Use of Agent Technology in Relation Extraction for Ontology Construction

M. D. S. Seneviratne and N. R. Ranasinghe

***Abstract*—Ontology plays a vital role in formulating natural language documents to machine readable form on the semantic web. For ontology construction information should be extracted from web documents in the form of entities and relations between them. Identifying syntactic constituents and their dependencies in a sentence, boost the information extraction from natural language text. In this paper we describe the use of employing a multi agent system to perform relation extraction between two identified entities. The learning capability of agents is exploited to train an agent to learn extraction rules from the syntactic structure of natural language sentences. In the multi agent system one agent makes use of Inductive Logic Programming for the rule learning process while another agent is expected to use the learnt rules to identify new relations as well as extract instances of predefined relations. All the relations derived are expressed as predicate expressions of two entities. We evaluate our agent system by applying it on number of wikipedia web pages from the domain of birds.**

***Index Terms*—Ontology, agent, parser, annotation, tagging, entities, relations.**

I. Introduction

Finding a specific piece of information from a massive collection of web sources is a tedious, time consuming task for a human being. Therefore semantic web researchers have made numerous efforts to make web pages machine readable by annotating the text in web pages with semantic tags and developing ontology to model the information in a more structured manner. Ontology development has emerged as a mean for a standard representation of various types of web pages in the same domain. It is an evolving process and can be extended continuously. Therefore automation or semi-automation of ontology development has become a demanding process.

Ontology describes entities and relations necessary to understand the underlying information. Therefore information extraction for ontology construction mainly involves extracting entities and relations among them, from a web page. Basic information element required for ontology construction is identified as entity. Therefore the pioneer task in information extraction for ontology construction is identifying the entities in a natural language document. Information extraction, concept definition from various web sources and text mining are required processes for identifying entities and relations for ontology development. Significant amount of work has been carried out in developing domain specific ontologies. Incorporating ontologies into tools for information access, provide foundation for enhanced, knowledge-based approaches to surveying, indexing and querying of document collections. Many researchers have concentrated on entity extraction. But relation is more complicated and requires heavy linguistic processing. Therefore already established tools in the area are good bases for a commencement of any work towards extracting information for ontology development.

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II. Related Work

A considerable amount of work has been carried out in the area of information extraction at a preliminary stage. Extraction rules generated by various algorithms and techniques are the base for many information extraction systems. Machine learning is the main technique adopted in information extraction process. Statistical machine learning methods such as Support Vector Machines [1], Hidden Markov Model [2]etc as well as rule based learning have also been exploited in some research work[3]. Further, work in identifying relations between entities which is more complicated has not yet been progressed satisfactorily. Relation extraction requires heavy linguistic processing of a given text and needs to be addressed in order to complete information extraction process. Many researchers have exploited machine learning [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], pattern matching [8], [9], [10], [11], shallow natural language processing [12], [13] and statistical methods [14] in the above mentioned areas. We give evidence below for many systems developed which are capable of identifying only taxonomical (is-a) relations and some systems in which relation extraction is modeled as categorizing a lexical term into one of the predefined relations.

Two systems Ontosyphon[15] and Text2Onto[16] exploit Hearst phrases template[17] to identify taxonomical relations despite the two different approaches used in achieving the final outcome. Text2Onto develops JAPE (Java Annotation Pattern Engine) [18] rules within GATE(General Architecture for Text Engineering)[18] whereas Ontosypon analyses sentences to identify the entities wrapped in Hearst phrases. Ontosypon uses an associative learning figure to validate the extracted class instances. Text2Onto feeds the identified information to an ontology initiation model to filter out the irrelevant instance occurrences and translates the information in the model to any ontology language. Burcu Yildiz and Silvia Miksch[19] have addressed the issue of adapting their information extraction system in different domains. They have incorporated an ontology management module to tackle different domain ontology to serve this purpose. Their approach uses bag of words and their neighbours, in the rule generation module to generate rules to extract basic concepts based on a predefined/given ontology. Therefore the system can only extract instances for the subclasses and values for the data_type property (i.e. hierarchical relations) in the ontology. OntoMiner [20] uses semantic partitioning to identify taxonomical relations.

Armadillo [21] induces rules for wrappers using irregularities and stores the extracted information in the RDF[22] store as Subject-Verb-Object triplets. Hence the relation extraction is made possible from natural language sentences. Armadillo can easily be switched to different domains. But they have not demonstrated extracting information from complex sentence structure. PubMiner [23] that generates rules based on associative rule discovery technique is capable of extracting both entities and relations from a massive biological literature. Event extractor of PubMiner considers a verb as an event, finds the binary relation between two name entities identified in the sentence where the verb is extracted. Webkb [24] employs machine learning algorithm Foil[25] to learn classification rules to identify entities. Similar algorithm is used to identify relations defined in the considered ontology. Some systems such as OntoLT [26] and T-rex [27] provide an environment for the user to experiment with various techniques in entity and relation extraction. OntoLT is based heavily on linguistic analysis to identify a head noun and verb to form a predicate expression. T-rex is a test bed for experimenting with extraction algorithms and scenarios.

Snoussi, Magnin and YunNile [28] uses an agent in their tool to extract information from HTML documents and place them in the XML format. A manually constructed definition is integrated into the autonomous agent for the purpose of extracting relevant information. Roxana Danger and Rafeal Berlanga's work [29] concentrates on extracting entity instances from a parsed natural text using OWL [30] ontologies. They use a similarity function between text fragments and lexical description in the ontology to extract entity instances. Several inference rules in the ontology and segment scope definitions that indicates which other segments can be related to a text fragment are applied to add new relations to connect instances. Hoifung Poon and Pedro Domingos [31] propose OntoUSP, a system that learns hierarchical relations over clusters of logical expressions and populates it by translating sentences to logical form. Diana Maynard, Adam Funk and Wim Peters [32] have investigated three linguistic patterns including Hearst patterns for the development of the tool SPRAT in GATE to extract variety of entity types and relations between them. .

III. GATE on Entity Extraction

For ontology construction, we attempt to extract relations from a text annotated with already identified entities. Therefore it is a must to identify the entities prior to relation extraction.

GATE (General Architecture for Text Engineering) is a framework established for processing texts that provides extensive facilities for researchers in the field. GATE's information extraction tool ANNIE can be used successfully in entity recognition process. Linguistic processing and pattern matching rules are used in GATE for information extraction. ANNIE is bundled with language processing tools Sentence Splitter, Tokenizer and Part of Speech Tagger. Those tools are run on a text to identify the lexical category in which each token belongs, before applying pattern matching rules. The JAPE (Java Annotation Pattern Engine) rules which provide finite state transduction over annotations based on regular expression are used in ANNIE/GATE for entity recognition. The left hand side of a JAPE rule defines regular expressions over which new annotation type is described on the right hand side. GATE framework supports its extensibility by making accommodations for new processing resources added as plug ins.

ANNIE already provides annotations of most general types Person, Location, Job Title etc. We make use of the GATE's developing facilities to build additional plug-ins to the GATE in order to identify domain specific terms representing ontology classes. We cross validate annotated GATE corpus by identifying false entities that enables identification of linguistic features responsible for the extraction of false entities. JAPE rules are then augmented with the counterfactuals of the above mentioned linguistic features to improve the rule accuracy by avoiding false positives. The output of the GATE can be stored outside the GATE framework for further processing when it is embedded in an application. Entire system architecture is given in Fig. 1.

IV. Relation Extraction from Natural Language Text

Successful relation extraction demands heavy linguistic processing. It is not always practical to categorize relationships into few groups because natural language is enriched with a vast vocabulary and a numerous sentence structures. Verb is the powerful lexical term which binds two adjacent syntactic categories and a relation can be defined as a predicate expression of two nouns i.e. subject and object wrapped in syntactic categories as follows.

A. Verb(Subject, Object) or Verb_Prep(Subject, Object)

Therefore identification of the main verb in a sentence is promising initiative in defining a relation between two entities. For the purpose of relation extraction by verb predicate, documents should be parsed in to identified sentence structures.

For an example the sentence "Jackdaws are found in Europe, Iran, north-west India and Siberia where they inhabit wooded steppers, woodland, cultivated land pasture, coastal cliffs and villages" can be mapped to the above predicate format as follows after the sentence is tagged for syntactic constituents and concepts.

located_in(Jackdaw, Europe),
located_in (Jackdaw, Iran),
located_in(Jackdaw, north-westIndia),
located_in(Jackdaw, Siberia)

Inhabit(Jackdaw, woodland),

Inhabit(Jackdaw, wooded steppers)
Inhabit(Jackdaw, cultivated land pastures),
Inhabit(Jackdaw, coastal cliffs),
Inhabit(Jackdaw, villages),

But the complicated nature of the natural language text does not permit to parse the entire text into a set of predefined sentence structures and no human is possibly capable of predefining all the valid syntactic patterns for natural language sentences. Some sentences are very expressive, but contain very little information. Some sentences are short and appear less complicated, but rich in information.

For an example from the sentence which displays the natural language characteristic crossing dependency

B. "Netball is a Ball Sport Played Between two Teams of Seven Players."

We can extract the following 3 relations.
Is_a(Netball, Ball Sport),
Played_between_teams(Netball, 2)
Has_no_of_players(Netball team, 7).

But the above sentence cannot be fitted into a common parse tree. Therefore the system should accommodate uncommon unknown language structures while attempts are being made to fit a sentence to a known structure. In order to accomplice this task the system is required to learn new grammar rules as well as to keep a sentence in place with known grammar rules. But it is very difficult to identify relations accurately from such syntactic structure and grammar rules only.

The Stanford parser[33] that is one of the language parsers available, not only parse a given sentence to give the grammar rules, but give dependencies among linguistic constituents of the sentence also. The Stanford typed dependencies[34] representation was designed to provide a simple description of the grammatical relationships in a sentence that can easily be understood and effectively used by people without linguistic expertise who want to extract textural relations. It represents all sentence relationships uniformly as typed dependency relations. These dependencies are quite effective in relation extraction.

For an example for the sentence "Humming Birds can be found in Cuba including Isle of Youth" the Stanford parser gives the collapsed dependencies given below.

nn(Birds-2, Humming-1)
nsubjpass(found-5, Birds-2)
aux(found-5, can-3)
auxpass(found-5, be-4)
prep_in(found-5, Cuba-7)
prep_including(Cuba-7, Isle-9)
prep_of(Isle-9, Youth-11)

Highlighted terms in dependencies indicate the already identified entities by the use of GATE and all the terms are syntactically tagged by the parser.

From the above structure the relation extracted should be in the form
located_in(Humming Bird, Cuba)
located_in(Humming Bird, Isle of Man)

V. USE OF AGENT TECHNOLOGY ON RELATION EXTRACTION

We use the Stanford parser on GATE output which is annotated with the entities, to identify syntactic constituents of a sentence and to derive dependencies among them. These dependencies and syntactic tags provide background knowledge to learn rules for relation extraction. We use an agent OntoSupport to induce rules for relation extraction, searching trough the typed dependencies of natural language sentences given in the training set. Since all the natural language sentences do not fall into predefined solid language structures we cannot provide training examples from all the possible language structures for rule learning process. Therefore learning rules for relation extraction from natural language text is a continuous process. User can expand the training set whenever he finds a different language structure which cannot be covered by the already learnt rules. Autonomous nature of the agent technology permits the agent to update the rule base and the knowledge while running in the background when the user updates the training set.

We use another agent OntoExtract to extract information for ontology construction by applying the rules formed by OntoSupport. When OntoExtract is released on the internet it can not only extract information for different users but can provide OntoSupport some information also in order to update its knowledge and rule set. We use JADE[35]; an agent framework to implement our agents.

A. Agent OntoSupport

The agent OntoSupport learn rules to extract relation instances for a known relation such as *located_in, part_of, feed_on* etc, some of which are domain specific relations. The outcome of the Stanford parser is used by OntoSupport in order to derive rules for relation extraction. Semantic ambiguity is one of the difficulties that we come across in natural language processing. For an example main verbs in above mentioned sentences "*found in*" and "*are native"* lead the way to the relation "*located_in*". Therefore "*are native*" and "*found in*" can be considered as equivalent terms (not a synonym) for "*located_in*" under background information. Whenever an equivalent term is found for a known relation verb the set of equivalent terms is updated with new found term that accounts for agent's knowledge.

OntoSupport employs inductive logic programming technique (ILP)[36] to derive the set of rules based on the text annotated with the entities. ILP algorithm used is given below.

Since Stanford parser provides many atomic formulas or atoms (i.e. predicate expression with n tuples) in the form of typed dependencies as well as syntactic tagging the output of the Stanford parser is a good candidate for inductive logic programming. In inductive logic programming the rules are induced with the available atoms and are generalized with respect to positive training data. Rules are specialized with respect to negative training data. We have a set of positive and negative training examples along with syntactic constituents (syntactic tags) of the sentence from which the relation is extracted and a set of atoms in typed dependencies.

First the typed dependencies are preprocessed to filter the relevant atomic formulas which can contribute to the rule formation. Relevant atoms contains at least one entity instance. Some measures are taken in order to reduce the complexity of the typed dependencies of a sentence. The atom *"nsubjpass"* is replaced by "*nsubj*" and "*prep_including*" is replaced by "*conj_and*". If a verb constituent is missing in "*nsubj*" OntoSupport search through the dependencies to find the verb associated with the noun constituent in "*nsubj*". Atoms that represent adjectives, adverbs and determinants are ignored because there is no significant impact on relations by them. Two adjacent noun constituents in atoms "*nn*" and "*prep_of*" are considered as one term.

For example the reduced typed dependencies of sentence – 2 is shown below.

nsubj(are_native-3, Ostriches-1)

conj_and(native-3, Sahel_of_Africa-8)

A verb constituents from "*nsubj*" are added to the set of positive verbs for the relation. Set of negative verbs for the relation is built from the negative examples.

OntoSupport uses ILP technique on reduced type dependencies and form the first rule with most occurring two atoms.

Algorithm for ILP

Create a list of atoms ordered according to the number of occurrences

(i.e. most occurred atom at the head and least occurred atom at the end)

Initialize the LHS of the rule LHS = Relation

Repeat

RHS = Head_of_List

RHS = RHS & Head_of_Tail

Remove Head_of_Tail from the list

For all negative examples

Apply RHS

If a negative example is covered, add an atom specialized to the negative example to

the RHS to uncover the negative example.

Add the atom to the set of negative atoms.

For all positive examples

Apply the rule

Remove the covered positive examples.

Add the rule to the rule set

Until all the positive examples are covered.

LHS – Left Hand Side RHS – Right Hand Side

B. *Agent OntoExtract*

The task of the agent OntoExtract is to apply the rules generated by OntoSupport to extract relations in a given corpus of a particular domain. In addition OntoExtract has the ability to process the sentences of entities not extracted as a relation in order to find whether the entities form negative relation or a new relation. Such a sentence can be categorized into one of the followings.

1) Verb unknown but extraction rules cover the typed dependencies
2) Verb known but extraction rules cannot cover the typed dependencies.
3) Verb unknown and extraction rules cannot cover the typed dependencies.

From the sentences fallen into group (i) OntoExtract communicates the verb constituent in the "nsubj" to OntoSupport that can update the set of positive verbs for the relation with the verb sent. Sentences in the category (ii) give a different structure for the relation. Then OntoExtract sends the URL of the file where the sentence and its syntactic constituents are stored, to OntoSupport to form a rule to cover newly found sentence structure for the relation. Sentences in the category (iii) form a completely new relation and they are sent to OntoSupport to formulate the new relation.

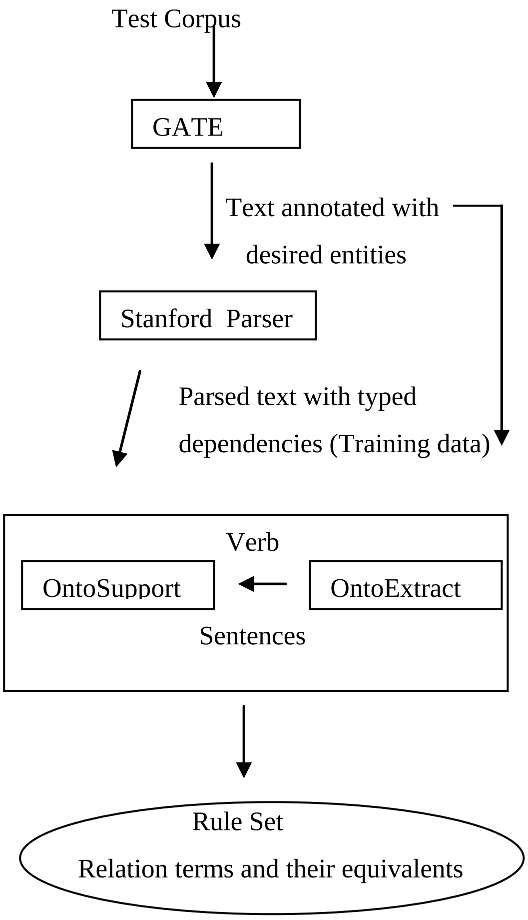

Fig. 1. Architecture of the system tools used are shown in boxes.

C. *Agent OntoExtract*

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VI. Results

We have used the domain of birds to test our system. Creation of ontology for the domain of birds requires to establish domain specific entities and relations between them. We identify entities *Bird*, *Location*, *Body_part*, *Colour*, *Diet*, *Habitat*, *Size*, *No_of_eggs*, *Characteristic* etc and attempt to find relations existing between them.

First we have selected rather small set of training data which cover different complicated sentence structures (13 wikipedia web pages as training data and 14 wikipedia web pages as testing data). From the training data the OntoSupport learnt the rules shown in fig. 2 for the relation *located_in()* which exists between Bird and Country. While the agent is in action it is expected to learn more rules in the case of any deviation from the already created rules.

The following tables shows the positive and negative examples for the relation *located_in(Bird, Country)* in our training set which is taken from 13 Wikipedia documents

TABLE I: Positive Training Data.

Bird	Country
Ostriches	Africa
Humming Birds	Cuba
Humming Birds	Isle of Man
Parrots	South America
Parrots	Australasia
Doves	Indomalaya
Doves	Australasia
Emu	Australia
Eagles	California
Shoebill	Africa
Jackdaws	Iran
Jackdaws	India
Jackdaws	Siberia
Nutcracker	Europe
Nutcracker	Asia
Potoos	Mexico
Kiwi	New Zealand

TABLE II: Negative Training Data.

Bird	Country
Cranes	Antarctica
Cranes	South America
Ostriches	Middle East
Swans	Asia
Swans	Central America
Swans	South America
Swans	Africa
Potoos	Chile

Based on the above mentioned training set OntoSupport first learns the rules shown in Fig. 2.

Where VB – Verb in Relation and negative(VB) – Verb is negative for the relation.

The set of rules in the Fig. 2 is generalized to reduce the number of rules. The final set of rules is given in Fig.3

located_in(Bird, Country): -nsubj(VB,Bird)
conj_and(Country, Country),
¬prep_except(NN, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Country) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
conj_and(VB, Country),
¬prep_except(NN, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
conj_and(Country, NN),
¬prep_except(NN, Country)
, ¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Country) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
conj_and(NN, Country),
¬prep_except(NN, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
prep_in(VB, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
prep_to(VB, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
prep_to(NN, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
prep_from(VB, Country),
¬negative(VB)

Fig. 2. Preliminary rules learnt by ontosupport

located_in(Bird, Country) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
conj_and(X, Country),
¬prep_except(Y, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
conj_and(Country, X),
¬prep_except(Y, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
prep_in(VB, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
prep_to(X, Country),
¬negative(VB)

located_in(Bird, Location) :- nsubj(VB, Bird),
prep_from(X, Country),
¬negative(VB)

Fig. 3. Final set of generalized rules.

TABLE III: RELATIONS EXTRACTED BY ONTO EXTRACT

Relation Instances found for the relation located_in()	**Negative relation Instances for the relation located_in**	**New Relations established between bird and location**
(Albatross, Southern Ocean) (Petrel, Southern Ocean) (Eagle, Eurasia) (Flamingo, America) (Nutcracker, Europe) (Nutcracker, Asia) (Macaw, Mexico) (Macaw, Caribbean) (Hornbill, Africa) (Hornbill, Asia) (Junglefowl, Sri Lanka) (Junglefowl, India) (Cassowary, New Guinea) (Kakapo, New Zealand)	(Pelican, Antarctica) (Pelican South Pacific) (Cuckoo, South America) (Cuckoo, Middle East) (Cuckoo, North Africa) (Owl, Antarctica) (Woodpecker, Australasia) (Woodpecker, Madagascar) (Woodpecker, Antarctica)	farmed_in is_dangerous is_national_bird

OntoExtract applied the rules on 14 text documents and found relations shown in TABLE III.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have discussed the use of linguistic characteristics combined with the agent technology in extracting relations from a sentence annotated with two or more entities. A set of rules for relation extraction is learnt from the training data(i.e. annotated text with entities and relations) and typed dependencies. From the semantic annotations on the sentence the agent identifies various equivalent terms for a relation and continuously updates its knowledge throughout the operation in order to reduce the effects of semantic ambiguity. Inductive logic programming used in the agent's learning prevents the agent extracting negative relations. A rather small test corpus which covers a number of different syntactic structures is used for training at the beginning. But when agents are in action the system continuously learns new rules and updates the knowledge wherever appropriate. Another positive aspect of our approach is that the relations which cannot be categorized in to pre defined relations can specifically be identified. Therefore there are no relations of unknown category. The same set of rules can be tried in different domains. Then the entity types will be replaced with the entities specific to a domain if the rules comply with any of the annotated sentence. In this project we manage to combine linguistic characteristic with agent technology for successful relation extraction.

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