

ReTAX++: a Tool for Browsing and Revising Ontologies

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Abstract

Many existing ontology tools provide an integrated environment to browse and edit ontologies as well as inconsistency checking facilities. However, their visualization facilities are limited and guidance on how to correct the detected errors is not usually provided. We present our ontology editor, ReTAX++, a tool that facilitates browsing and revision of ontologies.

1 Introduction

Many exiting ontology tools such as Protégé¹, WedODE², Oiled³ and OntoEdit⁴ provide list-based representations for selection of classes or pop-up windows for manipulating classes. However, users usually find it difficult to browse the logical structure of ontologies graphically, and only OWLViz⁵, the plugin of Protégé, provides graphical visualization facilities which are static. These tools are also able to check for errors and inconsistencies by connecting with an external reasoner. However, only Protégé-OWL⁶, OWLDebugger⁶ is able to help users track down the reasons for OWL classes being inconsistent; SWOOP⁷ presents errors in ontologies to users in simple natural language. Other tools provide no explanation and functionalities for users to correct the detected defects and errors [Lam *et. al.* 2004].

We propose a graph-based approach implemented in ReTAX++ (see Figure 1) to help knowledge engineers browse ontologies and resolve the inconsistencies. When one wants to reuse an ontology by importing it onto the system, the ontology is displayed in a graphical format. With the help of a reasoner, the system detects and

highlights the inconsistent concepts. We propose graph-based algorithms to detect which relationships among concepts cause the inconsistencies, and provide options for the user to correct them. If an incomplete or inconsistent ontology is imported, a number of ontological fragments may still be formed. In this case, we aim to suggest to the user with the best concept candidate to integrate the fragments.

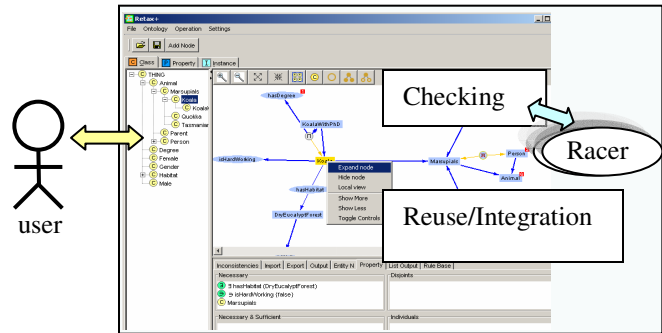


Figure 1. The structure of ReTAX++

2 Contradiction Checking

We formally represent an ontology as a directed graph with a finite set of nodes and edges. There are three types of nodes, *viz.* the concepts and relations of an ontology are represented as nodes in the graph; the intersection, union and complement operations between concepts are represented as \sqcup , \sqcap , \neg nodes respectively. The edges represent the relationships among the nodes. In this paper we only illustrate how a complement contradiction is checked and resolved, therefore, instances, enumerated concepts and cardinality restrictions etc. are not considered. Paths in a graph, represented as Π , are alternating sequences of nodes and edges such that each edge in the sequence is preceded by its source node. We assume that there is at most one edge between any two nodes, therefore, an edge in a graph can always be determined by its source and target nodes. Hence, a path can be abbreviated by just enumerating the nodes $\langle n_0, n_1, \dots, n_m \rangle$. For brevity, the nodes are written as the concept names, relation names and the concept operation symbols.

¹ <http://protege.stanford.edu/>

² <http://delicias.dia.fi.upm.es/webODE/>

³ <http://oiled.man.ac.uk/>

⁴ <http://www.ontoprise.de/home>

⁵ <http://www.co-ode.org/downloads/owlviz/>

⁶ <http://protege.stanford.edu/conference/2005/submissions/posters/poster-drummond.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.mindswap.org/2004/SWOOP/>

Complement contradiction occurs if a concept is defined to have a relationship with a concept but the concept must not have a relationship with that concept simultaneously. Given an ontology and a concept, we can find a set of concept paths $\Phi = \{\Pi_1, \Pi_2, \dots, \Pi_n\}$, the first node of the paths is always the concept. Each path Π_i with a \neg node is compared to each path Π_j without \neg node. By comparing these paths, and converting them to negated normal form, if necessary, to make the relation nodes with the same restriction, we can infer which relationships among concepts may cause the contradiction. The two paths Π_j, Π_i are complement contradictory if the following conditions hold:

1. No \sqcup node exists in both paths Π_j and Π_i , otherwise, they may be alternative.
2. The relation nodes preceding the \neg node in Π_i must have the same name but different restrictions with the corresponding nodes in Π_j .
3. The relation nodes after the \neg node in Π_i must have the same name and restriction with the corresponding nodes in Π_j .

The following example shows how we check which relationships cause the concept *mad_cow* to be inconsistent. The *eat* relationship of *mad_cow* specifies that at least an individual eats a part of animal and of brain. *vegetarian* specifies that all of its individuals do not eat the parts of animal. Further, *mad_cow* is defined as a *vegetarian*. There is an inconsistency. We now illustrate how the contradiction is checked using graph-based algorithms.

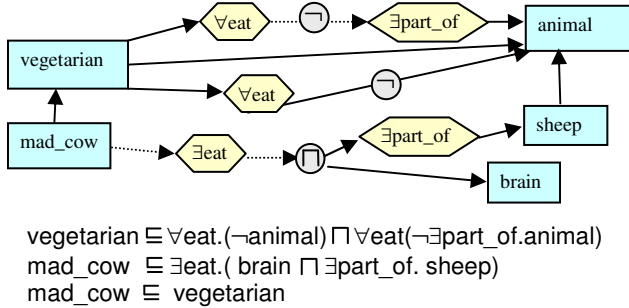


Figure 2. *mad_cow* example

Firstly, a set of paths is found in the graph,

- $$\begin{aligned} \Pi_1 &= \langle \text{mad_cow}, \text{animal} \rangle \\ \Pi_2 &= \langle \text{mad_cow}, \text{vegetarian}, \forall \text{eat}, \neg, \text{animal} \rangle \\ \Pi_3 &= \langle \text{mad_cow}, \text{vegetarian}, \forall \text{eat}, \neg, \exists \text{part_of}, \text{animal} \rangle \\ \Pi_4 &= \langle \text{mad_cow}, \exists \text{eat}, \exists \text{part_of}, \sqcap, \text{sheep} \rangle \\ \Pi_5 &= \langle \text{mad_cow}, \exists \text{eat}, \sqcap, \text{brain} \rangle \end{aligned}$$

A relation node in a path can be converted to normalized form in order to make the restriction of relation nodes to be the same, $\Pi_3' = \langle \text{mad_cow}, \text{vegetarian}, \neg, \exists \text{eat}, \exists \text{part_of}, \text{animal} \rangle$. As *sheep* is a subconcept of *animal*, it is substituted by *animal* in Π_4 , therefore, $\Pi_4' = \langle \text{mad_cow}, \exists \text{eat}, \exists \text{part_of}, \sqcap, \text{animal} \rangle$. This identifies a

complement contradiction located in paths Π_3' and Π_4' , and the three conditions are held by them.

To facilitate editing the ontology, the user clicks the nodes in the graphical browser, the operations of nodes will pop up. The system provides the following options to resolve the complement contradiction:

1. Remove the complement axiom by eliminating the \neg node in the graph.
2. Change the restriction of any relation node in one of paths. In this example, either the restriction of *eat* relation of *mad_cow* can be changed to \forall , or the restriction of *eat* relation of *vegetarian* can be changed to \exists .
3. Change the \sqcap node to \sqcup , the path is then alternative.
4. Remove one of the relations of the concept. The *eat* relation of either *mad_cow* or *vegetarian* can be removed.

3 Reuse & Integration

If only portions of the ontology can be read by the system (or some concepts cannot be linked by any of the existing relations), then fragments of the ontology may be formed using the relationships which have been detected. We will conduct an empirical study with a view to capturing the heuristics used by ontology engineers when facing ill-formed ontologies which were broken into a number of fragments. We then incorporate the heuristics into the system which provides facilities and suggests the best concept candidate to integrate the fragments via *concept-subconcept* relationships, or merging two similar concepts. The resulting ontology could be either a single consistent ontology or a number of consistent fragments.

4 Discussion & Future Work

This paper outlines our system ReTAX++, a graph-based ontology browsing and revision tool, which is still being developed. The user is provided with options to resolve the inconsistencies in the ontology; however, some of the proposed solutions require a more efficient implementation. For example, an ontology may contain numerous inconsistencies which are propagated from an inconsistent concept, and hence we require a more efficient strategy to discover the root causes of inconsistency. Future work will involve performing an empirical study to evaluate the suggestions offered by the system with respect to resolving inconsistencies. The functionalities of integrating fragments will also be implemented.

References

- [Lam *et al.*, 2004] Sik Chun Lam, Derek Sleeman and Wamberto Vasconcelos. ReTAX+: A Cooperative Taxonomy Revision Tool. In *Proceedings of AI-2004 Conference*, Cambridge, UK, December 2004. Publisher: Springer, p 64-77.