

# AUTOMATIC FEEDBACK GENERATION

## *Using Ontology in an Intelligent Tutoring System for both Learner and Author Based on Student Model*

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Abstract: Presenting feedback to learner is one of the essential elements needed for effective learning. Feedback can be given to learners during learning but also to authors during course development. But producing valuable feedback is often time consuming and makes delays. So with this reason and the others like incomplete and inaccurate feedback generating by human, we think that it's important to generate feedback automatically for both learner and author in an intelligent tutoring system (ITS). In this research we used ontology to create a rich supply of feedback. We designed all components of the ITS like course materials and learner model based on ontology to share common understanding of the structure of information among other software agents and make it easier to analyze the domain knowledge. With ontologies in fact, we specify the knowledge to be learned and how the knowledge should be learned. In this paper we also show a mechanism to make reason from the resources and learner model that it made feedbacks based on learner.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

No Learning would occur unless some type of feedback mechanism was at work. Feedback can increase motivation for learning and lets learners to know the accuracy of their response to an instructional question. It can compare the response to some performance standard or provide further guidance. Feedback provides information on correctness, precision, comparisons, motivational aspects, visual presentation, and guidance on sequence of lessons. During the specification and development of course material, many mistakes and errors can be made. With these features, feedback could also be helpful for author who presents the lessons and correct his bugs in designing and structuring the courses.

Emerging technologies have created new possibilities for designing instructional feedback. However, effective feedback depends on pedagogical and psychological considerations.

Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. When getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence and need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for

improvement. They also need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

In a classroom learners and teachers can easily interact, i.e. students can freely ask questions and teachers usually know whether their students understand (basic) concepts or problem solving techniques. Feedback is an important component of this interaction. But there is a frequent lack of feedback in electronic learning environment (or eLearning) courses in higher education (Murray, 1999).

In our research, we want to develop generic, domain and task independent feedback mechanisms that produce semantically rich feedback to learners and authors during learning and authoring. We will develop generic feedback mechanisms where ontologies are arguments of the feedback engine. This is important, because the development of feedback mechanisms is time consuming and specialist work, and can be reused for different ontologies. Besides generic feedback mechanisms we will also develop mechanisms by means of which authors can define domain and/or task specific feedback.

This article is structured as follows: In Section 2, we will compare our approach with related work. In

Section 3, explains the designed student model and the features that we considered in it for better feedback generation. Section 4,5, presents the idea for feedback generation to learner and author. Section 6, introduces schema analysis and the reasoning rules.

## 2 RELATED WORK

Although many authors underline the necessity of feedback in authoring systems (Aroyo and Dicheva, 2004a; Aroyo and Mizoguchi, 2004c; Murray, 1999), we have found little literature about feedback and feedback generation in authoring systems. Jin et al. (Jin and Chen, 1999) describe an authoring system that uses a domain as well as task ontology to produce feedback to an author. The ontologies are enriched with axioms, and on the basis of the axioms the models developed can be verified and messages of various kinds can be generated when authors violate certain specified constraints. The details of the techniques used are not given, and it is not clear to us how general the techniques are. Our contribution is the introduction of schema analysis as a general technique to produce messages about errors of structural aspects of course material.

Aroyo et al. (Aroyo and Dicheva (2004a, 2004b); Aroyo and Mizoguchi, 2004c) describe a common ontology (web) based authoring framework. The framework contains a domain as well as task ontology and supports an authoring process in terms of goals, and primitive and composite tasks. Based on ontologies, the framework monitors and assesses the authoring process, and prevents and solves inconsistencies and conflicting situations. Their requirements for authoring support are: (1) help in consistently building courseware, (2) discovery of inconsistencies and conflicting situations, (3) modularization of authoring systems (reusability), (4) production of feedback, hints and recommendations, and (5) allow accepting or rejecting the proposed solutions. We think that our framework satisfies all these requirements. Schema analysis as a technique could be positioned in (1), (2) and (4).

Stojanovic et al. (Stojanovic and Staab and Studer, 2001) present an approach for implementing eLearning scenarios using the semantic web technologies XML and RDF, and make use of ontology based descriptions of content, context and structure. A high risk is observed that two authors express the same topic in different ways

(homonyms). This problem is solved by integrating a domain lexicon in the ontology and defining mappings, expressed by the author itself, from terms of the domain vocabulary to their meaning defined by the ontology. In our approach these mappings are analyzed automatically.

In the Authoring Adaptive Hypermedia community the importance of feedback mechanisms in authoring systems has been recognized (Cristea, 2004). Although we have found an impressive amount of authoring tools for adaptive hypermedia (Brusilovsky, 2003), we have not found descriptions of technologies used for providing feedback to authors. We expect our results will be useful for authoring adaptive hypermedia as well.

## 3 STUDENT MODEL AND ITS FEATURES

Student Model is an ITS component which keeps track of specific information related to each individual student, such as his mastery or competence of the material being taught, and his misconceptions. In effect, it stores the computer tutor's beliefs about the student. This information is used by the pedagogical module to tailor its teaching to the individual needs of the student.

Based on the subject of the domain, the information stored in student models could be divided into two major groups: domain specific information and domain independent information. The model of domain-specific information which is named Student Knowledge Model (SKM) (Brusilovsky, 1994), represents a reflection of the student's state and his skills. Some of this information could be:

- Student's prior knowledge about the domain
- Records of learning behavior (number of lectures taken, number of helps asked, frequency of mistakes made while solving problems, reaction/answering time while solving problems)
- Records of evaluation /assessment (qualitative and quantitative scores).

A student model also needs to cover a certain amount of domain-independent information in addition to the student's current knowledge level. The domain-independent information about a student may include learning goals, cognitive aptitudes, measures for motivation state, preference about the presentation method, factual and historic data, etc.

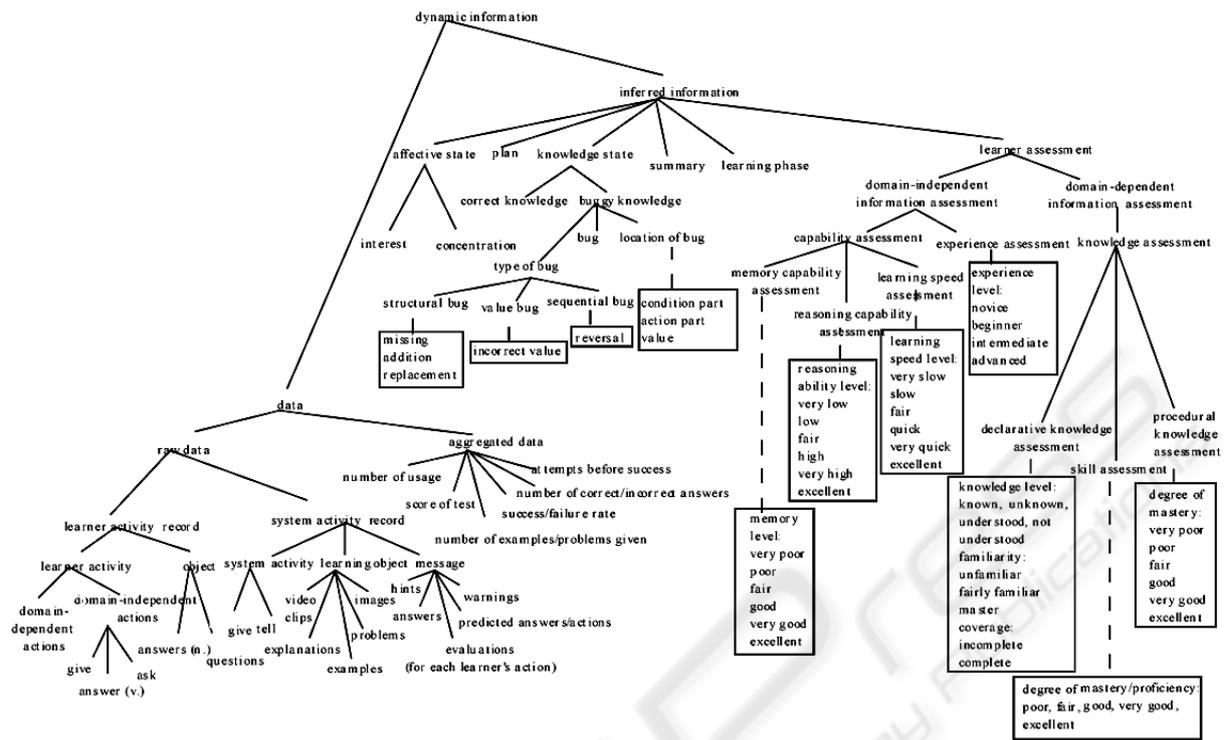


Figure 1: Part of Ontology based Student Model.

Our stress for better feedback generation is on both cognitive aptitudes and learning styles information and we think that these two information type could help us respect to the others.

Shute (Shute, 1995) identified a number of specific cognitive aptitudes besides student's general attributes:

- General knowledge (GK)
- Inductive reasoning skill (IR)
- Working memory capacity (WM)
- Procedural learning skill (PL)
- Information processing speed (IPS)
- Associative learning skill (AL)
- Reflectivity
- Risk-taking.

The most important part of student preferences is the learning style that is correlated with multiple intelligence. Howard Gardner's most current research (Lane, 1998) defines eight distinct intelligence forms stated as follows:

- Verbal/linguistic intelligence
- Logical/mathematical intelligence
- Visual/spatial intelligence
- Musical/rhythmic intelligence
- Bodily/kin aesthetic intelligence
- Intra-personal intelligence
- Interpersonal intelligence
- Naturalist intelligence

Gardner suggested that everyone possesses all above form of intelligence but in varying capacity, consequently one can show low ability in a domain area but high ability in another domain. According to the multiple intelligence theory, intelligent educational system should be individualized so that every student can be guided to achieve his or her maximum potential (Lane, 2000).

With these two factors and the features that we mention above, we introduce a student model based on ontology (Figure 1) which included all of these features.

In this designed ITS we have both student model in individual and group form. The group student model in many cases corrects the individual model and also helps the author for presenting courses and the contents based on each student and verifies them better. This group student model is needed for both student and author feedback generation and we could produce feedbacks more accurately. Some features from the student model that we consider as aspects of the feedback generation, listed here:

- Student's Study Goal
- Cognitive Aptitudes
- Student Non-Domain Related Experiences
- Student Preferences
- Student Learning Style
- Student Study Time for Content Sections

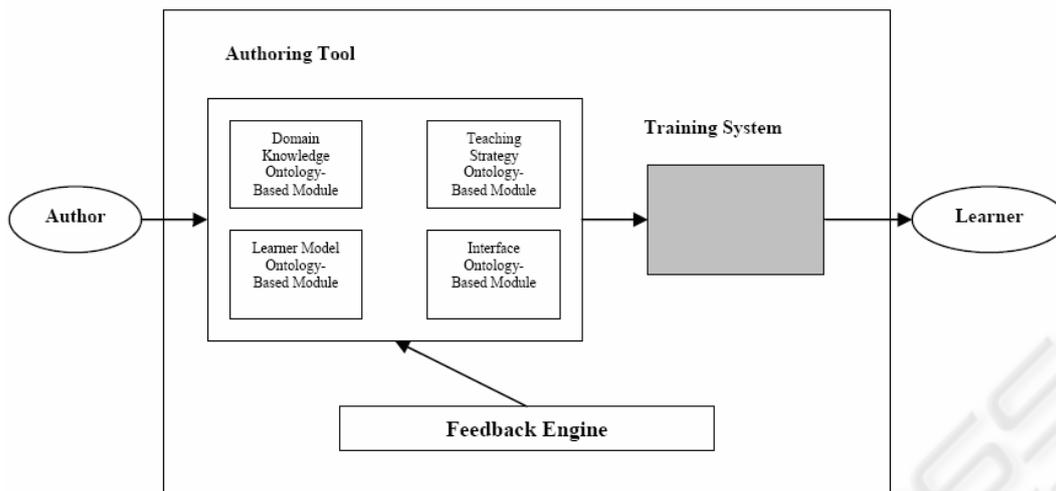


Figure 2: An ITS structure supported feedback generation module.

#### 4 FEEDBACK GENERATION TO LEARNER

To produce semantically rich feedback the system should contain several types of knowledge and in order to represent this knowledge we make use of ontologies. At this moment, we distinguish knowledge about:

- Domain – presents the contents of the ITS. (Domain Knowledge Module)
- Student Model – presents the diagnosis of system from student. (Learner Model Module)
- Education – For example: concept learning, problem solving, examples and definitions. (Teaching Strategy module)
- Feedback – presents the different types of feedback and patterns/phases during dialogs.

Figure 2 gives the architecture of an ITS that supports a generic feedback mechanism.

The Intelligent Tutoring environment consists of three main components: a training system for the learner, an authoring tool, a feedback engine, and takes a set of ontologies as argument. The Training System consists of a design and learning environment in which a learner can learn concepts and solve problems.

The authoring tool consists of an authoring environment where the author develops and maintains courses and course related materials like ontologies, examples and feedback patterns. The feedback engine automatically produces feedback to learners as well as to authors. The learner receives different types of feedback, for example

corrective/preventive feedback, critics and guiding customized to the learning style of the learner.

The feedback engine produces generic feedback and specific feedback. Generic feedback is independent of the ontologies used. Specific feedback is defined by the author and can be course, domain or student knowledge specific. To construct feedback, the feedback engine uses the four argument ontologies. Since the ontologies are arguments, the feedback engine doesn't have to be changed if the ontology is changed for another.

The feedback engine can produce the three above mentioned types of feedback. To produce student and author feedback, student and author activities are observed and matched against the ontologies mentioned. To produce group feedback information of a number of students working on a particular course is given to the author of the course. Using this information, an author may be able to optimize his/her course.

#### 5 FEEDBACK GENERATION TO AUTHOR

In order to help the author prepare teaching material efficiently, Authoring Tool provides task ontology for workflow. When the goal of training is for example to teach the operator how to recover from an accident, the training procedure is a sequence of recognition, judgment and actions. This sequence is called a workflow.

Corresponding to each specific mistake, the author has a teaching strategy in his mind. With training task ontology, he models his strategy into a sequence of teaching behaviors. The modeling process is made up of two levels: the first is to model the knowledge in his mind into a sequence of abstract steps (sub-tasks). The second is to model the subtasks to a sequence of concrete teaching actions on teaching materials.

With the goal of making the student recognize an error, the procedure usually includes the following six steps:

- 1) teaching the student to recognize the existence of an error
- 2) teaching the student the cause of the error
- 3) giving further explanation about the error
- 4) teaching underlying knowledge for deep understanding
- 5) giving explanations on the contradiction in the student's answer
- 6) pointing out the error directly

At a relatively higher level, teaching strategies are modeled into frameworks with goals and sub-goals. Along with the sub-goals in the author's mental agenda are teaching behaviors with materials such as concrete examples, hints, demonstrations and simulations to be used to attain the sub-goals. As the sub-goals become concrete, they finally can correspond to a sequence of teaching behaviors. But how to help the author to represent the behaviors is still a difficult problem. We need a facility to model these behaviors, and that is the training task ontology we are developing. In the training task ontology, we define vocabulary, which can be used by the author to represent his/her behaviors explicitly. With the help of the training task ontology, the author can model his/her teaching behaviors into a series of verb-object phrases.

Furthermore, the author arranges the teaching materials according to such behaviors, in order to get a sequence of well-arranged material which will be shown to the students.

To determine the quality of a course, we want to detect whether or not the following properties hold for a course. If such a property holds, this may signal (the absence of) a potential mistake:

- **Completeness:** Are all concepts that are used in the course defined somewhere?
- **Timely:** Are all concepts used in a course defined on time?
- **Recursive concepts:** Are there concepts defined in terms of itself?

- **Correctness:** Does the definition of a concept used in the course correspond to the definition of the concept in the ontology?

- **Synonyms:** Are there concepts with different names but exactly the same definition?

- **Homonyms:** Are there concepts with multiple, different definitions?

Since a course and course related material are represented by means of schema languages such as RDF, we can use schema analysis techniques to answer the above questions, and to produce feedback about possible mistakes for authors. We have implemented the mentioned analyses as six distinct schema-analyses, which we show at work in simple course structure and domain ontology.

## 6 SCHEMA ANALYSIS AND THE REASONING RULES TO DETERMINE FEEDBACKS

As we mentioned, the domain ontology represents by RDF and the course structure is modified by XML. So use of these tools facilitates the reasoning process and sharing information between different types of components. We used from Description Logic as method for ontology reasoning and we generate feedbacks by this means.

Description Logic (DL) allows specifying a terminological hierarchy using a restricted set of first order formula. The equivalence of OWL (Ontology Web Language, like RDF) and DL allows OWL to exploit the considerable existing body of DL reasoning fulfill important logical requirements. These requirements include concept satisfiability, class subsumption, class consistency, and instance checking. Table 1 shows a subset of reasoning rules that support OWL entailed semantics.

Table 1: Parts of OWL reasoning rules.

TransitiveProperty	$(?P \text{ rdf:type owl:TransitiveProperty}) \wedge (?A ?P ?B) \wedge (?B ?P ?C) \rightarrow (?A ?P ?C)$
subClassOf	$(?a \text{ rdfs:subClassOf } ?b) \wedge (?b \text{ rdfs:subClassOf } ?c) \rightarrow (?a \text{ rdfs:subClassOf } ?c)$
subPropertyOf	$(?a \text{ rdfs:subPropertyOf } ?b) \wedge (?b \text{ rdfs:subPropertyOf } ?c) \rightarrow (?a \text{ rdfs:subPropertyOf } ?c)$
disjointWith	$(?C \text{ owl:disjointWith } ?D) \wedge (?X \text{ rdf:type } ?C) \wedge (?Y \text{ rdf:type } ?D) \rightarrow (?X \text{ owl:differentFrom } ?Y)$
inverseOf	$(?P \text{ owl:inverseOf } ?Q) \wedge (?X ?P ?Y) \rightarrow (?Y ?Q ?X)$

We used the above reasoning for feedback generation to student from his/her student model. For detecting authoring problems, we used Schema analysis. Schema analysis techniques are based, amongst others, on mathematical results about fixed points. Since these results are not widely known, we will explicitly show how to use them in the context of schema analyses. Schema analyses will be expressed in the functional, declarative, programming language Haskell; since this allows us to stay close to the mathematical results we use (Haskell, 2005). We give some examples of schema-analyses that determine whether or not certain properties hold. The results of these analyses form the basis of feedback to the author. The analyses take the schemata as input. In this paper we perform two types of analyses: 1) the analysis of structural properties of a schema, for example the recursive property, and 2) the comparison of a schema with one or more other schemata, for example to test the correctness of a definition.

## 6.1 Solving Authoring Problems with Schema Analysis

In this section we describe six algorithms (four briefly and two in more detail), which can be used to signal the (possible) mistakes listed in section 5.

**Completeness** – we distinguish three kinds of (in) completeness: (1) within a course, (2) within domain ontology and (3) between a course and domain ontology. If a concept is used in a course, for example in a definition or an example, it has to be defined elsewhere in the course. The undefined concepts in a course are calculated in three steps: (1) determine the set of concept id's that appear in the right- and left hand sides of concepts within examples and all concept id's that appear in the right hand side of concepts within definitions (used concepts), (2) determine the concept id's that appear in the left-hand side of concepts in definitions (defined concepts) and (3) check that each of the used concepts appears in the set of defined concepts. A course is complete if all concepts used appear in the set of defined concepts. Completeness can also be applied to (domain) ontology, and between a course and ontology. The first one check whether all used concepts in the ontology are defined in the same ontology, the second one if all used concepts in a course are defined in the ontology. The same three steps are performed in both functions.

**Timely** – A concept can be used before it is defined. This might not be an error if the author uses an inductive instead of a deductive strategy to

teaching, but issuing a warning is probably helpful. Furthermore, there may be a large distance (measured for example in number of pages, characters or concepts) between the definition and the use of the concept, which is probably an error. We define the function *timely* to determine whether or not concepts in a course are defined in time and a function *outOfOrderConcepts* to list the concepts that appear to be out of order.

```
timely :: Course -> Bool
timely = null.outOfOrderConcepts
```

In function *outOfOrderConcepts*, function *extractActivities* returns for every activity in the course the tuple (*Strategy*, [*Extra\_p*]) and puts these tuples in a list *activities*. Then, using functions *inits* and *tails* every [*Extra\_p*] list is split as follows: for every element *x* in the list [*Extra\_p*] the list is subdivided into a left part (*epl*), which contains all elements to the left of element *x*, and a right part (*epr*), which contains element *x* as and all elements to the right of *x*. For example, for the input list [*e*, *d*] we get ([], [*e*, *d*]), ([*e*], [*d*]), ([*e*, *d*], []). where *e* is example and *d* is definition. Finally, function *intime* tests the timely constrains for all tuples (*es*, (*epl*, *epr*)): if the first element of *epr* is a definition and the educational strategy is deductive, then: 1) a related example appears after the definition, and 2) no related example appears before the definition (tested by *elemBy eqConcept c* in the code below). In case of an inductive activity, a related example appears before the definition and no related example appears after the definition. Function *intime* is always true if *epr* is empty or the first element of *epr* is an example.

```
outOfOrderConcepts :: Course -> [Extra_p]
outOfOrderConcepts c =
  let activities = extractActivities c
      split = [(es, s) | (es, eps) <-
                    activities, s <- zip (inits eps) (tails eps)]
      in [head epr | (es, (epl, epr)) <-
          split, not (intime (es, epl, epr))]
  intime (_, _, []) = True
  intime (_, _, Ex (j, c, cs, r) :_) =
    True
  intime (Deductive, epl, Def (j, c, cs) :
    epr) = elemBy eqConcept c epr && not
    (elemBy eqConcept c epl)
  intime (Inductive, epl, Def (j, c, cs) :
    epr) = elemBy eqConcept c epl && not
    (elemBy eqConcept c epr)
  eqConcept id (Def (i, c, cs)) = False
  eqConcept id (Ex (i, c, cs, r)) = id == c
```

**Recursive concepts** – A concept can be defined in terms of itself. Recursive concepts are often not desirable. If a concept is recursive, there should be a

base case that is not recursive. Recursive concepts may occur in a course as well as in ontology. We define two functions: *recursiveOntology* and *recursiveCourse* which take ontology respectively a course as argument. Both first extract all concept definitions, and use function *recursiveConcepts*. We show the definition of *recursiveOntology*.

```
recursiveOntology::Ontology → Bool
recursiveOntology =
not.null.listRecursiveConceptsOntology
listRecursiveConceptsOntology::
Ontology → [Id]
listRecursiveConceptsOntology =
recursiveConcepts.extractAllConceptsOnt
```

Function *recursiveConcepts* calculates for every concept all reachable concepts. Every concept in *reachables* is checked for recursiveness: a concept is recursive if the concept's Id is a member of the set of reachable concepts. The recursive concepts are collected in a list.

```
recursiveConcepts::
[(Id, RelatedConcepts)] → [Id]
recursiveConcepts allConcepts =
let nonTerminalConcepts =
filter (not.null.snd) allConcepts
reachables = reachable
nonTerminalConcepts allConcepts
in [x | (x, y) ← reachables, elem x y]
```

**Synonyms** – Concepts with different names may have exactly the same definition. For example, concept a, with concept definition (a, [c, d]), and concept b, with concept definition (b, [c, d]), are synonyms. In general, given a set productions, two concepts x and y are synonyms if their identifiers are different,  $Id_x \neq Id_y$ , and  $(reachableTerminals_x) = (reachableTerminals_y)$ .

We define function *synonyms* to check for synonyms in ontology: for all concepts in the ontology all reachable terminal concepts are determined. Concepts with the same reachable terminal concepts and different concept id's are collected in a list.

**Homonyms** – A concept may have multiple, different definitions. If for example concept "a" has definitions (a, [b, c]) and (a, [d, f]), then these two definitions are homonyms. To list the homonyms in an ontology, we calculate the concepts that appear at least twice in the left hand side of a definition.

**Correctness** – the concepts in a course should correspond to the same concepts in its domain ontology. To determine whether or not this is the case, for every concept in a course all reachable

terminal concepts are determined by function *reachableTerminals*. The set of productions contains the course's concepts completed with the concepts of the ontology for concepts that are not defined in the course. The result of this calculation is compared against the reachable terminal concepts of the same concept defined in the ontology.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Feedback is crucial in education: it is an essential element needed for effective learning. Semantically rich feedback is sparse in most eLearning systems. In this paper we present our ideas about an Intelligent Tutoring system that produces semantically rich feedback for learners as well as for authors. The system we imagine consists of a generic feedback engine: different ontologies can be plugged in, i.e. they are the arguments of the feedback engine. This is important because mechanisms for automatically generating feedback are involved, and should be reused for different ontologies. The system supports the generation of generic as well as domain specific feedback.

The most important aspect of this idea is that it uses student model and its features that we considered in it for better automatic feedback generation. We defined feedback patterns based on ontologies for educational elements such as certain types of questions, examples, definitions, etc. So all the parts of this designed system is ontology based.

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