Paper submitted to AAAI-91 Workshop on Creativity: Models, Methods, and Tools, July 14-19 1991, Anaheim, California

MAPPING CREATIVITY WITH KNOWLEDGE SUPPORT TOOLS

Mildred L G Shaw & Brian R Gaines

Knowledge Science Institute
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4
mildred@cpsc.ucalgary.ca & gaines@cpsc.ucalgary.ca

Abstract: Many of the tools developed within the knowledge acquisition research community to support the knowledge engineer in developing knowledge-based systems are based on methodologies from psychology, education or management designed to support people in developing overt conceptual structures. Often the root discipline already has explicit models of the roles of these methodologies in supporting the human creative process. Given the tremendous technical progress in developing a variety of interactive knowledge acquisition tools in recent years it is appropriate to investigate the applicability of these tools to their original domain of application in the root disciplines. This paper reports some preliminary experiments on the application of knowledge acquisition tools to support first year graduate students in establishing their own research directions and identities.

INTRODUCTION

Human creativity is a puzzle within an artificial intelligence context. We expect creativity to be associated with intelligence, yet factor analyses of intelligence tests and divergent thinking tests suggest that creativity is a distinct factor of ability independent of intelligence (Bolton, 1972). Logically, the puzzle is perhaps resolved if one thinks of it in terms of the difference between the capabilities to perform a task *well*, and those to perform it both well and *differently*. Originality is not valued positively within the current performance paradigms of artificial intelligence research. On the contrary, we have been concerned with systems that mimic natural intelligence, and our evaluations are higher the closer the performance is to established human norms. A highly creative person would not come out well within such an evaluation framework!

However, much of what has been done within the artificial intelligence research paradigm is potentially valuable to creativity research and to the support of human creativity. In the knowledge acquisition community, we have developed many tools designed to elicit expertise (Boose & Gaines, 1988, 1990). These are apparently within the performance framework noted above—to 'snapshot' existing expertise. However, we have come to realise as Clancey (1989, 1990) has stressed, that, while the expertise may exist, the overt knowledge that we presuppose to underlie it may not pre-exist. Skilled performance in the neural network that is the brain is not necessarily based on overt knowledge structures. Indeed, there is no basis other than explicit presupposition to suppose that there *are* 'knowledge structures' underlying expertise.

Over a period of time, at the knowledge acquisition workshops we have come to view our knowledge acquisition tools, not as transferring knowledge, but rather as supporting the expert in building a model of his or her skill sufficient to emulate it. We no longer presuppose that such a model pre-exists in a form to be 'transfered.' Since the roots of most knowledge acquisition tools is in other disciplines, such as psychology, anthropology and management (Shaw & Woodward, 1990), and the original purpose was often to aid people in understanding their own psychological processes, it is plausible that the computational tools developed may serve other purposes. In particular, they may be relevant to aspects of the human creative process.

One of the first psychologists to consider the relationship between convergent and divergent knowledge processes within a cognitive framework was George Kelly (1955) whose *personal construct theory* presents a person as exploring his or her environment, collecting data about the world and constructing a personal reality from which to view it. The repertory grid methodology used in many knowledge acquisition tools (Shaw & Gaines, 1983, 1987; Boose, 1984; Boose & Bradshaw, 1987; Diederich, Ruhmann & May, 1987) stems from this perspective, and supports the elicitation and analysis of the construct system, or conceptual framework, with which an individual operates in his or her own domain.

Kelly analyzes the dynamics of change in a person's construct system in terms of a *creativity cycle* in which convergent and divergent thinking alternate. A system of personal constructs is not fixed, but may vary from one occasion to another:

> There are typical shifts in the sequence of construction which people employ in order to meet everyday situations....The Creativity Cycle has to do with the way in which a person develops new ideas. (Kelly, 1955, pp.514-515).

Kelly sees convergence/divergence as a sequence of loosening and tightening of constructions. A person who uses only tight construing may be very productive but cannot be original. On the other hand, loose construing is characterized by a person's "preposterous thinking" (p. 529) which is unformulated and often preverbal. The structured alternation of these processes is what we perceive as the creativity underlying intelligent behavior. Thus the paradoxical relation expressed at the start of this section is explained in terms of sequentiality—the full scope of intelligence involves not only a high level of performance but the adaptive renewal of the underlying basis of that performance through a process of creative reconstruction.

We are studying the application of knowledge acquisition tools as systems to support the creative component of scientific knowledge processes. This paper presents Kelly's personal construct theory and, in particular, the repertory grid, as a method of eliciting relevant but abstract constructs about the topic, together with semantic nets which are used to produce a concept map of the cognitive structures involved. Hypermedia is used for annotation and explanation, to add notes, diagrams and links to other material during the creativity process. An empirical study has been undertaken of the system in use by ten graduate students in a Cognitive Science course in a university department of Computer Science to explore and elaborate aspects of their research topics. Some initial results are presented.

KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION TOOLS

There are well over one hundred knowledge acquisition tools named and described in the current literature (Boose, 1989). However, a recent classification of tool architectures has characterized them in terms of four major types (Gaines, 1990):

- Semi-formal elicitation and structuring through hypertext and hypermedia—used to capture raw knowledge at the pre-computational stage—the tool typically being based on a hypermedia system such as Apple's HyperCard.
- Direct editing of knowledge in a semantic network, frame, rule, representation—used with overt, computational knowledge structures directly available from an expert or derived through other tools—the tool typically being some form of graphic knowledge editor for semantic nets.
- Indirect elicitation through critical cases described in relevant attributes—used when the expert cannot provide overt knowledge structures but can provide high quality stereotypical case data—the tool typically being graphic interaction through a repertory grid methodology.
- Inductive derivation of knowledge from data sets of varying quality—used when the expert cannot provide high quality case data but can give access to substantial databases of lower quality data—the tool typically being a derivative of ID3 or AQ11.

All of these types of tools seemed to us to have some *prima facie* validity as potential support for the creative process. Our logic was that tools designed to help an expert make his or her knowledge structures overt could also support students in developing models of their own intuitions. Such tools might counterbalance the weight of existing received knowledge, particularly used by first year postgraduate students attempting to establish their own research directions and personal research identities. The significance of the knowledge acquisition tools and underlying methodologies is threefold: they are *reflective*, reflecting back to the student his or her own vocabulary, nascent knowledge structures, and their implications; they are *adaptive*, capable of being continually edited and refined with little ergonomic cost; they are *operational*, generating knowledge structures capable of being used in the computer for reasoning, simulation and problem-solving.

In the early 1980's we reported the application of computer-based repertory grid tools as computer-assisted learning (CAL) tools to track the creativity cycle in a student's learning progression (Shaw & Gaines, 1982). We had already suggested that such tools could be used to derive the conceptual models underlying expertise in developing expert systems (Gaines & Shaw, 1980), and demonstrated their role in eliciting accounting expertise at an early expert systems conference (Shaw & Gaines, 1983). Boose (1984) presented parallel research in an industrial context at AAAI'84, and repertory grid methodologies and tools have since become routine items in the knowledge engineer's toolkit. In particular they have been greatly extended in both the richness of knowledge representation and the quality of interactive computer support and online computer analysis and its graphic presentation.

It has seemed to us as we enter the 1990's that the wheel has come a full circle and that it is time to test the tools developed for specialist expert system development as general *knowledge support systems* with applications to creative thinking at all stages of the educational, scientific and artistic process. We have at our disposal the original repertory grid tools, now greatly enhanced and integrated with hypermedia systems and a range of expert system shells (Gaines, Rappaport & Shaw, 1989; Gaines & Linster, 1990). We also have a graphic knowledge editor designed on the one hand for ease of use through simple MacDraw-like editing features, but on the other hand implementing a well-defined visual conceptual language supporting both Kelly's construct hierarchies and Brachman's KL-ONE conceptual structures (Gaines & Shaw, 1990). In the context of this paper, it is particularly interesting to note the way in which the graphic knowledge editor is able to support the concept maps already used within the educational system to help students elucidate and communicate their ideas (Novak & Gowin 1984).

The remainder of this paper briefly introduces the basic ideas of personal construct theory, gives an overview of the tools, illustrates their application in the hands of a graduate student, and summarizes our preliminary experience with ten students experimenting in their use.

PERSONAL CONSTRUCT THEORY

George Kelly commenced his studies as an engineer but moved into clinical psychology and developed a radically different approach to the subject that emphasized the questing nature of the individual and the idiosyncratic content of our models of the world. Kelly put forward the idea of an individual as what Shaw (1980) terms a *personal scientist* using *personal constructs* as filters through which people perceive events:

> Man looks at his world through transparent templets which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. (Kelly, 1955, pp.8-9)

He emphasizes the epistemological status of these constructs in predicting and controlling the world and their ontological status as personal conjectures rather than reality-derived absolutes:

> Constructs are used for predictions of things to come, and the world keeps on rolling on and revealing these predictions to be either correct or misleading. This fact provides the basis for the revision of constructs and, eventually, of whole construct systems. (Kelly, 1955, pp.14)

Making explicit the construct structures in use and identifying their strengths and weaknesses is a key process in aiding a person's coping with a complex world. In general we may expect many problems of knowledge, decision and action, both fundamental as in science and applied as in management, to be related to the construct systems in use. In particular we may expect the development of cognitive structures to be related to the construct system through which the person is viewing the world.

Kelly suggested the technique of the *repertory grid* to represent the repertoire of constructions that the individual has acquired from his personal observations of the world. A repertory grid or "construction matrix" is essentially a two-way classification of data in which events and abstractions, or constructs, are interlaced. In his own terms:

> ...it expresses one's own finite system of cross-references between the personal observations he has made and the personal constructs he has erected. (Kelly, 1965, p. 291)

The personal observations are known as *elements*. Elements were originally constituted from the role titles of significant people in the life of the particular individual. The personal constructs are bipolar dimensions which group the elements into varying clusters according to their similarities and differences within the individual's frames of reference. Kelly used the repertory grid as a tool to assist with psychotherapy, using significant others as elements. Since its introduction, it has been used in many settings to probe the construct systems of psychiatric patients, student teachers, effective managers, knitwear inspectors, rivet selectors in the aircraft building industry, and the conceptual structures of students and experts. The elements may be people, things, events, or experiences, which are related to the particular problem or purpose for using the grid.

THE REPERTORY GRID TOOL

RepGrid is a knowledge support system providing an integrated set of tools for elicitation and analysis of elements and constructs in a given domain. It combines a number of different techniques, including element and construct elicitation and clustering, and is linked to an inductive rule generation program. It runs on the Apple Macintosh family of computers to provide a highly interactive and graphic knowledge acquisition environment. At the heart of RepGrid is an object-oriented knowledge base in which knowledge is formally represented as a multiple-inheritance digraph of classes, objects and properties.

The main tools in RepGrid are shown in Figure 1:

- *Elicit* accepts specifications of elements within a domain and provides an interactive graphical elicitation environment within which a person can distinguish elements to derive his or her constructs within the domain. The resultant conceptual system is continuously analyzed to provide feedback prompting the person to enter further elements and constructs.
- *Exchange* extends this to share elements and constructs between people and allows the terms in the conceptual system derived from one person to be used by another in order to determine whether the two conceptual systems are different in any way. It can also be used by the same person looking at changes in their own conceptual structures over time, for example, after reading a specific book, or exploring a particular domain.
- *Process* gives access to clustering tools for the analysis and display of the conceptual systems elicited: FOCUS shows the system as a hierarchical structure; and PrinCom as a spatial map.
- *Socio* processes results from several people to reveal the similarities and differences in their conceptual systems, or the same person at different times, construing a domain defined through common elements or constructs. It can be used to focus discussion between people on those differences between them which require resolution, enabling them to classify them in terms of

differing terminologies, levels of abstraction, disagreements, misunderstandings, and so on (Shaw & Gaines, 1989).

RepGrid is coupled through an inter-application protocol with Apple's HyperCard, and to inductive analysis tools deriving rules from cases represented in the grids. It exports the grid data as class definitions, properties, constraints, entailments and instances to a variety of object-oriented knowledge-based system shells. In particular it exports to our KRS knowledge representation server, a KL-ONE-like system with associated graphic knowledge editor.

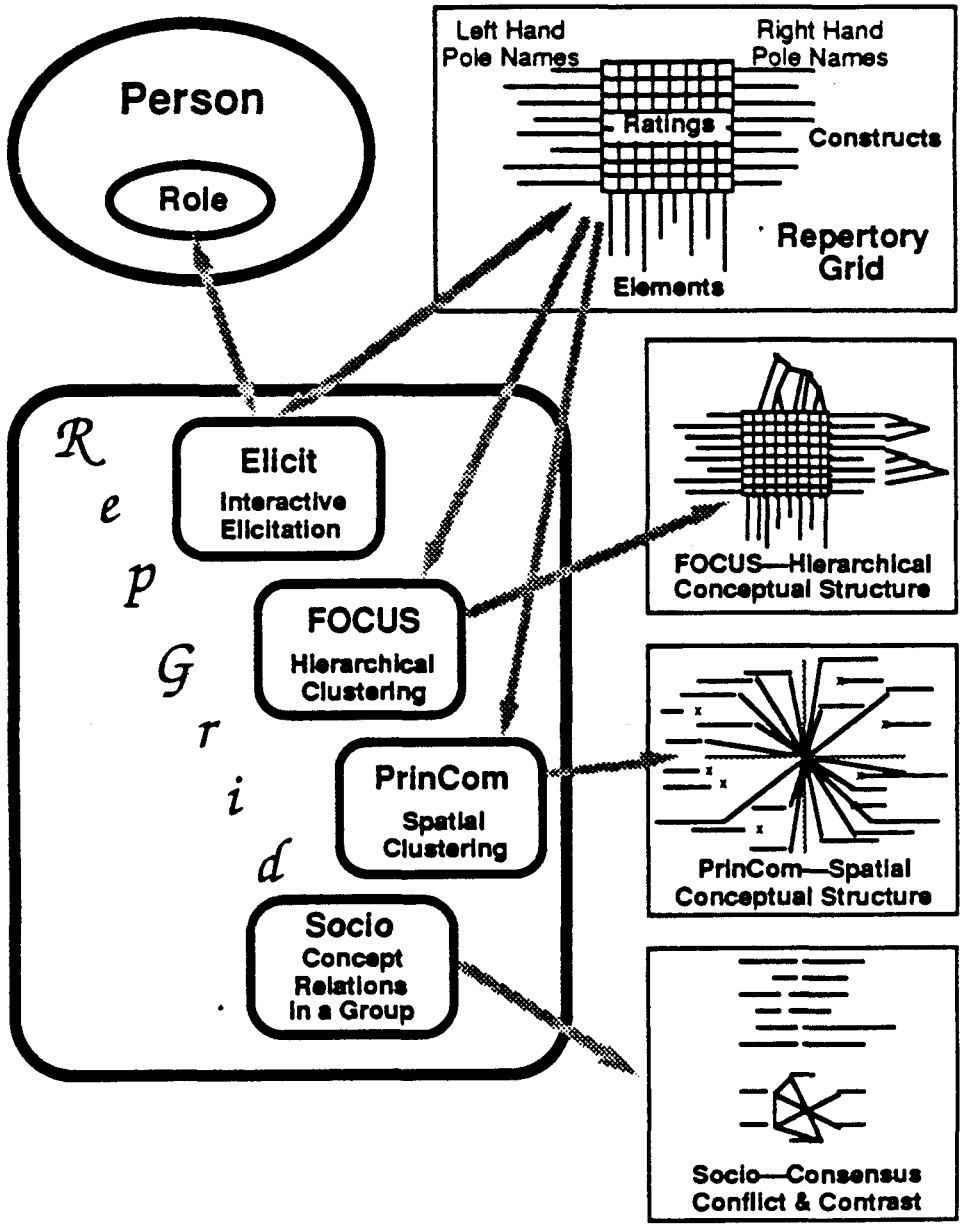

Figure 1 RepGrid Functionality

The ten graduate students were given access to RepGrid and associated tools for some two months with the assignment of developing their research ideas for their MSc research. Figures 2, 3 and 4 give examples of the interactive graphical elicitation of constructs using RepGrid by a graduate student organizing her framework of learning strategies as exemplified by some of the publications from the Institute for Research on Learning in California.

Figure 2 shows a construct in process of elicitation, with the elements listed on the left and being dragged on to the dimension of the bipolar construct *Facilitates Learning and Expanded Knowledge — Knowledge and Learning Hindered.* Figure 3 shows two constructs which are highly matched, showing the placing of the elements on each, and inviting the student to think of a new element which would reduce the match level.

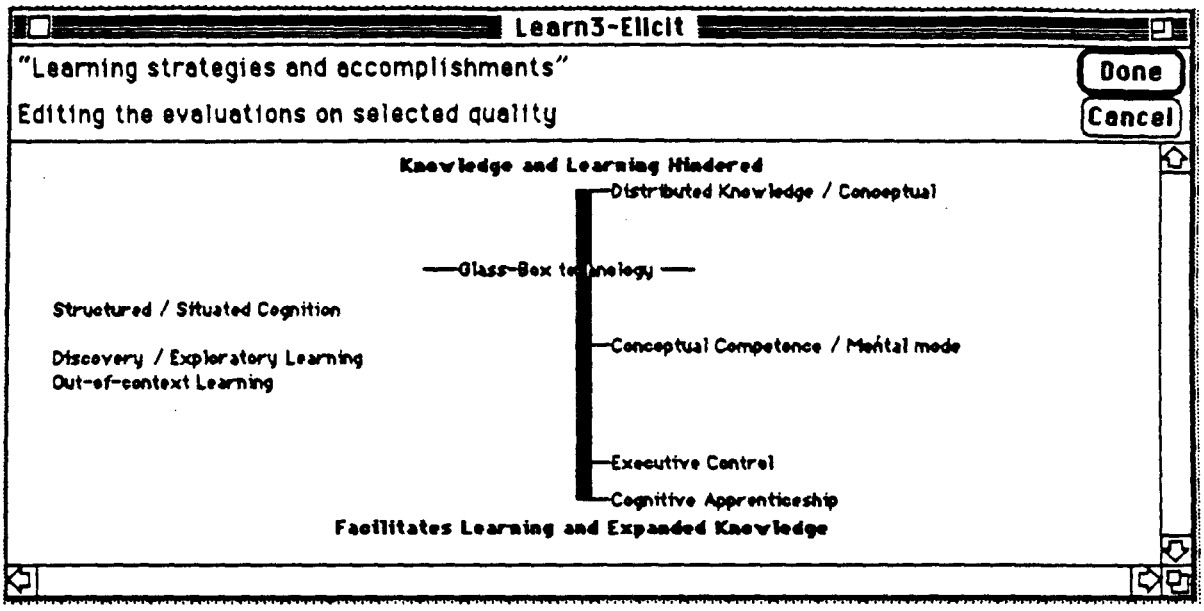

Figure 2 RepGrid Construct Rating

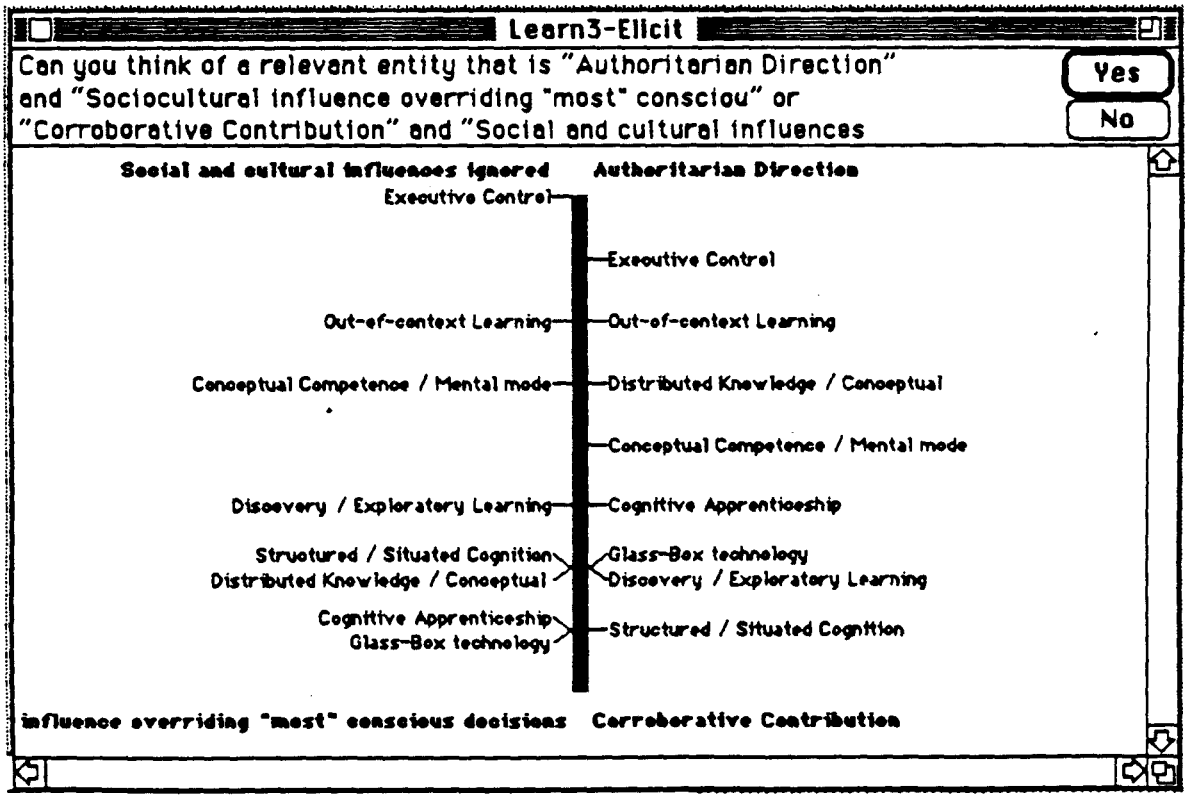

Figure 3 RepGrid Construct Match

Figure 4 shows a similar situation with two elements which are highly matched. The marke sticking up refers to the element *Cognitive Apprenticeship* and the marker sticking down to th other element *Structured / Situated Cognition.* Elements and constructs can be moved o changed at any time.

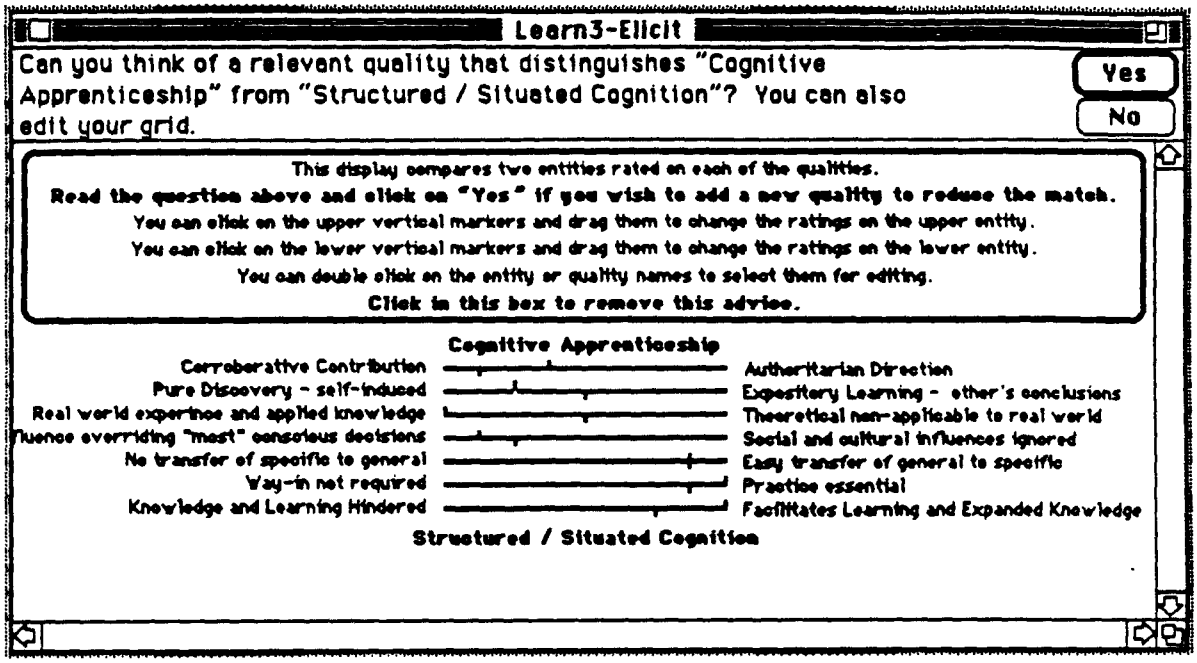

Figure 4 RepGrid Element Match

Figure 5 shows the display of the final grid with the constructs as rows, the elements as columr and the rating position of an element on a construct represented by a value from 1 on the left to on the right. That is, if we look at the last construct *Cognitive Apprentice* is on the pol *Facilitates Learning and Expanded Knowledge* whereas *Distributed Knowledge / Conceptua Dependency* is rated as *Knowledge and Learning Hindered.* The element *Conceptua Competence / Mental Models* is rated a 5 which puts it at neither pole. The others are not extremes of the poles, but are characterized by a part of both.

Corroborative Contribution	4	2	6	3	5	3	8	7	Authoritarian Direction
Pure Discovery - self-induced	3	5	8	8	5	1	2	9	Expository Learning - other's conclusions
Real world experince and applied knowledge	1	5	2	3	9	5	6	7	Theoretical non-applicable to real world
Sociocultural influence overriding "most" conscious decisions	2	3	3	2	6	4	9	7	Social and cultural influences ignored
No transfer of specific to general	8	8	2	5	3	1	6	9	Easy transfer of general to specific
Way-in not required	9	8	3	5	8	1	3	2	Practice essential
Knowledge and Learning Hindered	9	7	1	3	5	7	8	4	Facilitates Learning and Expanded Knowledge

Out-of-context Learning
Executive Control
Discovery / Exploratory Learning
Conceptual Competence / Mental models
Glass-Box technology
Distributed Knowledge / Conceptual Dependency
Structured / Situated Cognition
Cognitive Apprenticeship

Figure 5 RepGrid Display

Figure 6 shows the focused grid with the clusters on the right, and the values shaded in groups for easier interpretation, and Figure 7 shows the principal components analysis of the same data. The actual data values are also available, such as the match values and the factor loadings.

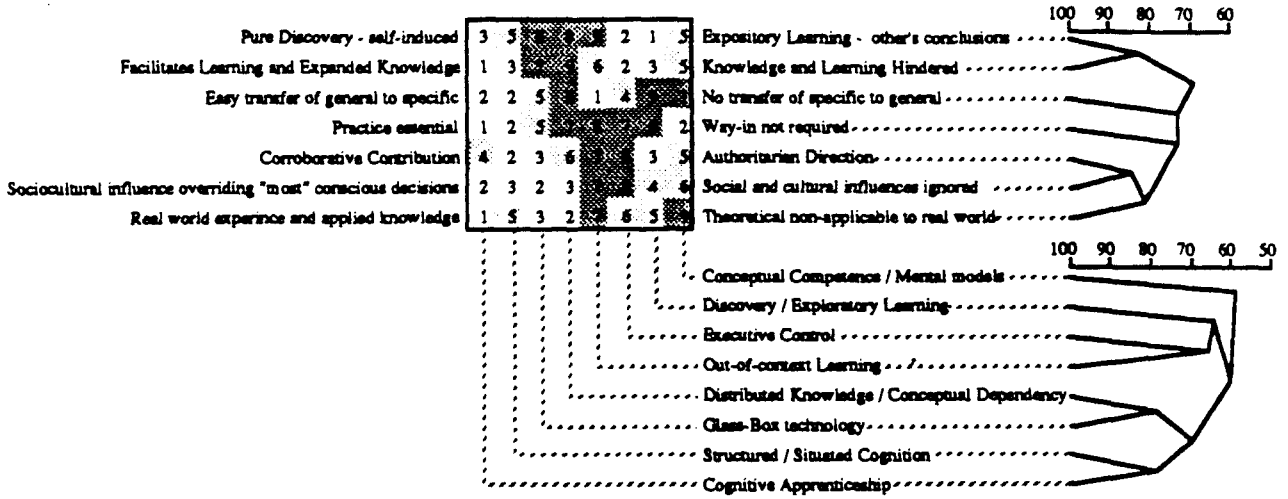

Figure 6 RepGrid FOCUS

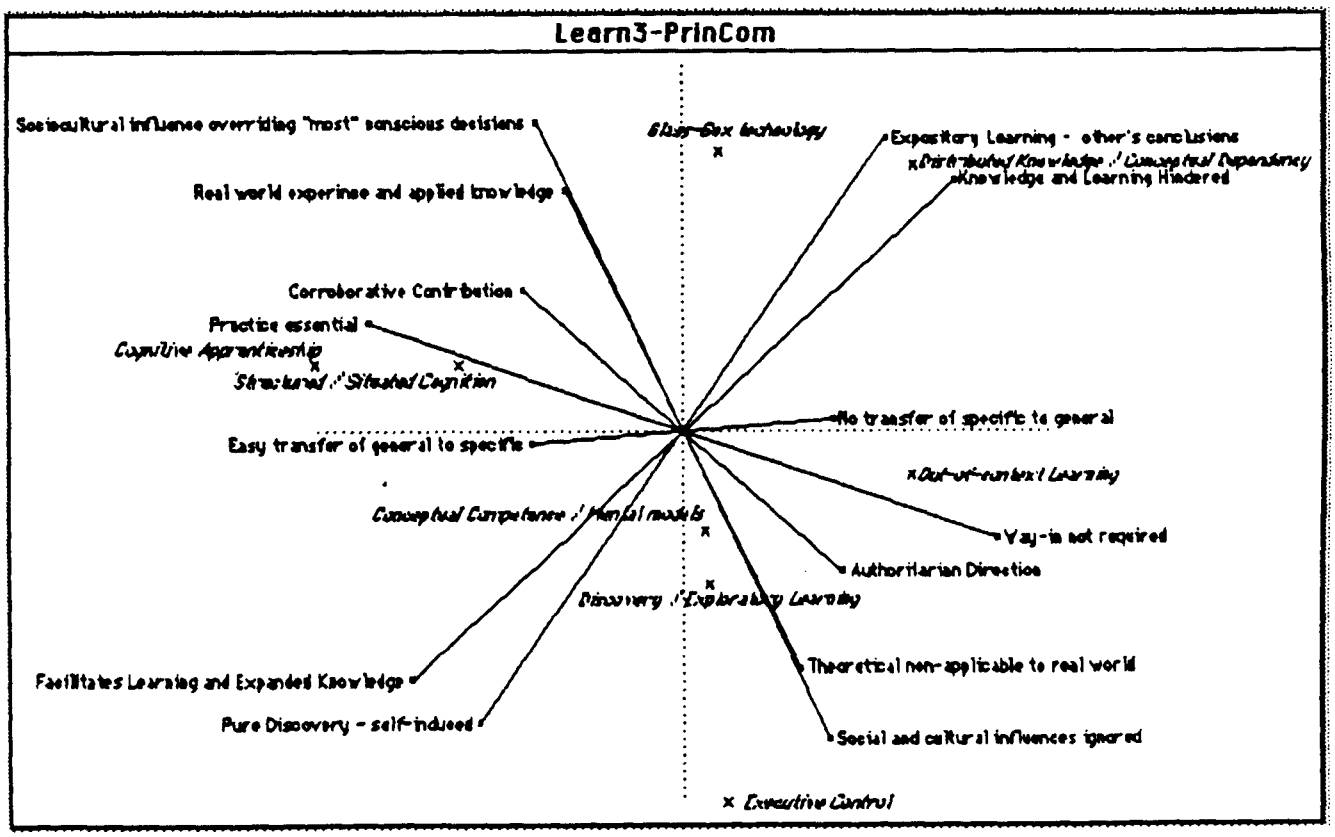

Figure 7 RepGrid PrinCom

Using the example described above the single output variable was used *Towards a Perfect System*, that is, the construct *Facilitates Learning and Expanded Knowledge — Knowledge and Learning Hindered* with the middle point described as *Limited Knowledge and Learning Gain*. Some of the rules produced by the induction system (Gaines, 1989) were:

- Knowledge is *hindered* when there is *limited* master teaching
- Knowledge is *hindered* when there is both *cooperative* participation and *expository* learning
- *Limited* knowledge gain occurs in purely *theoretical* environments
- Pure *discovery facilitates* knowledge gain
- *Analogous* learning supported by applied practice *facilitates* learning

THE HYPERTEXT TOOL

Students were provided with a skeleton HyperCard stack that supported inter-application communication with RepGrid. When this stack is running at the same time as RepGrid a popup menu cursor appears as one mouses over element names and construct pole names in graphic screens such as those of Figures 2 through 7. Mousing down when this cursor appears brings up a popup menu that offers a link to HyperCard. Selecting this transfers to the HyperCard stack at the card corresponding to the element or construct, creating such a card if it does not already exist.

The upper part of such annotation cards is predefined as shown in Figure 8 to show the grid name, element or construct names, and possible construct values or actual element values. The lower part contains a scrolling text area to the left for annotation and an open area to the right for buttons linking to further annotation. Facilities for linking to subject matter video disks are also provided.

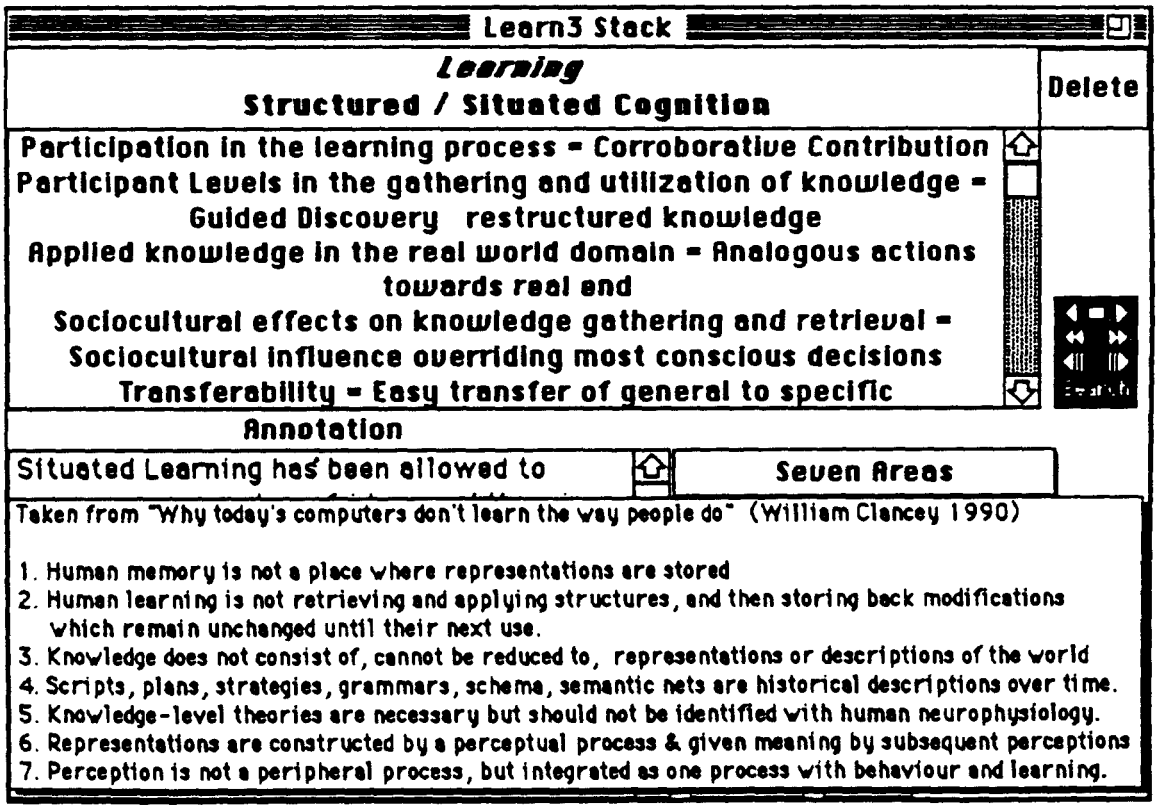

Figure 8 Element annotation card with additional annotation showing

All the students made heavy used of the hypermedia annotation facilities to annotate their elements and constructs and to add additional material such as background notes and diagrams. Since the supplied annotation facilities were designed to operate through a well-defined protocol leaving the full functionality of HyperCard open and available, several of the students took the opportunity to use the hypermedia tool for their own purposes. One student presented his complete final essay on this project in the stack embedding in it buttons that linked to examples, diagrams and references.

THE KNOWLEDGE EDITING TOOL

The knowledge structures developed in RepGrid can be exported to a variety of knowledge-based system shells as class, property, constraint, object, value and rule definitions. In particular they may be exported to the graphic editing tool associated with our knowledge representation server, KRS (Gaines, 1991). Figure 9 shows the grid concepts and rules shown above exported to KRS and graphed as a semantic net.

KL-ONE-style knowledge structures are difficult to edit because they are require the 'top-down' definition of general concepts and their stepwise refinement to more specific concepts. The grid methodology is a way of developing them 'bottom up' from cases. The KRS graphic knowledge editing tool further supports this approach. Knowledge structures can be developed and edited using drawing tools providing a natural visual language. The structures can extend across multiple screens supporting modularity and libraries. Structures can be freely duplicated and definitions may be fragmented across screens. The consistency of the definitions is determined only when they are compiled into a formal knowledge structure and inconsistencies are graphically highlighted.

The grapher is highly interactive. Objects, and groups of objects, may be dragged to new locations and the lines remain connected. Objects may be double-clicked to select them for editing—both text and object type may be edited. Popup menus associated with each object enable the connecting lines and arrows to be entered simply. The visual language used in Figure 9 is precisely defined. Concepts are ovals, primitive concepts are ovals with small horizontal lines inside each side, individuals rectangles, roles (and annotation) unboxed text, rules rounded-corner boxes, constraint expressions rounded-corner boxes with small horizontal lines. The interpretation of the arrows is overloaded but well-defined by the types of the objects at their head and tail. Lines without arrows connecting primitive concepts denote that the concepts are disjoint, and connecting roles that they are inverse. The knowledge compiler traces concepts and individuals through their outgoing arrows, builds a dependency table for concepts, highlighting circular links that it will not use, and generates concept definitions and individual assertions which are passed to the server.

All of the students exported their grid data to KRS and graphed it from various perspectives. However, this was done toward the end of the course and few of the students did much further development within KRS. The exception was one student who was very much taken by the graphic editing tool in its own right and used it directly to develop a number of different classifications of material in his research area of instructible systems. He remarked that he preferred the visual language of the graphic knowledge editor to the textual approach of an outliner and suggested a number of ways in which the tool could be improved as a knowledge outliner.

Ausubel (1969) proposed concept maps as a tool in education for both developing students' creativity and assessing their changing conceptual structures during the learning process. Novak & Gowin (1984) have reported extensive use of concept maps in the educational system, and Hunter, Stahl & Novak (1990) have developed CMap, a computer-based conceptual map tool. The graphic editor in KRS may be seen as a rather more elaborate and formally based version of such a tool, and it would be interesting to see its impact in use by those in the educational system already using concept maps.

this is only part of the story and there are dimensions to creativity well outside the cognitive paradigm, there seems to be enough within it to make the enterprise worthwhile.

The converse is also true—that what is missing within our current modeling and overt knowledge frameworks may be a major weakness in the cognitive and artificial intelligence paradigms. The very attempt to add the support of creativity to the objectives of our general support of knowledge processes may lead to new insights, methodologies and tools that are valuable across a wide range of problems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was funded in part by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. We wish to thank the 1990 class of CPSC 679, *Cognitive Processes in Artificial Intelligence.*

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