

Modelling object typicality in Description Logics

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Abstract. We present a semantic model of typicality of concept members in description logics that accords well with a binary, globalist cognitive model of class membership and typicality. We define a general preferential semantic framework for reasoning with object typicality in description logics. We propose the use of feature vectors to rank concept members according to their defining and characteristic features, which provides a modelling mechanism to specify typicality in composite concepts.

1 Introduction

The study of natural language concepts in cognitive psychology has led to a range of hypotheses and theories regarding cognitive constructions such as concept inclusion, composition, and typicality. Description logics have been very successful in modelling some of these cognitive constructions, for example IS-A and PART-OF. In this paper, we focus on the semantic modelling of typicality of concept members in such a way that it accords well with empirically well-founded cognitive theories of how people construct and reason about concepts involving typicality. We do not attempt to survey all models of concept typicality, but briefly outline some aspects of the debate:

According to the *unitary model* of concept typicality and class membership, variations in both graded class membership and typicality of class members reflect differences in similarity to a concept prototype [8]. Both class membership and typicality are determined by placing some criterion on the similarity of objects to the concept prototype. In contrast, according to the *binary model* of concept typicality and class inclusion, typicality and concept membership reflect essentially different cognitive processes. Concepts have *defining features* providing necessary and sufficient conditions for class membership, as well as *characteristic features* indicating typicality within that class [16, 2].

According to the *localist* view of concepts, the meaning of a compound concept is a function of the meanings of its semantic constituents. In contrast, according to the *globalist* view, the meaning of concepts are entrenched in our world knowledge, which is context sensitive and cannot be decomposed into, or composed from, our understanding of basic building blocks [15, 9]. Concept typicality can therefore not be determined

from concept definition alone, but requires a world view to provide context relative to which typicality may be determined.

Description logics cannot resolve any of these debates, but we can use DLs to model some aspects of them. In particular, we can model typicality of concept members based on their characteristic features. We can also model compositional aspects of typicality. Other aspects, such as the graded membership that underpins the unitary model, and non-compositionality of compound class membership in the globalist view, cannot be modelled using DLs, or at least not in an intuitively natural way. In [20] a model of graded concept membership was proposed, but this presented a marked departure from classical DL reasoning. We therefore restrict our attention to the binary model, with a compositional model of class membership, where being a member of a class is an all-or-nothing affair, and membership of compound concepts are determined by membership of their atomic constituents or defining features, while characteristic features contribute to induce degrees of typicality within a class.

The nature of DL reasoning has traditionally been *deductive*, but there have been a fair number of proposals to extend DLs to incorporate some form of *defeasible* reasoning, mostly centered around the incorporation of some form of default rules, e.g. [3]. In a previous paper [1], we presented a general preferential semantic framework for defeasible subsumption in description logics, analogous to the KLM preferential semantics for propositional entailment [11]. We gave a formal semantics of defeasible subsumption, as well as a translation of defeasible subsumption to classical subsumption within a suitably rich DL language. This was done by defining a preference order on objects in a knowledge base, which allowed for defeasible terminological statements of the form “All the most preferred objects in C are also in D ”.

In practice, an ontology may call for different preference orders on objects, and correspondingly, multiple defeasible subsumption relations within a single knowledge base. An object may be typical (or preferable) with respect to one property, but not another. For example, a guppy may be considered a typical pet fish, even though it is neither a typical fish, nor a typical pet [16]. So we may want a pet typicality order on pets, a fish typicality order on fish, and some way of combining these orders into a pet fish typicality order. That is, we want to order objects in a given class according to their typicality with respect to the chosen features of that class. The subjective world view adopted in the fish shop may be different from that adopted in an aquarium, or a pet shop, hence the features deemed relevant may differ in each case, and this has to be reflected in the typicality order.

Relative to a particular interpretation of a DL, any concept C partitions all objects in the domain according to their class membership into those belonging to C , and those not belonging to C . This yields a two-level preference order, with all objects in C preferred to all those not in C . This order may be refined further to distinguish amongst objects in C , but even the basic two-level order suffices to define an important class of preferential subsumption relations, namely those characterising the prototypical reasoning of [13].

A suitable preference order on objects may be employed to obtain a notion of defeasible subsumption that relaxes the deductive nature of classical subsumption. To this end, we introduce a parameterised defeasible subsumption relation \sqsubseteq_j , used to express terminological statements of the form $C \sqsubseteq_j D$, where C and D are arbitrary concepts,

and \approx_j is induced by a preference order \leq_j . If \leq_j prefers objects in A to objects outside of A , we say that C is preferentially subsumed by D relative to A iff all objects in C that are typical in A (i.e. preferred by the typicality order corresponding to A), are also in D .

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: We first fix some standard semantic terminology on description logics that will be useful later on. After giving some background on rational preference orders, we introduce the notion of an ordered interpretation, and present a formal semantics of parameterised defeasible subsumption. This is a natural extension of the work presented in [1], and provides a way of reasoning with the IS-A relationship between concepts relative to a given concept. We then put forward two approaches to the definition of a derived typicality order on concepts, namely *atomic composition* and *feature composition*. We argue that feature composition is the more general approach, and is not as vulnerable to arguments against compositionality as is the case with atomic composition. We show how feature vectors may be used to determine typicality compositionally, taking into account semantic context.

2 Preliminaries

2.1 DL Terminology

In the standard set-theoretic semantics of concept descriptions, concepts are interpreted as subsets of a domain of interest, and roles as binary relations over this domain. An interpretation I consists of a non-empty set Δ^I (the *domain* of I) and a function \cdot^I (the *interpretation function* of I) which maps each atomic concept A to a subset A^I of Δ^I , and each atomic role R to a subset R^I of $\Delta^I \times \Delta^I$. The interpretation function is extended to arbitrary concept descriptions (and role descriptions, if complex role descriptions are allowed in the language) in the usual way.

A DL knowledge base consists of a *Tbox* which contains *terminological axioms*, and an *Abox* which contains *assertions*, i.e. facts about specific named objects and relationships between objects in the domain.

Tbox statements are *concept inclusions* of the form $C \sqsubseteq D$, where C and D are (possibly complex) concept descriptions. $C \sqsubseteq D$ is also called a *subsumption statement*, read “ C is subsumed by D ”. An interpretation I *satisfies* $C \sqsubseteq D$, written $I \models C \sqsubseteq D$, iff $C^I \subseteq D^I$. $C \sqsubseteq D$ is *valid*, written $\models C \sqsubseteq D$, iff it is satisfied by all interpretations.

Objects named in the Abox are referred to by a finite number of *individual names*. These names may be used in two types of assertional statements – *concept assertions* of the form $C(a)$ and *role assertions* of the form $R(a, b)$, where C is a concept description, R is a role description, and a and b are individual names. To provide a semantics for Abox statements it is necessary to add to every interpretation an injective *denotation function* which satisfies the unique names assumption, mapping each individual name a to a different element a^I of the domain of interpretation Δ^I . An interpretation I satisfies the assertion $C(a)$ iff $a^I \in C^I$; it satisfies $R(a, b)$ iff $(a^I, b^I) \in R^I$.

Rbox statements may include amongst others, role inclusions of the form $R \sqsubseteq S$ and role axioms that are used to define role properties such as transitivity.

An interpretation I satisfies a DL knowledge base \mathcal{K} iff it satisfies every statement in \mathcal{K} . A DL knowledge base \mathcal{K} *entails* a DL statement ϕ , written as $\mathcal{K} \models \phi$, iff every interpretation that satisfies \mathcal{K} also satisfies ϕ .

2.2 Preferential semantics

In a preferential semantics for a propositional language, one assumes some order relation on propositional truth valuations (or on interpretations or worlds or, more generally, on states) to be given. The intuitive idea captured by the order relation is that interpretations higher up (greater) in the order are more typical in the context under consideration, than those lower down. For any given class C , we assume that all objects in the application domain that are in (the interpretation of) C are more typical of C than those not in C . This is a technical construction which allows us to order the entire domain, instead of only the members of C . This leads us to take as starting point a finite set of preference orders $\{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\}$ on objects in the application domain, with index set \mathcal{J} . If \leq_j prefers any object in C to any object outside of C , we call \leq_j a C -order.

To ensure that the subsumption relations eventually generated are *rational* [4, 14], we assume the preference orders to be a *modular partial orders*, i.e. a reflexive, transitive, anti-symmetric relations such that, for all a, b, c in Δ^I , if a and b are incomparable and a is strictly below c , then b is also strictly below c . Modular partial orders have the effect of stratifying each Δ^I into layers, with any two elements in the same layer being unrelated to each other, and any two elements in different layers being related to each other. (We could also have taken the preference order to be a total preorder, i.e. a reflexive, transitive relation such that, for all a, b in Δ^I , a and b are comparable. Since there is a bijection between modular partial orders and total preorders on Δ^I , it makes no difference for present purposes which formalism we choose.)

We further assume that the order relation has no infinite chains (and hence, in Shoham's terminology [17, p.75], is bounded, which is the dual of well-founded, which in turn implies, in the terminology of [11], that the order relation is smooth). In the presence of transitivity, this implies that, for every nonempty subset X of Δ^I and $a \in X$ there is an element $b \in X$, maximal in X , with b greater than or equal to a .

3 Preferential subsumption

We now develop a formal semantics for preferential subsumption in description logics. We assume a DL language with a finite set of preference orders $\{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\}$ in its signature. We make the preference orders on the domain of interpretation explicit through the notion of an *ordered interpretation*: $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\})$ is the interpretation I with preference orders $\{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\}$ on the domain Δ^I .

The preference orders on domain elements are constrained by means of role assertions of the form $a \preceq_j b$ for $j \in \mathcal{J}$, such that the interpretation of \preceq_j is constrained to be that of \leq_j , that is, $\preceq_j^I = \leq_j$:

Definition 1. An ordered interpretation $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\})$ satisfies an assertion $a \preceq_j b$ iff $a^I \leq_j b^I$.

We do not make any further assumptions about the DL language at present, but assume that concept and role assertions, concept and role constructors, and classical subsumption are interpreted in the standard way, ignoring the preference orders of ordered interpretations.

We first introduce the notion of satisfaction by an ordered interpretation, thereafter we relax the semantics of concept inclusion to arrive at a definition of satisfaction of a parameterised preferential subsumption relation \sqsubseteq_j by an ordered interpretation. Finally, we define what it means for a preferential subsumption statement to be entailed by a knowledge base.

3.1 Satisfaction

Definition 2. An ordered interpretation $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\})$ consists of an interpretation I and finite, indexed set of modular partial orders $\{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\}$ without infinite chains over its domain Δ^I .

Definition 3. An ordered interpretation $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\})$ satisfies $C \sqsubseteq D$, written $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq D$, iff I satisfies $C \sqsubseteq D$.

The preferential semantics of \sqsubseteq_j is then defined as follows:

Definition 4. An ordered interpretation $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\})$ satisfies the preferential subsumption $C \sqsubseteq_j D$, written $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$, iff $C_j^I \subseteq D^I$, where

$$C_j^I = \{x \in C^I : \text{for no } y \in C^I \text{ is } x \leq_j y \text{ but } y \not\leq_j x\}.$$

For brevity, we shall at times write $\leq_{\mathcal{J}}$ instead of $\{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\}$. We make no assumption about which concept or role constructors are part of the DL language under consideration, but assume that, if present, the constructors \sqcap , \sqcup and \neg are interpreted in the standard way, ignoring the order on I . Some of the properties of \sqsubseteq_j listed below may therefore be irrelevant in some DLs. For example, rational monotonicity is only relevant in a DL which can express negated concepts.

Preferential subsumption is *supraclassical*, *nonmonotonic* and *defeasible*, in the following senses of these terms:

Supraclassicality: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq D$ then $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ for all $j \in \mathcal{J}$.

Nonmonotonicity: $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ does not necessarily imply $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqcap C' \sqsubseteq_j D$ for any $j \in \mathcal{J}$.

Defeasibility: $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ does not necessarily imply $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq D$ for any $j \in \mathcal{J}$.

The following properties of \sqsubseteq_j are analogous to the familiar properties of rational preferential entailment [11, 14].

Reflexivity: $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j C$.

And: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j F$ then $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D \sqcap F$.

Or: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j F$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash D \sqsubseteq_j F$ then $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqcup D \sqsubseteq_j F$.

Left logical equivalence: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq D$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash D \sqsubseteq C$ and
 $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j F$ then $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash D \sqsubseteq_j F$.
 Left defeasible equivalence: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash D \sqsubseteq_j C$ and
 $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j F$ then $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash D \sqsubseteq_j F$.
 Right weakening: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash D \sqsubseteq F$ then $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash$
 $C \sqsubseteq_j F$.
 Cautious monotonicity: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j F$ then
 $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqcap D \sqsubseteq_j F$.
 Rational monotonicity: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \not\Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j \neg F$ then
 $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqcap F \sqsubseteq_j D$.
 Cut: If $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqcap D \sqsubseteq_j F$ and $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j D$ then $(I, \leq_{\mathcal{J}}) \Vdash C \sqsubseteq_j F$.

3.2 Entailment

Satisfaction for defeasible subsumption is defined relative to a fixed, ordered interpretation. We now take this a step further, and develop a general semantic theory of entailment relative to a knowledge base using ordered interpretations.

Definition 5. *The preferential subsumption statement $C \sqsubseteq_j D$ is valid, written $\models C \sqsubseteq_j D$, iff it is satisfied by all ordered interpretations $(I, \{\leq_j: j \in \mathcal{J}\})$.*

Definition 6. *A DL knowledge base \mathcal{K} entails the preferential subsumption statement $C \sqsubseteq_j D$, written $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqsubseteq_j D$, iff every ordered interpretation that satisfies \mathcal{K} also satisfies $C \sqsubseteq_j D$.*

The following properties of \sqsubseteq_j are direct consequences of its corresponding properties relative to a fixed, ordered interpretation:

- \sqsubseteq_j is supraclassical: If $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqsubseteq D$ then also $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqsubseteq_j D$.
- \sqsubseteq_j is nonmonotonic: $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqsubseteq_j D$ does not necessarily imply that $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqcap C' \sqsubseteq_j D$.
- \sqsubseteq_j is defeasible: $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqsubseteq_j D$ does not necessarily imply that $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqsubseteq D$.

The other properties of \sqsubseteq_j listed earlier relative to a fixed, ordered interpretation extend analogously in the context of entailment relative to a knowledge base. For example, reflexivity of \sqsubseteq_j relative to \mathcal{K} reads $\mathcal{K} \models C \sqsubseteq_j C$.

4 Typicality of derived concept membership

In Section 2 we presented a semantic framework to model typicality of concept membership: \leq_j is a C -order if it ranks any object in C higher than any object outside of C . We now address the question of derived typicality orders. We distinguish between two possible approaches to resolve this problem:

1. *Atomic composition:* Here we use the atomic constituents or defining features of each compound concept C as building blocks. We combine their respective typicality orders recursively, depending on the operators used in the syntactic construction of C . Say $C \equiv A \sqcap B$, and typicality orders \leq_j and \leq_k are defined such that \leq_j is an A -order and \leq_k is a B -order respectively. We may then form a new typicality order for C by composing \leq_j and \leq_k according to some composition rule for \sqcap .

2. *Feature composition*: Here we identify the relevant features of each concept C . For each object a belonging to C , we form a feature vector characterising a . These feature vectors are then used to determine the typicality of a in C .

Irrespective of the composition rules applied, atomic composition is vulnerable to the same criticisms that have been levied against localist, compositional cognitive models of typicality of concept membership [15].

Feature composition is also compositional, but, in contrast with atomic composition, it is not localist. That is, the typicality of a member of a concept may be influenced by characteristic features that do not constitute part of the definition of the concept. For example, the diet of penguins may be a relevant characteristic feature in determining their typicality, but atomic composition cannot take this into account when determining typicality unless this feature forms part of the definition of a penguin.

Atomic composition may be viewed as a restricted version of feature composition, since any defining feature may be considered a relevant feature. Hence, we will only consider feature composition further. We consider the definition of feature vectors, their normalisation, and their composition.

4.1 Feature vectors

The features of a concept come in two guises: They are either *characteristic features*, co-determining typicality of objects in the concept, or they are *defining features* of the concept. In a description logic extended with suitable preferential subsumption relations, characteristic features may be introduced on the right-hand side of preferential subsumption statements. For example, in the axioms given below, if \sqsubseteq_1 is derived from the *Penguin-order* \leq_1 , then $\forall \text{eats.Fish}$ is a characteristic feature of *Penguin*. Defining features are introduced on the right hand-side of classical subsumption statements. For example, in the following axioms, *Seabird* is a defining feature of *Penguin*, so are *Bird* and $\exists \text{eats.Fish}$. Similarly, *Bird* and $\exists \text{eats.Fish}$ are both defining features of *Seabird*.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Seabird} &\equiv \text{Bird} \sqcap \exists \text{eats.Fish} \\ \text{Penguin} &\sqsubseteq \text{Seabird} \\ \text{Penguin} &\sqsubseteq_1 \forall \text{eats.Fish} \end{aligned}$$

The question arises whether relevant features should be determined algorithmically through some closure operator, or whether their identification is a modelling decision. While defining features are likely to be derivable from the knowledge base, this is not obvious in the case of characteristic features. We therefore view the choice of relevant features as a modelling decision, in accordance with a globalist view of concepts as context sensitive. The choice of features relevant for a particular concept, and their respective preference orders are therefore determined by a subjective world view and has to be re-evaluated in each new context.

Definition 7. A feature vector is an n -tuple of concepts $\langle C_1, \dots, C_n \rangle$ with corresponding preference vector $\langle \leq_1, \dots, \leq_n \rangle$ such that \leq_j is a C_j -order, for $1 \leq j \leq n$, and weight vector $\langle w_1, \dots, w_n \rangle$ such that $w_j \in \mathbb{Z}$, for $1 \leq j \leq n$.

We do not place any formal relevance restriction on the choice of elements of a feature vector, as this is a modelling decision. We may even, for example, have two feature vectors for *Fish*, one for use in the fish shop, and one for the pet shop. We may also define different preference orders for the same concept, for use in different contexts. For example, miniature, colourful fish may be typical in a pet shop, but not even relevant in a fish shop.

Next, we consider the normalisation of preference orders, which paves the way for their composition.

Definition 8. Let $\langle C_1, \dots, C_n \rangle$ be a feature vector with corresponding preference vector $\langle \leq_1, \dots, \leq_n \rangle$. The level of an object $x \in \Delta$ relative to preference order \leq_j , written $level_j(x)$, is defined recursively as follows:

$$level_j(x) := \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } x \text{ is } \leq_j \text{-minimal in } C_j^I; \\ 0 & \text{if } x \text{ is } \leq_j \text{-maximal in } (C_j^I)'; \\ \max\{level_j(y) : y <_j x\} + 1 & \text{for non-minimal objects in } C_j^I; \\ \min\{level_j(y) : x <_j y\} - 1 & \text{for non-maximal objects in } (C_j^I)', \end{cases}$$

where $(C_j^I)'$ is the set-theoretic complement of C_j^I in Δ .

Definition 8 maps objects in the domain to integers. We note that the absence of infinite \leq_j -chains ensures that $level_j$ is defined on the whole of Δ . Given any feature C_j in the feature vector, Definition 8 assigns a positive level to all objects in C_j , and a non-positive level to all objects not in C_j . In the case where \leq_j is a two-level order, $level_j(x) = 1$ for $x \in C_j$, and $level_j(x) = 0$ for $x \notin C_j$.

It is not difficult to see (given the modularity of the preference orders) that this mapping preserves the relative order of elements in the corresponding preference order:

Proposition 1. For any $x, y \in \Delta$, $x \leq_j y$ iff $level_j(x) \leq level_j(y)$.

We now have the required apparatus to compose the chosen preference orders of a feature vector. We define the typicality of objects relative to a given concept, based on its relevant features. The weight vector is used to align the relative importance of each feature.

The intuition of Definition 9 is that it ranks those objects that conform better to the features of C in terms of typicality on a higher level. This induces a modular C -order \leq on objects in the domain.

Definition 9. Given concept C with feature vector $\langle C_1, \dots, C_n \rangle$, preference vector $\langle \leq_1, \dots, \leq_n \rangle$ and weight vector $\langle w_1, \dots, w_n \rangle$, let

$$level(a) := \begin{cases} \max\{1, \sum_{j=1}^n (level_j(a) \times w_j)\} & \text{if } a \in C^I; \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

for any object $a \in \Delta$. The preference relation \leq_k on Δ given by:

$$a \leq_k b \text{ iff } level(a) \leq level(b),$$

for some $k \in \mathcal{J}$, is the typicality C -order induced by the features, preferences and weights as above.

4.2 Example

We conclude this section with an illustrative example. Suppose we have the following terminological statements:

$$Penguin \sqsubseteq Bird \sqcap Flightless \sqcap Aquatic \quad (1)$$

$$Penguin \sqsubset_1 \forall habitat.Southern \quad (2)$$

$$Southern \sqsubseteq \neg Equatorial \quad (3)$$

$$GalapagosPenguin \sqsubseteq Penguin \quad (4)$$

Line (2) of the TBox states that the habitat of typical penguins is restricted to the southern regions. Note that we cannot derive from (2) and (4) that the habitat of typical Galapagos penguins is restricted to the southern regions.

Further, let \preceq_1 be a modular *Penguin*-order that partitions objects into typical penguins, atypical penguins, and non-penguins. Then:

$$level_1(a) := \begin{cases} 2 & \text{if } a \text{ is typical in } Penguin^I; \\ 1 & \text{if } a \text{ is atypical in } Penguin^I; \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Let \preceq_2 be the modular default $\exists habitat.Equatorial$ -order that partitions this concept into two classes. Then:

$$level_2(a) := \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } a \in \exists habitat.Equatorial^I; \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

We now construct a feature vector for *GalapagosPenguin*. We choose *Penguin* as relevant defining feature, and $\exists habitat.Equatorial$ as relevant characteristic feature. That is, a Galapagos penguin is a penguin whose distinctive characteristic is that it occurs in the equatorial region. The feature vector for *GalapagosPenguin* is therefore $\langle Penguin, \exists habitat.Equatorial \rangle$. Its preference vector is $\langle \preceq_1, \preceq_2 \rangle$, and as weight vector we choose $\langle 1, 2 \rangle$ in order to normalise the ranges of \preceq_1 and \preceq_2 . The resulting derived preference order is \preceq_3 , obtained from:

$$level_3(a) := \begin{cases} 3 & \text{if } a \text{ is atypical in } Penguin^I \text{ and } a \in \exists habitat.Equatorial^I; \\ 2 & \text{if } a \text{ is typical in } Penguin^I \text{ and } a \in \forall habitat.Southern^I; \\ 1 & \text{if } a \text{ is atypical in } Penguin^I \text{ and } a \in \forall habitat.Southern^I; \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

This then induces the following preferential subsumption statement:

$$GalapagosPenguin \sqsubset_3 \exists habitat.Equatorial \quad (5)$$

So, typically, Galapagos penguins are found in the equatorial region, and not exclusively in the southern regions.

Of course, in this example we could simply have stated this, but the point is that defining and characteristic features may be used to compositionally derive the typicality

of objects in a class based on chosen relevant features. Our example gives a simple illustration of this claim.

We conclude this section with a few comments on the choice of weights in the weight vector. In the above example, we normalised the weights so that the two preference orders have the same range.

We could also use the weight vector to give preference to some features over others. Consider using the weight vector $\langle 2, 1 \rangle$ in the above example. This induces the following lexicographic order based on the features as above, in which having the defining feature *Penguin* takes precedence over the characteristic feature \exists *habitat.Equatorial*:

$$level'_3(a) := \begin{cases} 4 & \text{if } a \text{ is typical in } Penguin^I \text{ and } a \in \forall habitat.Southern^I; \\ 3 & \text{if } a \text{ is atypical in } Penguin^I \text{ and } a \in \exists habitat.Equatorial^I; \\ 2 & \text{if } a \text{ is atypical in } Penguin^I \text{ and } a \in \forall habitat.Southern^I; \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Using the preference order \preceq'_3 obtained from $level'_3$, we cannot deduce the subsumption statement obtained in (5) above, but instead now find that the habitat of typical Galapagos penguins is restricted to the southern regions:

$$GalapagosPenguin \sqsubseteq'_3 \forall habitat.Southern \quad (6)$$

5 Related work

Notions of typicality have been studied in a wide variety of contexts, most of them beyond the scope of this paper. In the context of ontologies, Yeung and Leung [20] proposed a model of graded membership, but their representation is not directly in terms of description logics. Approaches using extensions of description logics as the modelling language to model uncertainty include the probabilistic approach of Koller et al. [10] and fuzzy approaches such as that of Straccia [18, 19]. Giardona et al. [5, 6] define a nonmonotonic extension of the description logic \mathcal{ALC} to reason about typicality, while Grossi et al. [7] use contexts, modelled as sets of description logic models, to describe a version of typicality. Finally, Lambrix et al. [12] introduce an intelligent search engine based on default description logics, used to represent typical information about a topic.

6 Conclusion

We presented a semantic framework for modelling object typicality in description logics. In [1] we showed how reasoning with a single typicality order on the domain of interpretation (and the induced defeasible subsumption relation) can be reduced to reasoning in a sufficiently expressive DL. This translation is also applicable when reasoning with typicality of individual concept members, as presented in this paper.

We also presented a proposal for deriving new typicality orders from existing ones, using feature vectors. Our proposal is compositional, and rooted in a globalist cognitive stance on the semantics of typicality. The determination of compositional rules is therefore a modelling decision, unlike compound class membership, the meaning of which can be completely determined from the meanings of its atomic constituents.

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