apply this re-labeling on the MT training tree nodes, and then acquire rules from these re-labeled trees. We chose to split only these two categories because our syntax MT system tends to frequently make parse errors in these two categories, and because, as shown by Klein and Manning (2003), further refining the VP and IN categories is very effective in improving monolingual parsing accuracy.

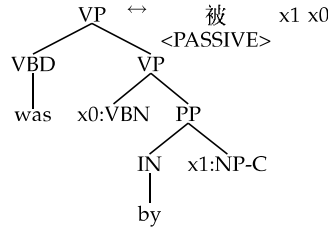
This type of re-labeling fixes the parse error in Figure 10. SPLIT-VP transforms the R18 root to VPF, and the R17 frontier node to VP.VBN. Thus R17 and R18 can never be composed, preventing the wrong tree being formed by the translation model.

**4.2 Statistical Re-labeling**

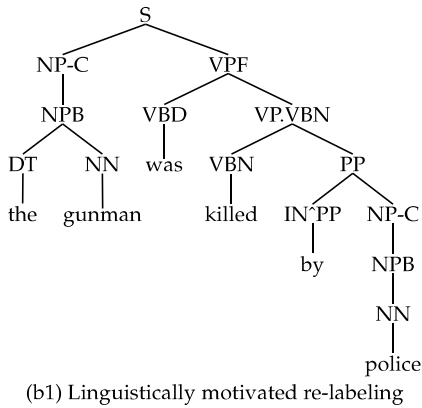
Our second re-labeling approach is to learn the split categories for the node labels of the training trees via the EM algorithm, as in Petrov et al. (2006). Rather than using



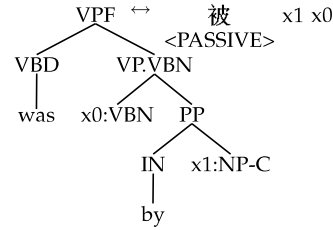
(a1) The original tree



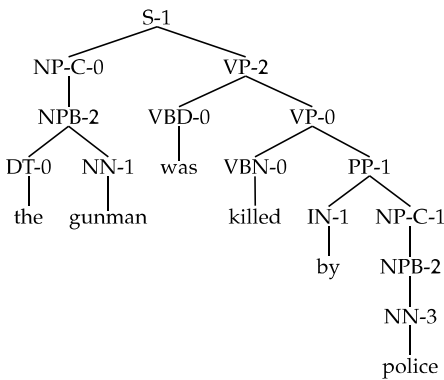
(a2) A VP rule extracted from (a1)



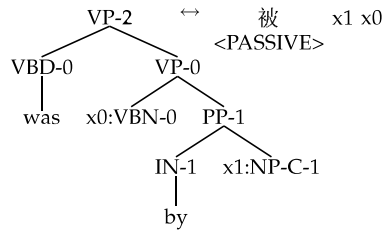
(b1) Linguistically motivated re-labeling



(b2) A VP rule extracted from (b1)



(c1) Automatic category splitting



(c2) A VP rule extracted from (c1)

**Figure 12**  
Re-labeling of parse trees.

their parser to directly produce category-split parse trees for the MT training data, we separate the parsing step and the re-labeling step. The re-labeling method is as follows.

1. Run a parser to produce the MT training trees.
2. Binarize the MT training trees via the EM binarization algorithm.
3. Learn an  $n$ -way split PCFG from the binarized trees via the algorithm described in Petrov et al. (2006).
4. Produce the Viterbi split annotations on the binarized training trees with the learned category-split PCFG.

As we mentioned earlier, tree binarization sometimes makes the decoder over-generalize the trees in the MT outputs, but we still binarize the training trees before performing category splitting, for two reasons. The first reason is that the improvement on MT accuracy we achieved by tree re-structuring indicates that the benefit we obtained from structure reuse triumphs the problem of tree over-generalization. The second is that carrying out category splitting on unbinarized training trees blows up the grammar—splitting a CFG rule of rank 10 results in  $2^{11}$  split rules. This re-labeling procedure tries to achieve further improvement by trying to fix the tree over-generalization problem of re-structuring while preserving the gain we have already obtained from tree re-structuring.

Figure 12(c1) shows a category-split tree, and Figure 12(c2) shows the minimal xRs rules extracted from the split tree. In Figure 12(c2), the two VPs (VP-0 and VP-2) now belong to two different categories and cannot be used in the same context.

In this re-labeling procedure, we separate the re-labeling step from the parsing step, rather than using a parser like the one in Petrov et al. (2006) to directly produce category-split parse trees on the English corpus. We think that we benefit from this separation in the following ways: First, this gives us the freedom to choose the parser to produce the initial trees. Second, this enables us to train the re-labeler on the domains where the MT system is trained, instead of on the Penn Treebank. Third, this enables us to choose our own tree binarization methods.

Tree re-labeling fragments the translation rules. Each refined rule now fits in fewer contexts than its corresponding coarse rule. Re-labeling, however, does not explode the grammar size, nor does re-labeling deteriorate the reuse of substructures. This is because the re-labeling (whether linguistic or automatic) results in very consistent annotations. Table 4 shows the sizes of the translation grammars from different re-labelings of the training trees, as well as that from the unlabeled ones.

**Table 4**

Grammar size vs. re-labeling methods. Re-labeling does not explode the grammar size.

RE-LABELING METHOD	# RULES (M)	NONTERMINAL SET SIZE
No re-labeling	154.80	144
Linguistically motivated re-labeling	154.97	210
4-way splitting (90% merging)	158.89	178
8-way splitting (90% merging)	160.62	195
4-way splitting (50% merging)	164.15	326

It would be very interesting to perform automatic category splitting with synchronous translation rules and run the EM algorithm on the synchronous derivation forests. Synchronous category splitting is computationally much more expensive, so we do not study it here.

### 4.3 Experimental Results

We ran end-to-end MT experiments by re-labeling the MT training trees. Our two baseline systems were a syntax MT system with neither re-structuring nor re-labeling, and a syntax MT system with re-structuring but no re-labeling. The linguistically motivated re-labeling method was applied directly on the original (unrestructured) training trees, so that it could be compared to the first baseline. The automatic category splitting re-labeling method was applied to binarized trees so as to avoid the explosion of the split grammar, so it is compared to the second baseline. The experiment results are shown in Table 5.

Both re-labeling methods help MT accuracy. Putting both re-structuring and re-labeling together results in 0.93 BLEU points improvement on NIST08 set, and 1 BLEU point improvement on the newswire subset. All p-values are computed between the re-labeling systems and Baseline1. The improvement made by the linguistically motivated re-labeling method is significant at the 0.05 level. Because the automatic category splitting is carried out on the top of EM re-structuring and because, as we have already shown, EM re-structuring significantly improves Baseline1, putting them together results in better translations with more confidence.

If we compare these results to those in Table 1, we notice that re-structuring tends to help MT accuracy more than re-labeling. We mentioned earlier that re-structuring overgeneralizes structures, but enables reuse of substructures. Results in Table 5 and Table 1 show substructure reuse mitigates structure over-generalization in our tree re-structuring method.

## 5. Re-aligning (Tree, String) Pairs for Training

So far, we have improved the English structures in our parsed, aligned training corpus. We now turn to improving the word alignments.

Some MT systems use the same model for alignment and translation—examples include Brown et al. (1993), Wu (1997), Alshawi, Bangalore, and Douglas (1998), Yamada and Knight (2001, 2002), and Cohn and Blunsom (2009). Other systems use Brown et al. for alignment, then collect counts for a completely different model, such as Och and Ney

**Table 5**

Impact of re-labeling methods on MT accuracy as measured by BLEU. Four-way splitting was carried out on EM-binarized trees; thus, it already benefits from tree re-structuring. All p-values are computed against Baseline1.

EXPERIMENT	NIST08		NIST08-NW	
	BLEU	p	BLEU	p
Baseline1 (no re-structuring and no re-labeling)	29.12	—	35.33	—
Linguistically motivated re-labeling	<b>29.57</b>	0.029	<b>35.85</b>	0.050
Baseline2 (EM re-structuring but no re-labeling)	29.74	—	36.12	—
4-way splitting (w/ 90% merging)	<b>30.05</b>	0.001	<b>36.42</b>	0.003

(2004) or Chiang (2007). Our basic syntax-based system falls into this second category, as we learn our syntactic translation model from a corpus aligned with word-based techniques. We would like to inject more syntactic reasoning into the alignment process. We start by contrasting two generative translation models.

### 5.1 The Traditional IBM Alignment Model

IBM Model 4 (Brown et al. 1993) learns a set of four probability tables to compute  $P(f|e)$  given a foreign sentence  $f$  and its target translation  $e$  via the following (simplified) generative story:

1. A fertility  $y$  for each word  $e_i$  in  $e$  is chosen with probability  $P_{fert}(y|e_i)$ .
2. A null word is inserted next to each fertility-expanded word with probability  $P_{null}$ .
3. Each token  $e_i$  in the fertility-expanded word and null string is translated into some foreign word  $f_i$  in  $f$  with probability  $P_{trans}(f_i|e_i)$ .
4. The position of each foreign word  $f_i$  that was translated from  $e_i$  is changed by  $\Delta$  (which may be positive, negative, or zero) with probability  $P_{distortion}(\Delta|\mathcal{A}(e_i), \mathcal{B}(f_i))$ , where  $\mathcal{A}$  and  $\mathcal{B}$  are functions over the source and target vocabularies, respectively.

Brown et al. (1993) describe an EM algorithm for estimating values for the four tables in the generative story. With those values in hand, we can calculate the highest-probability (Viterbi) alignment for any given string pair.

Two scale problems arise in this algorithm. The first is the time complexity of enumerating alignments for fractional count collection. This is solved by considering only a subset of alignments, and by bootstrapping the  $P_{trans}$  table with a simpler model that admits fast count collection via dynamic programming, such as IBM Model 1 (Brown et al. 1993) or Aachen HMM (Vogel, Ney, and Tillmann 1996). The second problem is one of space. In theory, the initial  $P_{trans}$  table contains a cell for every English word paired with every Chinese word—this would be infeasible. Fortunately, in practice, the table can be initialized with only those word pairs observed co-occurring in the parallel training text.

### 5.2 A Syntax Re-alignment Model

Our syntax translation model learns a single probability table to compute  $P(etree, f)$  given a foreign sentence  $f$  and a parsed target translation  $etree$ . In the following generative story we assume a starting variable with syntactic type  $v$ .

1. Choose a rule  $r$  to replace  $v$ , with probability  $P_{rule}(r|v)$ .
2. For each variable with syntactic type  $v_i$  in the partially completed (tree, string) pair, continue to choose rules  $r_i$  with probability  $P_{rule}(r_i|v_i)$  to replace these variables until there are no variables remaining.

We can use this model to explain unaligned (tree, string) pairs from our training data. With a large enough rule set, any given (tree, string) pair will admit many derivations. Consider again the example from Figure 1. The particular alignment associated

with that (tree, string) pair yields the minimal rules of Figure 2. A different alignment yields different rules. Figure 13 shows two other alignments and their corresponding minimal rules. As noted before, a set of minimal rules in proper sequence forms a derivation tree of rules that explains the (tree, string) pair. Because rules explain variable-size fragments (e.g., R35 vs. R6), the possible derivation trees of rules that explain a sentence pair have varying sizes. The smallest such derivation tree has a single large rule (which does not appear in Figure 13). When our model chooses a particular derivation tree of minimal rules to explain a given (tree, string) pair it implicitly chooses the alignment that produced these rules as well.<sup>3</sup> Our model can choose a derivation by using any of the rules in Figures 13 and 2. We would prefer it select the derivation that yields the good alignment in Figure 1.

We can also develop an EM learning approach for this model. As in the IBM approach, we have both time and space issues. Time complexity, as we will see subsequently, is  $O(mn^3)$ , where  $m$  is the number of nodes in the English training tree and  $n$  is the length of the corresponding Chinese string. Space is more of a problem. We would like to initialize EM with all the rules that might conceivably be used to explain the training data. However, this set is too large to practically enumerate.

To reduce the model space we first create a bootstrap alignment using a simpler word-based model. Then we acquire a set of minimal translation rules from the (tree, string, alignment) triples. Armed with these rules, we can discard the word-based alignments and **re-align** with the syntax translation model.

We summarize the approach described in this section as:

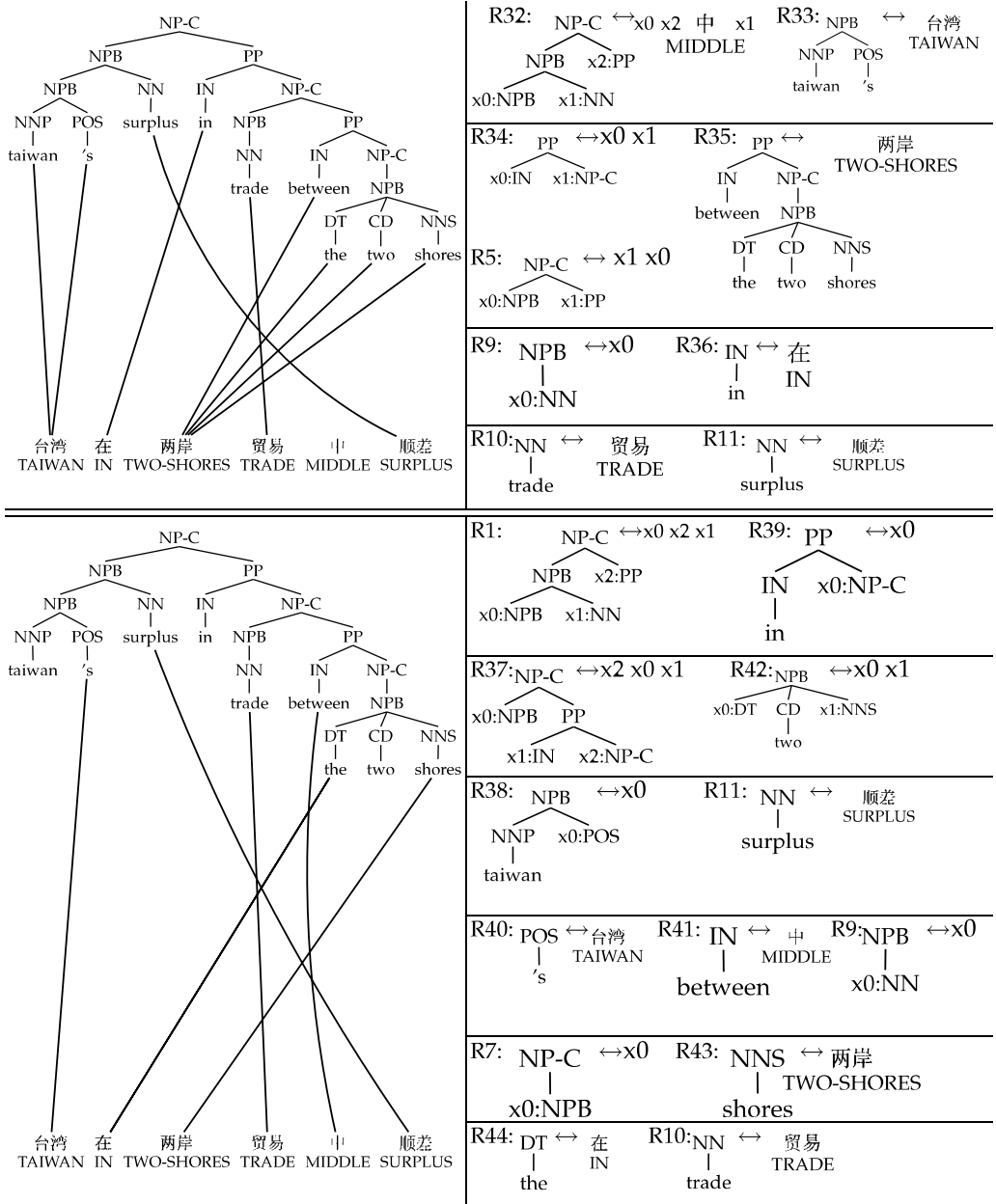
1. Obtain bootstrap alignments for a training corpus using word-based alignment.
2. Extract minimal rules from the corpus and alignments using GHKM, noting the partial alignment that is used to extract each rule.
3. Construct derivation forests for each (tree, string) pair, ignoring the alignments, and run EM to obtain Viterbi derivation trees, then use the annotated partial alignments to obtain Viterbi alignments.
4. Use the new alignments to re-train the full MT system, this time collecting composed rules as well as minimal rules.

### 5.3 EM Training for the Syntax Translation Model

Consider the example of Figure 13 again. The top alignment was the bootstrap alignment, and thus prior to any experiment we obtained the corresponding indicated minimal rule set and derivation. This derivation is reasonable but there are some poorly motivated rules, from a linguistic standpoint. The Chinese word 两岸 roughly means *the two shores* in this context, but the rule R35 learned from the alignment incorrectly includes *between*. However, other sentences in the training corpus have the correct

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<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking there is actually a one-to-many mapping between a derivation tree of minimal rules and the alignment that yields these rules, due to the handling of unaligned words. However, the choice of one partial alignment over another does not affect results and in practice we impose a one-to-one mapping between minimal rules and the partial alignments that imply them by selecting the most frequently observed partial alignment for a given minimal rule.

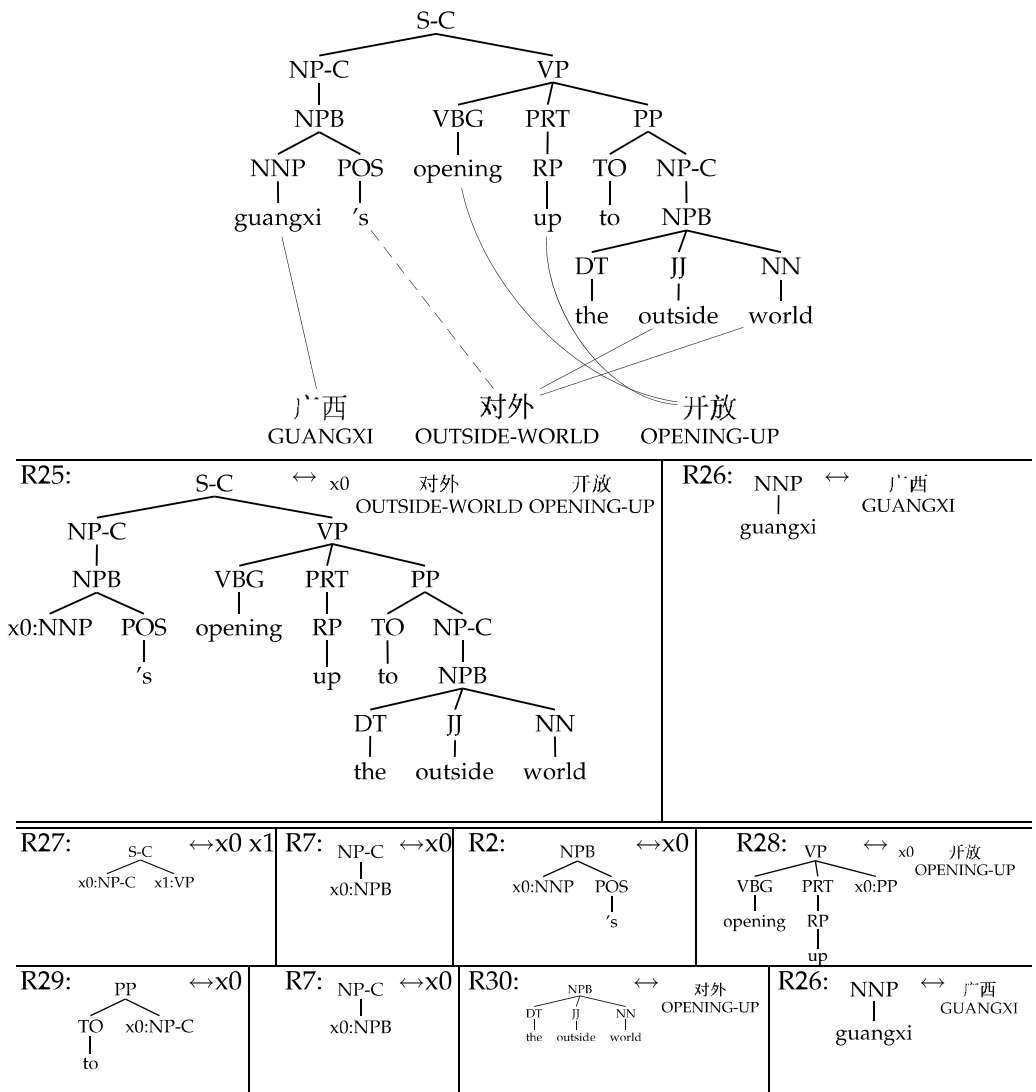


**Figure 13**  
The minimal rules extracted from two different alignments of the sentence in Figure 1.

alignment, which yields rules in Figure 2, such as R8. Figure 2 also contains rules R4 and R6, learned from yet other sentences in the training corpus, which handle the 在 ... 中 structure (which roughly translates to *in between*), thus allowing a derivation which contains the minimal rule set of Figure 2 and implies the alignment in Figure 1.

EM distributes rule probabilities in such a way as to maximize the probability of the training corpus. It thus prefers to use one rule many times instead of several different

rules for the same situation over several sentences, if possible. R35 is a possible rule in 46 of the 329,031 sentence pairs in the training corpus, and R8 is a possible rule in 100 sentence pairs. Well-formed rules are more usable than ill-formed rules and the partial alignments behind these rules, generally also well-formed, become favored as well. The top row of Figure 14 contains an example of an alignment learned by the bootstrap alignment model that includes an incorrect link. Rule R25, which is extracted from this alignment, is a poor rule. A set of commonly seen rules learned from other training sentences provide a more likely explanation of the data, and the consequent alignment omits the spurious link.



**Figure 14** The impact of a bad alignment on rule extraction. Including the alignment link indicated by the dotted line in the example leads to the rule set in the second row. The re-alignment procedure described in Section 5.2 learns to prefer the rule set at bottom, which omits the bad link.



**Table 6**

Translation performance, grammar size versus the re-alignment algorithm proposed in Section 5.2, and re-alignment as modified in Section 5.4.

EXPERIMENT	NIST08		NIST08-NW		# RULES (M)
	BLEU	p	BLEU	p	
no re-alignment (baseline)	29.12	—	35.33	—	76.0
EM re-alignment	29.18	0.411	35.52	0.296	75.1
EM re-alignment with size prior	29.37	0.165	<b>35.96</b>	0.050	110.4

Now we need an EM algorithm for learning the parameters of the rule set that maximize  $\prod_{\text{corpus}} P(\text{tree}, \text{string})$ . Knight, Graehl, and May (2008) present a generic such algorithm for tree-to-string transducers that runs in  $O(mn^3)$  time, as mentioned earlier. The algorithm consists of two components: DERIV, which is a procedure for constructing a packed forest of derivation trees of rules that explain a (tree, string) bitext corpus given that corpus and a rule set, and TRAIN, which is an iterative parameter-setting procedure.

We initially attempted to use the top-down DERIV algorithm of Knight, Graehl, and May (2008), but as the constraints of the derivation forests are largely lexical, too much time was spent on exploring dead-ends. Instead we build derivation forests using the following sequence of operations:

1. Binarize rules using the synchronous binarization algorithm for tree-to-string transducers described in Zhang et al. (2006).
2. Construct a parse chart with a CKY parser simultaneously constrained on the foreign string and English tree, similar to the bilingual parsing of Wu (1997).<sup>4</sup>
3. Recover all reachable edges by traversing the chart, starting from the topmost entry.

Because the chart is constructed bottom-up, leaf lexical constraints are encountered immediately, resulting in a narrower search space and faster running time than the top-down DERIV algorithm for this application. The Viterbi derivation tree tells us which English words produce which Chinese words, so we can extract a word-to-word alignment from it.

Although in principle the re-alignment model and translation model learn parameter weights over the same rule space, in practice we limit the rules used for re-alignment to the set of minimal rules.

#### 5.4 Adding a Rule Size Prior

An initial re-alignment experiment shows a small rise in BLEU scores from the baseline (Table 6), but closer inspection of the rules favored by EM implies we can do even better.

<sup>4</sup> In the cases where a rule is not synchronous-binarizable, standard left-right binarization is performed and proper permutation of the disjoint English tree spans must be verified when building the part of the chart that uses this rule.

EM has a tendency to favor a few large rules over many small rules, even when the small rules are more useful. Referring to the rules in Figures 2 and 13, note that possible derivations for (*taiwan's*, 台灣)<sup>5</sup> are R33, R2–R3, and R38–R40. Clearly the third derivation is not desirable, and we do not discuss it further. Between the first two derivations, R2–R3 is preferred over R33, as the conditioning for possessive insertion is not related to the specific Chinese word being inserted. Of the 1,902 sentences in the training corpus where this pair is seen, the bootstrap alignments yield the R33 derivation 1,649 times and the R2–R3 derivation 0 times. Re-alignment does not change the result much; the new alignments yield the R33 derivation 1,613 times and again never choose R2–R3. The rules in the second derivation themselves are not rarely seen—R2 is in 13,311 forests *other* than those where R33 is seen, and R3 is in 2,500 additional forests. EM gives R2 a probability of  $e^{-7.72}$ —better than 98.7% of rules, and R3 a probability of  $e^{-2.96}$ . But R33 receives a probability of  $e^{-6.32}$  and is preferred over the R2–R3 derivation, which has a combined probability of  $e^{-10.68}$ .

The preference for shorter derivations containing large rules over longer derivations containing small rules is due to a general tendency for EM to prefer derivations with few atoms. Marcu and Wong (2002) note this preference but consider the phenomenon a feature, rather than a bug. Zollmann and Sima'an (2005) combat the overfitting aspect for parsing by using a held-out corpus and a straight maximum likelihood estimate, rather than EM. DeNero, Bouchard-Côté, and Klein (2008) encourage small rules with a modeling approach; they put a Dirichlet process prior of rule size over their model and learn the parameters of the geometric distribution of that prior with Gibbs sampling. We use a simpler modeling approach to accomplish the same goals as DeNero, Bouchard-Côté, and Klein which, although less elegant, is more scalable and does not require a separate Bayesian inference procedure.

As the probability of a derivation is determined by the product of its atom probabilities, longer derivations with more probabilities to multiply have an inherent disadvantage against shorter derivations, all else being equal. EM is an iterative procedure and thus such a bias can lead the procedure to converge with artificially raised probabilities for short derivations and the large rules that constitute them. The relatively rare applicability of large rules (and thus lower observed partial counts) does not overcome the inherent advantage of large coverage. To combat this, we introduce size terms into our generative story, ensuring that all competing derivations for the same sentence contain the same number of atoms:

1. Choose a rule size  $s$  with cost  $c_{size}(s)^{s-1}$ .
2. Choose a rule  $r$  (of size  $s$ ) to replace the start symbol with probability  $P_{rule}(r|s, v)$ .
3. For each variable in the partially completed (tree, string) pair, continue to choose sizes followed by rules, recursively to replace these variables until there are no variables remaining.

This generative story changes the derivation comparison from R33 vs. R2–R3 to S2–R33 vs. R2–R3, where S2 is the atom that represents the choice of size 2 (the size of a rule

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<sup>5</sup> The Chinese gloss is simply “taiwan”.

in this context is the number of non-leaf and non-root nodes in its tree fragment). Note that the variable number of inclusions implied by the exponent in the generative story above ensures that all derivations have the same size. For example, a derivation with one size-3 rule, a derivation with one size-2 and one size-1 rule, and a derivation with three size-1 rules would each have three atoms. With this revised model that allows for fair comparison of derivations, the R2–R3 derivation is chosen 1,636 times, and S2–R33 is not chosen. R33 does, however, appear in the translation model, as the expanded rule extraction described in Section 1 creates R33 by joining R2 and R3.

The probability of size atoms, like that of rule atoms, is decided by EM. The revised generative story tends to encourage smaller sizes by virtue of the exponent. This does not, however, simply ensure the largest number of rules per derivation is used in all cases. Ill-fitting and poorly motivated rules such as R42, R43, and R44 in Figure 13 are not preferred over R8, even though they are smaller. However, R6 and R8 are preferred over R35, as the former are useful rules. Although the modified model does not sum to 1, it can nevertheless lead to an improvement in BLEU score.

## 5.5 Experimental Results

The end-to-end MT experiment used as baseline and described in Sections 3.5 and 4.3 was trained on IBM Model 4 word alignments, obtained by running GIZA, as described in Section 2. We compared this baseline to an MT system that used alignments obtained by re-aligning the GIZA alignments using the method of Section 5.2 with the 36 million word subset of the training corpus used for re-alignment learning. We next compared the baseline to an MT system that used re-alignments obtained by also incorporating the size prior described in Section 5.4. As can be seen by the results in Table 6, the size prior method is needed to obtain reasonable improvement in BLEU. These results are consistent with those reported in May and Knight (2007), where gains in Chinese and Arabic MT systems were observed, though over a weaker baseline and with less training data than is used in this work.

## 6. Combining Techniques

We have thus far seen gains in BLEU score by independent improvements in training data tree structure, syntax labeling, and alignment. This naturally raises the question of whether the techniques can be combined, that is, if improvement in one aspect of training data aids in improvement of another. As reported in Section 4.3 and Table 5, we were able to improve re-labeling efforts and take advantage of the split-and-merge technique of Petrov et al. (2006) by first re-structuring via the method described in Section 3.4. It is unlikely that such re-structuring or re-labeling would aid in a subsequent re-alignment procedure like that of Section 5.2, for re-structuring changes trees based on a given alignment, and re-alignment can only change links when multiple instances of a (subtree, substring) tuple are found in the data with different partial alignments. Re-structuring beforehand changes the trees over different alignments differently. It is unlikely that many (subtree, substring) tuples with more than one partial alignment would remain after a re-structuring.

However, re-structuring may benefit from a prior re-alignment. We do not want re-structuring decisions to be made over bad alignments, so unifying alignments based on common syntax should lead EM to make a more confident binarization decision.

**Table 7**

Summary of experiments in this article, including a combined experiment with re-alignment, re-structuring, and re-labeling.

EXPERIMENT	NIST08		NIST08-NW		# RULES (M)
	BLEU	p	BLEU	p	
Baseline (no binarization, no re-labeling, Model 4 alignments)	29.12	—	35.33	—	76.0
left binarization	29.35	0.184	35.46	0.360	153.4
EM binarization	<b>29.74</b>	0.010	<b>36.12</b>	0.016	154.8
Linguistic re-labeling	<b>29.57</b>	0.029	<b>35.85</b>	0.050	154.97
EM binarization + EM re-labeling (4-way splitting w/ 90% merging)	<b>30.05</b>	0.001	<b>36.42</b>	0.003	158.89
EM re-alignment	29.18	0.411	35.52	0.296	75.1
Size prior EM re-alignment	29.37	0.165	<b>35.96</b>	0.050	110.4
Size prior EM re-alignment + EM binarization + EM re-labeling	<b>30.6</b>	0.001	<b>36.73</b>	0.002	222.0

Better re-structuring should in turn lead to better re-labeling, and this should increase the performance of the overall MT pipeline.

To test this hypothesis we pre-processed alignments using the modified re-alignment procedure described in Section 5.4. We next used those alignments to obtain new binarizations of trees following the EM binarization method described in Section 3.4. Finally, re-labeling was done on these binarized trees using 4-way splitting with 90% merging, as described in Section 4. The final trees, along with the alignments used to get these trees and of course the parallel Chinese sentences, were then used as the training data of our MT pipeline. The results of this combined experiment are shown in Table 7 along with the other experiments from this article, for ease of comparison. As can be seen from this table, the progressive improvement of training data leads to an overall improvement in MT system performance. As noted previously, there tends to be a correspondence between the number of unique rules extracted and MT performance. The final combined experiment has the greatest number of unique rules. The improvements made to syntax and alignment described in this article unify these two independently determined annotations over the bitext, and this thus leads to more admissible nodes and a greater ability to extract rules. Such a unification can lead to over-generalization, as rules lacking sufficient context may be extracted and used to the system's detriment. This is why a re-labeling technique is also needed, to ensure that sufficient rule specificity is maintained.

## 7. Conclusion

This article considered three modifications to MT training data that encourage improved performance in a state-of-the-art syntactic MT system. The improvements changed syntactic structure, altered bracket labels, and unified alignment across sentences, and when combined led to an improvement of 1.48 BLEU points over a strong baseline in Chinese–English translation. The techniques herein described require only

the training data used in the original MT task and are thus applicable to a string-to-tree MT system for any language pair.

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