

Adaptive Special educational needs (SEN) education on the Semantic Web

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Abstract

Web technologies have recently utilised AI techniques in order to support efforts in making the web more intelligent - providing higher-level and more customised data and services to users. This new evolution of the web is termed the "Semantic Web". The Semantic Web is an extension of the current traditional World Wide Web - adding semantic description and ontologies. One benefit is that such description and modelling helps to provide additional meaning to the information on the web; making content machine understandable.

The Web has been used in education for a long time in adaptive learning, e-learning and distance learning. In recent years, Semantic web have been applied in education to retrieve the relevant material, and add semantic annotation to documents. One such technology, semantic annotation tools, are starting to gain traction; with automatic annotation such as Magpie, semi-automatic such as Ontomat-Annotizer or more manual approaches such as Amaya. Adding semantic to educational documents would likely reduce the teacher's workload by supporting them with their routine work; increase flexible online teaching and for students; and support self-organization and self-directed learning networks for lifelong learning.

All types of learning disability which is affects on nearly 20% of internet users could be better supported by making the use of Web content more efficiently. Semantic web and the use of annotation tool such as Amaya and Ontomat-Annotizer can enhance the learning of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and their viability is the subject of this paper.

Keywords: Semantic Web, Ontology, SEN, Annotation, Semantic Web Tools

1. Introduction

We use the Internet to access information in many different fields including education. A substantial effort is being made to further develop the internet's capability in order for it to be a useful tool for diverse teaching and learning environments. Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of WWW, developed the idea of semantic web for the first time in 1998. Although everything on the web is machine-readable, it is not machine-understandable (Jing&Quan 2008). Adding semantics to web information provide methods for the computer to understand the information on the web (McCalla 2004, Wu et al. 2006, Bittencourt et al. 2008, Lawrence& Chi 2009). The semantic web opens the way to some important developments in the education field. It is able to

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upport teachers and students by adding extra features to the current Web in order to provide an adaptable and intelligent learning environment-adapting educational content to the learner and the context. The opportunity exists that such technologies can support learning anywhere, anytime and anybody learning from mostly reusable learning objects from the web (Ig Ibert et al. 2008).

The architectural approach of the semantic web is relatively straightforward, creating a layer on the existing Web that enables advanced automatic processing of the web content so that data can be shared and processed by both humans and computers (Jing et al. 2007). This fact has a number of implications for Web-based education – one being how such approaches are best able to support tailored learning strategies. Primary, secondary and higher education institutions continually expand the use of online service each year and still work on greater integration of web technology within the classroom. One limitation when using the traditional Web is that it often leads to a considerable amount of manual work (e.g. keyword searching leading to further analysis of options or further navigation) and little content reuse. The process does not always leverage (or target) the previous experience of the student when he or she is searching for information on the Web. In addition, the ease of which students and educators are able to add content in various sites often leads to duplication of educational content (with poor consistency checking as content evolves). Finally, standard Web languages (with traditional page linking) do not always fully support the on-going linking of content, especially when those links are identified by content consumers. The use of semantic web technologies is able to overcome some of these problems by the reuse, sharing, automation, integration and annotating of educational content on the web (Berners-Lee 2007).

Today, Ontologies (models of knowledge) are being used in a number of fields including knowledge management, natural language processing, database design, education, bio-informatics, e-Commerce, intelligent integration information and information retrieval. Ontologies form part of the semantic web and provide a mean for defining a domain specific language for education- Special Educational Needs (SEN) in particular. The government's department for education and skills in the UK define children with SEN having 'learning difficulties or disabilities which make it harder for them to learn or access education than most other children of the same age'.

Teachers are increasingly integrating the Web as part of their learning methods. SEN students use the Web for their research, with many enrolled for online courses, and access much of their educational information via the Web. Still more required to support them if we want use the semantic web to overcome some of the issues of reuse and adaptability of content. The use of semantic web technologies requires some exploration to determine its effectiveness in supporting the education of SEN learners.

Dyslexic, deaf or students with hearing difficulties would benefit from adding images and further information about the content (e.g. a poem) being discussed in class. This would enable them to accomplish high level of learning as they would be able to concentrate on their work instead of disturbing the class. This would prevent them from asking other students about fundamental queries, missing important information or falling behind in the lesson (and sent to another area or class for alternative work). In addition, all students with Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) would find the image annotation as a motivational tool to concentrate on their work (Keath 2008). All students with physical disability who require to search or retrieve specific information struggle to find the exact information required using the traditional web without wasting too much time and effort. Also keeping track of his recent visits/activities and relating the topics learnt and the sites he accesses during different learning sessions would facilitate the learning progress for SEN students. Opportunities to adapt content by considering previous experience and abilities are made available. Semantic web support for SEN learners offers an opportunity for better integration, sharing, reuse through the addition of semantic annotation.

This paper presents research in progress-exploring some of the annotation tools in a SEN context. The aim of this paper is to show the merits of the Semantic annotation tools that are able to specifically support the education of SEN students. We discuss Amaya and Ontomat-Annotizer as an example of manual and semi-automatic annotation tool in practical. The paper adds to previous works with it focus on SEN, using Amaya and Ontomat Annotizer to provide support for students who are learning poems. Protégé 4.1 used for modelling our ontologies. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents theoretical background relating to semantic web. Section 3 includes an investigation of different annotation tools used to support

Special Educational needs (SEN) students. Section 4 demonstrates a comparison of different annotation tools used for Special Educational Needs students. Finally section 5 and 6, we review of future work, and draw the conclusions from this research.

2. Background

In this section there is a description of the semantic web components, architecture, adapting semantic web in education and the Research outline.

2.1 The architecture of semantic Web

The architecture of semantic web based on a hierarchy of languages – starting with work by Tim Berners-Lee (shown in the first diagram in figure 1) and evolving to specify the new languages and tools.

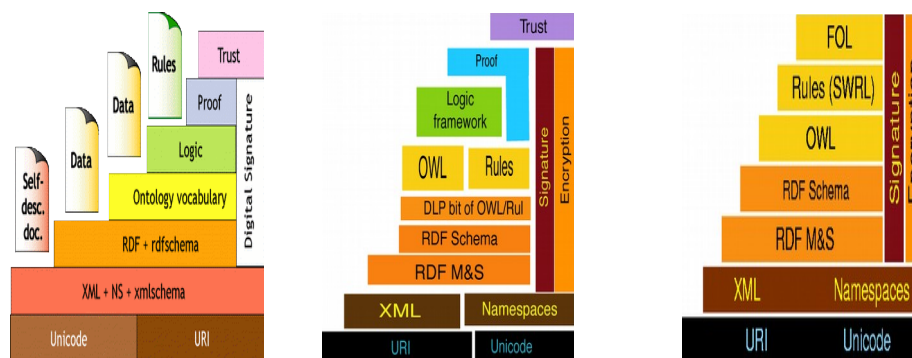


Figure 1. Semantic web Architecture (Berners Lee, Pulido et al. 2006, Horrocks at el 2005)

W3C Web Ontology Working Group worked hard and come up with new web ontology language OWL (bringing together the work of DAML and OIL groups), leading to the evolutions of the basic hierarchy designed by Berners-Lee). The affect of adding specific detail about rule and query languages, is an extra layer with OWL stack. The architecture developed by adding another layer labelled as DLP bit of OWL/Rules on top of RDFS and another layer of OWL and Rules sitting side by side on top of DLP bit of OWL/Rules (see figure 1) (Pulido et al 2006). This updating based on incorrect assumption about the semantics of Description Logic Programs (DLP). Since DLP is not compatible with OWL so it will not be below OWL and assuming that DLP include semantic rules we come up with the third diagram of figure 1(Ian et al. 2005). Consider DLP as a subset of OWL, Horrocks at el (2005)

displayed the hierarchy with extra First order rules language such as SWRL layer above OWL as illustrated in the third diagram of figure 1. In addition, more expressive languages such as Full Order Logic (FOL) would sit above SWRL. Maximising the compatibility with RDF and OWL for the semantic web architect layers will advantage the development of the semantic web (Ian et al. 2005).

2.2 Semantic web components

The basic components of semantic web are; Metadata, semantic web languages, ontologies, semantic mark-up of pages and services (Devedzie 2008). They can be summarised as follows:

Metadata: Metadata is data about data which means the data that describes another piece of as shown in figure 2. Some developers consider the Metadata as the heart of e-learning (Sammour 2006). Learning systems which may include data about students, teachers, and courses taken can be developed by using metadata. Adding extra data of this type using semantic web would help the computer to understand additional query requirements. Figure 2 shows how each data on the web will be joined by semantic metadata.



Figure 2. Representation of metada

Semantic Web Languages: The basic ontology language and simple models used for combining data and representing information on the web. They have typically used the Resource Description Framework (RDF), which could be represented as a labelled graph (Devedzie 2004; Drummond 2005; Berners-Lee 2009; Ghaleb et al, 2006, Allemang&Hendler 2008) and are based on XML (then called RDF/XML). Many of the languages based on XML. Resources are described using RDF statements, which are represented as subject, predicate and object as in figure 3.



Figure 3. Representation of RDF statement

An extended ontology language of RDF is RDFS (Antoniou&Harmelen 2008). It allows classes of resources and properties to be included. To query the data on the web like SQL, Berners-Lee developed SPARQL and considers it as one level higher because of the query included (Berners-Lee 2009).

Ontology Web Language (OWL) is an ontology language which describes classes. The components of OWL are Classes, Properties, and Individuals (Tauberer and Elin, 2009). Implementation of semantic description with OWL is possible by specifying concepts and relationships between concepts (Koper 2004). It delivers three sublanguages: OWL Lite, OWL DL, and OWL Full (Yu 2007).

For the purpose of this research we used OWL 2 which is fully supported with protégé 4.1 beta. Figure 4 show structure of SEN learning ontology using OWL which include three entities Person, Course and teacher. Student and Teacher are subclass of a Person entity and Poem is a subclass of a Course entity. Moreover, it shows that there is relationship between SEN-Student and the course taken, also a relationship between the teacher and the subject teaching which is in these example poems.

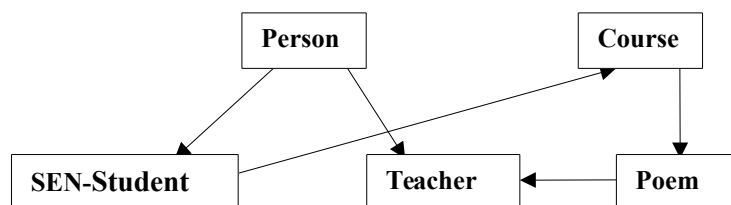


Figure 4. an outline of part of SEN educational representing classes and subclasses ontology

Ontology: Ontology is the basic blocks for semantic web, and the structure composed of relationships as well vocabulary that most often revolves around a particular domain (Sharman, Kishore& Ramesh 2007). It is text-based piece of reference-knowledge located on the web for the gents to use it when needed (Devedzic 2004). The basic components of ontology are classes, properties and restrictions (Sachs 2006). Classes are grouping resources with similar characteristics according to W3C recommendation. There are two types of properties Object properties which link individuals to individuals and Datatype properties which link individuals to data

values. Restrictions are all the condition provided such as a query which includes all SEN student aged 7. Davedzie (2004) explains the ontology as a tool to help in sharing and reusing knowledge. Ontologies can be very useful for a community as a way of structuring and defining the meaning of the metadata that are currently collected. Also ontology can be used to provide semantic annotations for collections of images, audio or other textual objects.

In early 2004, OWL (Web Ontology Language) has officially released as W3C Recommendation for representing ontology. For our example, all the metadata about SEN students, SEN teachers and the poems are structured and defined by the SEN ontology designed using protégé 4.1. It describes the entities involved, relationships and data involved as well as adding any restriction required.

Semantic Web Services: It is a software system identified by a URI according to W3C draft definition. Web service operates by exchanging the data in XML structure and all the input and output parameters are XML documents as well. XML allow data to be shared while web service allows software to be shared and reused during development. SOAP, WSDL, and UDDI are technologies for transporting data over the web (Anura 2004, Rudi & Andreas 2007). Web service allows the communication between data through the internet; allow sharing data from a server application to a desktop. For the purpose of our example, suppose SEN students enrol for a course via the web, semantic web allows the student to track the procedure of the enrolment on the bases that he/she applied through the web. This means that web service helps in the integration of distributed application and facilitates sharing information on the web. There are different ways to display the layers of web services. Figure 5 illustrates the layers of the web services according to W3C.

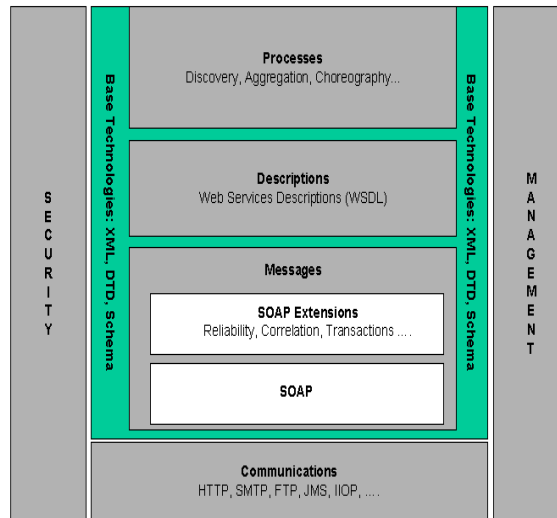


Figure 5 an outline of web services layers stack

2.3 Adapting Semantic Web in SEN Education

Everyday there are many educational web pages added to the web which make the search and retrieve of information more difficult and time consuming. Semantic web manage this problem using the metadata organized in several ontologies. This metadata explain the data or the documents content published on the web which then helps the computer to understand them. This can help to accomplish the search and data retrieving method in less time and with less effort.

The motivation of semantic web is to add meaning to information develop the use of this web content in education and specifically for students with SEN. An educational semantic web considers student, teacher and content as agents to develop the learning process. Teacher agents undertake all the routine daily work, students can communicate with teachers, use resources such as tutorials. Teacher agents can deal with the teacher experience and expertise (Anderson & Whitelock 2004). This means that if we consider SEN educational semantic web then we will have SEN Teacher, SEN student and content as agents interacting. SEN Teacher agents can help in marking, assessing, record keeping, medical issues, background experience and motivations. SEN Student agent support students in facilitate communication, research. For example, students can communicate with the teachers regarding their

work, assessment and other students socially with the same interest, group work, self organize.

Although e-learning has achieved a number of successful steps recently by implementing many of successful systems which benefit large numbers of students in many colleges and universities, it often does not consider the individual learner needs, style and interest. The emphasis was on the use of ontology to provide the required learning material according to learner's interest (Sancho et al, 2005). Stutt & Motta (2004) from Open University of the UK consider the learners needs when they describe applications of the educational semantic web. Many SEN students use eLearning as an effective method in there learning (Jackie 2008). Part of achieving high progress in SEN education is considering their needs and experiences. This would better integrate SEN students and provide the material according to their ability - and put into account any medical or social problems which may affect on their education activities. Also, this would help in providing the right materials required for every lesson.

2.4 Research outline

This research evaluates the potential of using Amaya and OntoMat-Annotizer as an annotation tools to support the learning methods for SEN students. First, we designed SEN ontology using protégé 4.1 beta which provide full support for OWL which is used in this research. A experiment poem website was created that includes a number of different styles of poems. We combined SEN OWL ontology designed in protégé and SEN educational website created in HTML and added Amaya or OntoMat-Annotizer as a selected annotation tools for this research to build a SEN educational semantic web as illustrated in figure 6.

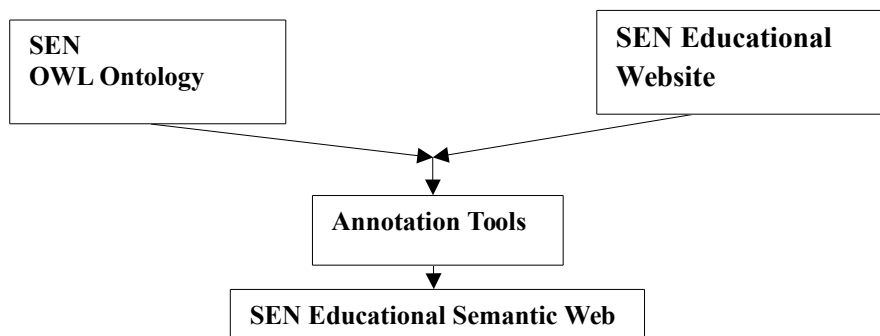


Figure 6. An overview of adapting semantic web with SEN Education

3. Annotation tools used to support SEN

Annotations are external comments, additional information, notes or remarks which can be attached to any web document (Kahan et al. 2002). Annotations could be considered as metadata, as it is additional information about data on the web.

Recently, there are many annotation tools developed such as manual, semi-automatic or automatic. In this paper we will investigate the use of Amaya as a manual annotation tool and Ontomat-Annotizer as a semi-automatic annotation to support SEN students. Amaya is a manual way, not requiring complicated technical skills, with easy to use and the software available free from the internet. Ontomat annotizer utilises the structure of the ontology, available on the internet, requiring less time and effort. Amaya allow users to browse and author web pages. The web page will be uploaded onto a server. Also, Amaya maintains a consistent internal document model. It allows the presentation of the document structure at the same time as formatted view. Furthermore, it can work on several documents with different format such as (X)HTML, MathML and SVG (Kahan 2002). Links can be created like hypertext and finally, include annotations which are external information which could be attached to the web document or part of the document. This annotation process could easily be used to support SEN related tagging. All annotations would provide extra information and images for the documents published on the internet. All annotation would provide extra information and images for the documents published on the web. Consequently, all annotations is saved and used at any time when required. Dyslexic students who have problems in concentrating or any other disability which hinder the student from understanding the meaning can benefit from Amaya annotation tool with a tailored view or additional content.

The use of Amaya as an annotation tool was through an educational system for SEN. The website used in Amaya was a poem website which includes different styles of poems. This website was developed to add extra information for SEN by adding annotations to each poem. For example, when a SEN student needed to learn about children's poem, most of the words are tagged with additional information and a

picture to represent the word. This is shown in Amaya by a picture of a pen to show the annotation and when you clicked will show the stored annotation.

Figure 7 shows a screen capture of Amaya when creating an annotation on a poem. We selected the white bear word from the children poem and added further information and image of a white bear.

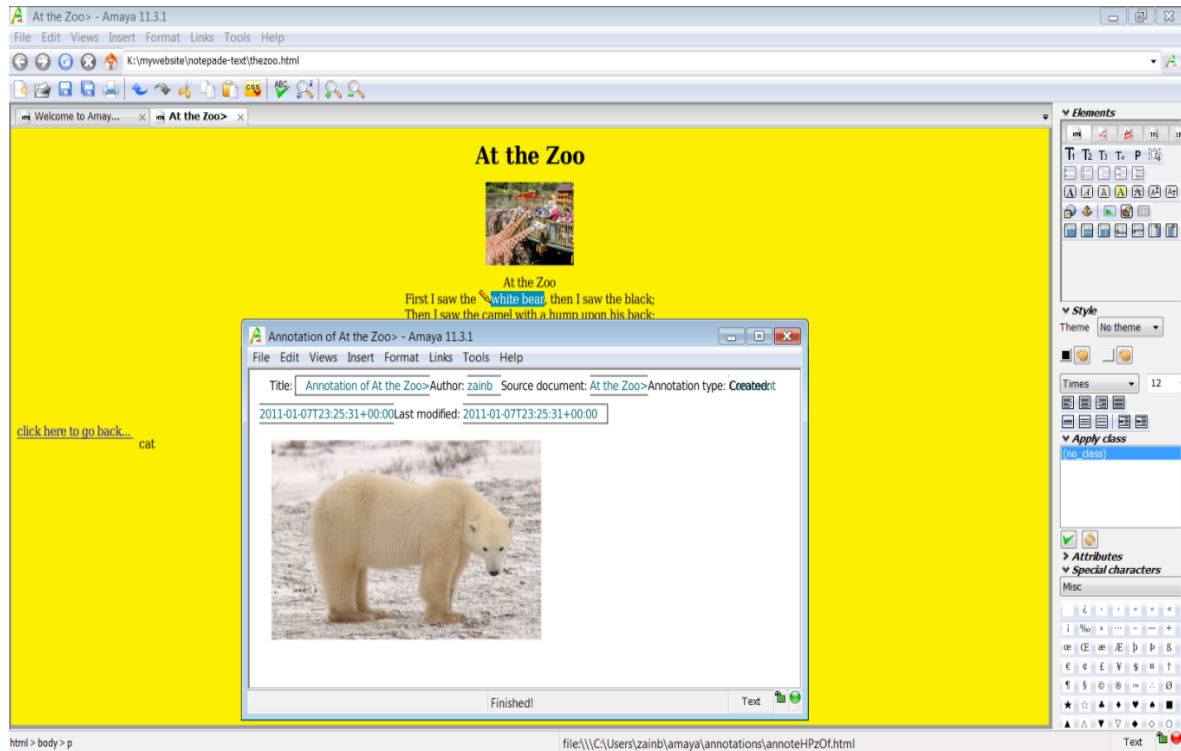


Figure 7. Annotating a poem with Amaya

The work was loading poem website in Amaya and adding semantic annotation to each poem. The annotation added was further information and images about the poems. All annotation can be saved and used any time. It is represented with a tagged pen with each part annotated and every time we need to see the annotation we should click on the pen as indicated in figure 8. the pen can be hidden if it disturbs the students.

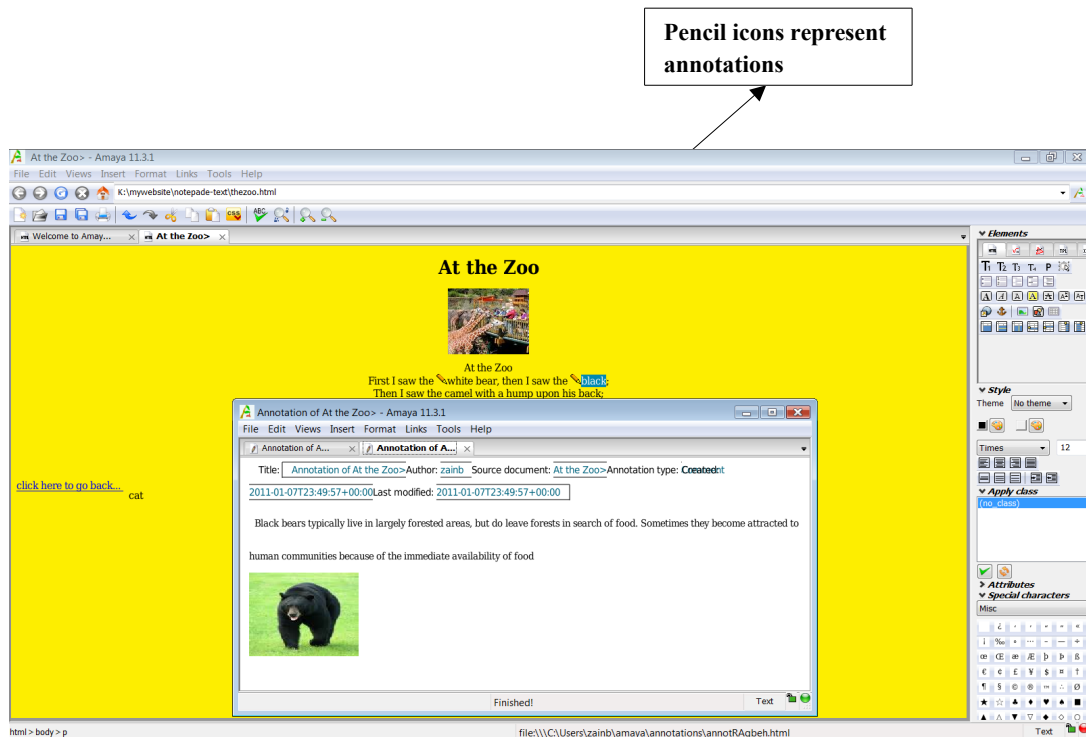


Figure 8. Annotating a poem with Amaya showing the marks of the annotation

We notice from this example that SEN learners can get extra support with their learning by adding extra information and pictures to make easy to understand using Amaya annotation tool. It could support local annotations or remote annotations. It is considered a local annotation when the user created it.

Ontomat-Annotizer: It is a semi automatic annotation tool (Handschuh& Staab 2003). It started by opening the SEN educational ontology which is designed using protégé 4.1 beta with OWL , as well the poem website. Then selects the class where the text from the websites fits in then drag the text from the website to the class – associating the text to the description of the class. This software shows the collaboration between the design of the ontology and the website. We loaded protégé ontology in one side and website with HTML code on the other side. When we highlight any text from the poem such as the writer name and drag it to the Author class we notice that this name is added as an individual in Author class. The annotation created and the part of the text will be presented as an instance of this class as shown in Figure 9.

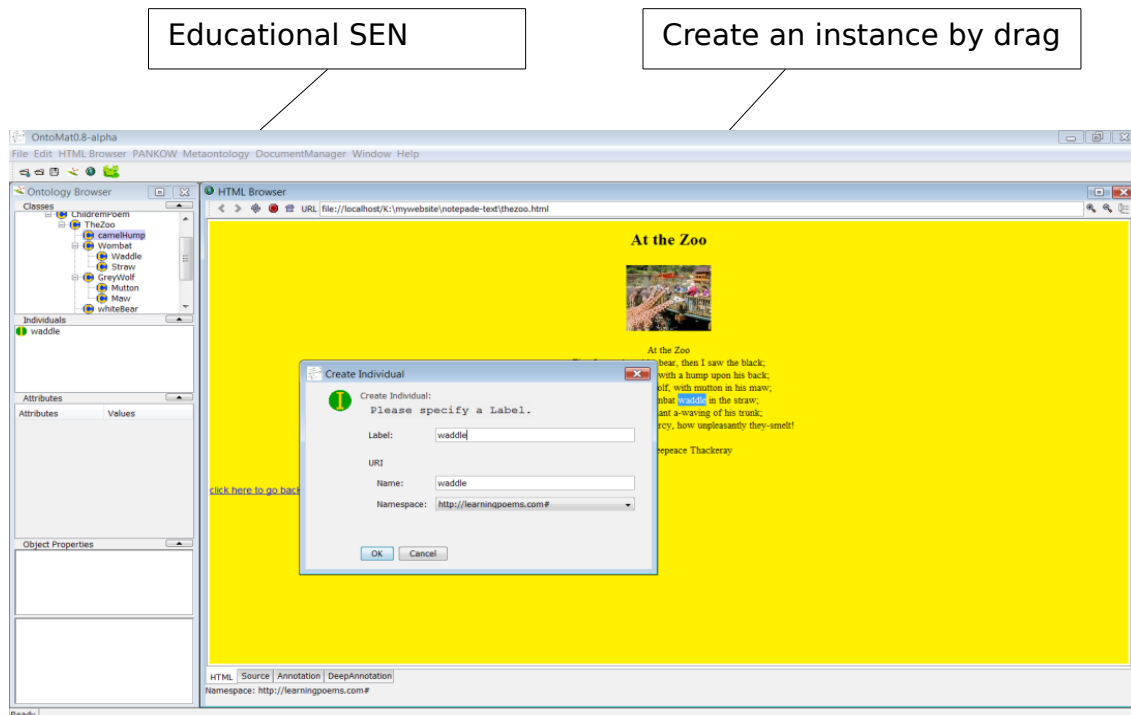


Figure 9. Representation of creating Author instance by dragging the author name from the website to the class of similar instances (Author)

Figure 10 illustrates the progress of the annotation of a children poem, on the left of the screenshot is the ontology designed using protégé with all the classes, entities, attributes and relationships.

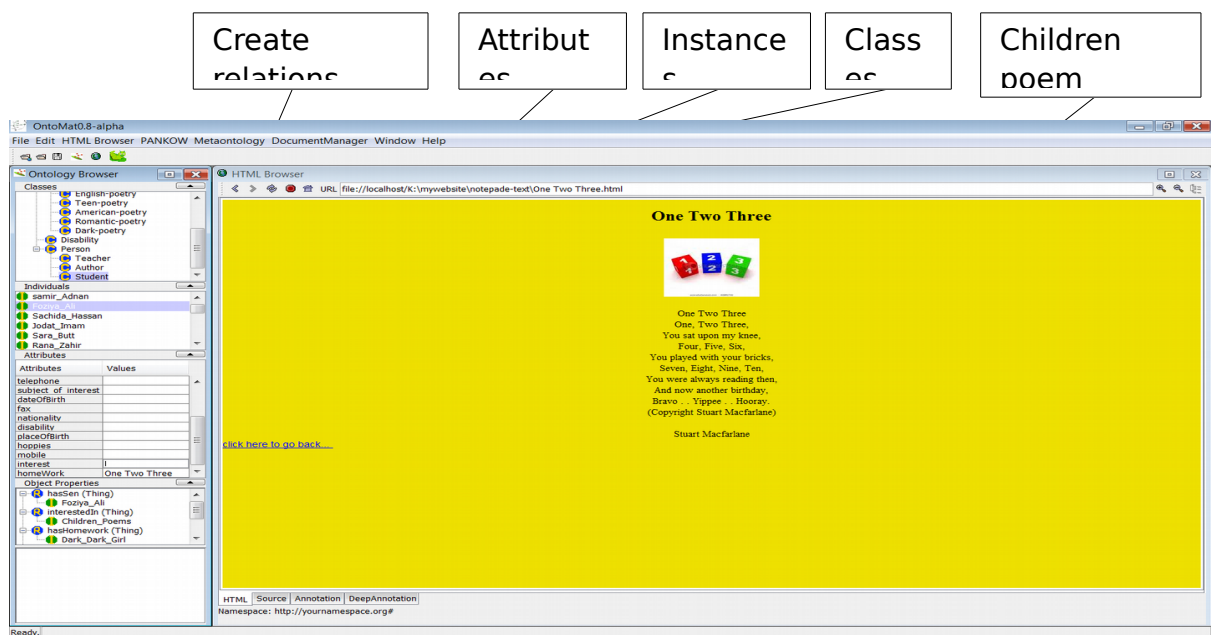


Figure 10. create annotation using Ontomat-Annotizer.

4. Comparisons of annotation tools used to support SEN

For Amaya annotation requires adding all the annotation manually which takes time, effort and cost. In contrast, the Ontomat-Annotizer is a semi-automatic annotation tool, which uses a drag' drop method for the annotation of documents on the web. The benefit being that it relies on an Ontology (itself a means for sharing and standardising vocabulary). The result is saving time, effort and cost. The process of creating metadata in OntoMat is supported in three ways. First, annotation by typing statements through the ontology, second, annotation by Markup and finally, annotation by Authoring web pages (Seigfried & Steffen 2003). This means that OntoMat-Annotizer generate three types of metadata as explained in our example, creating instances, attributes and relationship instances. Where, Amaya allow users to browse and author web pages. This reflects the efficiency of OntoMat-Annotizer as good tool for annotation. This means. Amaya provide some support for ontologies where Ontomat-Annotizer has full support for ontologies. The drawback with Ontomat-Annotizer is that metadata which provided about the content of the web require that authors must create the content and annotate the content (Hands Schuh & Staab 2002). This requires domain skills and employs annotators with associated extra cost. Similarly, Amaya requires people to enter relevant Metadata manually which again raises the cost of content generation and took longer time than Ontomat-Annotizer. There is obviously more authoring effort for Amaya than Ontomat-Annotizer. Amaya based on XML or HTML where Ontomat-Annotizer based on HTML only. A summary of the finding can be seen in table 1.

	Amaya	Ontomat-Annotizer
Efficiency		x
cost	x	x
Maintenance	x	x
Ease of use	x	
More Time	x	x
Support for ontology		x
Based on XML or HTML	x	
Automation		x
Authoring effort	x	

Table 1: comparisons between Amaya and Ontomat-Annotizer

5. Future work

The next step required is to work on other annotation tools to find out how others can enhance the progress of the education of SEN and what are the differences could make in the future of SEN education. For example, students who are blind or have sever visual problems find many lessons very difficult to understand without thorough description from others. This affect on other students if they involve in explain what they are doing or employ a person to do this job which cost the school. Using multimedia as part of the options for annotation can improve the teaching level for these students. Multimedia could increase the learning motivation for students with ADHD as well as Dyslexic students. There are some of annotation tools which consider multimedia as an extra option for annotation such as M-OntoMat-Annotizer and magpie. Some of the research questions that result from this work are:

- What are the merits of specific tools with respect to specific SEN?
- How can the annotation be best used for SEN adaption?
- How does each tool work with different subject content?
- How can the ontology be more automatically generated?
- What is the balance between ontological content and annotation?

6. Conclusions

Despite all the researches so far in the field of educational semantic web, there is little done for SEN semantic web and surprisingly little effort has been spent on developing the education of SEN using the Web. In this paper we provide an overview of two of the annotation tools to support SEN educational system. Also, there is an investigation (abd basic experiment) of two annotation tools Amaya and Ontomat-Annotizer. Amaya the basic annotators, allow users to manually create annotations but does not contain any features to support automatic annotation and more sophisticated user support. On the other hand, Ontomat-Annotizer is a semi automatic annotation tool, providing ontology based on drag and drop creation of instances and the ability to mark-up pages while they are being created. OntoMat also incorporates methods for deep annotation, i.e. annotation for Web pages. Amaya and Ontomat-Annotizer Proceedings of the U.K. Academy for Information Systems (UKAIS 2011), 16th Annual Conference

tools used with an experimental poem website are both based on HTML. Although, there is clear comparisons between Amaya or Ontomat-Annotizer much work still required on how best to develop education content for SEN using semantic web technologies.

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