



Legal-Onto: An Ontology-based Model for Representing the Knowledge of a Legal Document

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Abstract: In the legal knowledge domain, legal norm documents are general rules which are mandatory for people in a certain field. Many regulations are affecting to activities in a field. Ontology is an effective approach for representing practical knowledge domains. In this paper, an integration ontology for representing the knowledge of a law document is proposed. This model is integrated of ontology about relational knowledge and the graph of keyphrases as a conceptual graph. It can represent semantic of contents in the law document. Based on this integrated model, the improvement method of self-attention network by language-oriented semantic analyzing is studied for intellectual retrieval on the law document. Moreover, the proposed method is applied to construct an intelligent support system for knowledge querying on Vietnam Land Law. It can help users to query some meaning of terminology in land law and some land-related administrative procedures.


1 INTRODUCTION


In the legal knowledge, legal norm documents which issued by the government contain general rules that are mandatory for people in a certain field (Casellas, 2011, Sartor et al., 2011). For each field, many regulations affect to activities in that field. Those regulations have a complicated relationship with other regulations: the regulations which are issued by the administrative unit depend on the regulations of the superior unit, and also are affected by the regulations of other related units in that field.

In Vietnam, the system of legal documents has many levels: 1/ The highest validity is Constitution; 2/ Codes/Laws and resolutions of National Assembly; 3/ Sub-law documents for instructing the detail of the law established by Vietnam National Assembly. Thus, a support system for intellectual retrieval on law knowledge is very necessary for people.

Nowadays, there are many systems organize the database of law documents (Leone et al., 2018, Fawei et al., 2019). Szostek and Zatucki (2022) introduced some information tools in the administration of justice. The CEN Workshop on an Open XML Interchange Format for Legal and Legislative Resources (Metalex) developed the standards for representing sources of law and references to sources of law in XML (Sartor et al., 2011). It can answer to the urgent request to normalize the abundance of local legal XML dialects. Nonetheless, those systems still have some limitations to represent the semantic of those documents. This led to current searching systems on law domain only can retrieve some articles in law document and have not yet retrieve deeper in content, such as administrative procedures about a determined service.

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In this paper, an ontology for representing the knowledge of a law document is proposed. This model is the integration of ontology Rela-model, which is useful to represent relational knowledge domains (Do et al., 2018), and the graph of key phrases as a conceptual graph (Shi et al., 2018). The integration model, called Legal Rela-model, has the foundation including concepts in law domain, relations between concepts, inference rules of this domain and relations between key phrases, concepts in law document and database storing law contents. This model can represent complex relations between concepts in a law document to retrieve some required knowledge to people. Besides, the method for intellectual retrieval on the law document is proposed. The improvement of self-attention network (Vaswani et al., 2017) is presented by language-oriented semantic analyzing in Vietnamese (Nguyen et al., 2020a). This technique is used to extract key phrases of a law document.

Moreover, the proposed method is applied to construct an intelligent support system for querying on Vietnamese land law (Nguyen et al., 2020c) with its knowledge base is organized by ontology Legal Rela-model. This system can help users to query some meaning of terminology in land law and some land-related administrative procedures. It also tested by major lawyers and got positive feedback from users.

The next section presents some related work about methods for organizing the document repository, especially for law documents. Section 3 proposes a knowledge model for representing the content of a law document, called Legal Rela-model, based on the integration of ontology Rela-model and the conceptual graph of key phrases. Section 4 designs the method for solving problems about querying knowledge content of the law document by Vietnamese. Section 5 shows the architecture of a support system in land resource for querying on Vietnamese Land Law and its testing results. The last section concludes and presents some future work.

2 RELATED WORK

The law document is a general rule of conduct, commonly binding on agencies, organizations and individuals nationwide or within a certain administrative unit (Vietnam Ministry of Justice, 2011, Nguyen et al., 2022). With a determined domain, there are many documents related together impacting to that domain. Ontology is an effective approach to organize semantic document repository

(Huynh et al., 2019, Doan et al., 2003). However, those methods are not suitable to organize law documents.

LIDO is an ontology for Legal Informatics Document (Sartor, 2019). This ontology can be represented the legal actions affecting the document, the legal temporal events, the structure of the legal resource, and the semantic structure of the legal document organization.

Huynh et al. (2019) constructed the integrating method of an ontology describing domain knowledge, and a database of document repository. This method includes a model of domain knowledge for various information retrieval tasks, called The Classed Keyphrase based Ontology (CK-ONTO). Nonetheless, this graph-based measure has not been used to evaluate the semantic relevance in documents.

Ngo et al. (2021) designed a system for Vietnamese legal text processing by leveraging the strength of traditional information retrieval methods (BM25), pre-trained masked language models (BERT), and legal domain knowledge. They also proposed a novel data augmentation method which is based on legal domain knowledge in the legal textual entailment. However, the proposed method does not represent the semantic of the legal document.

The chatbot in (Nguyen et al., 2020c) was designed to tutor some administrative procedures, such as how to get a printing license. However, this system cannot support to query the content in a law document related to the working domain.

Statistical relational learning (SRL) and graph neural networks (GNNs) are two powerful approaches for learning and inference over graphs. Typically, they are evaluated in terms of simple metrics such as accuracy over individual node labels. The study in (Embar and Srinivasan, 2021) proposed a sampling framework to tractably compute the values of aggregate graph queries (AGQ). That method only works on information of social network and cannot be used for organizing the meaning of a legal document.

Ontology is a useful method for representing the knowledge domain and searching on it (Do et al., 2020). This study presents a method for organizing the content of a law document and its meaning in each article by integrated ontology. It is the foundation to design techniques for querying some meaning of law terminology and some administrative procedures in Vietnamese.

3 KNOWLEDGE MODEL OF RELATIONS FOR LAW DOMAIN

The system of Vietnamese legal documents includes:

- The Constitution: the highest legal-valued document for constructing other documents.
- Codes/Laws and resolutions of National Assembly: In a determined domain, this document is a general rule of conduct, commonly binding on and applied repeatedly to agencies, organizations and individuals nationwide or within a certain administrative unit in this domain.
- Sub-law documents: Those are documents instructing the detail of the law established by National Assembly. Some of sub-law documents are: Decrees of the Government, Decisions of Prime Minister, Circulars or Joint circulars of ministers who are related to the scope of the law, Decisions of provincial-level People’s Committees, etc.

This section presents a model to represent a law document by its content and its meaning. This model is improved based on Rela-model, called Legal Rela-model. This ontology is an integration between ontology Rela-model representing the knowledge of law and a conceptual graph representing relations between legal key phrases. Moreover, the ontology Legal Rela-model is connected to the structure of Vietnamese legal document.

At the article 11 of the circular of Vietnam Ministry of Justice (2011), the structure of a law document is one of the followed kinds:

- a) Part, Chapter, Section, Article, Clause, Point; or
- b) Chapter, Section, Article, Clause, Point; or
- c) Section, Article, Clause, Point; or
- d) Clause, Point.

Based on those structures, the database for contents of a law document can be organized. Through that database, the knowledge of the law document can represent by ontology Legal Rela-model.

Definition 3.1: The ontology for representing a legal document, called *Legal Rela-model*, consists of components as follows:

$$\mathcal{X} = (C, R, RULES) + (Key, Rel, weight)$$

In which:

- (C, R, RULES) is a structure of Rela-model (Do et al., 2018, Nguyen et al., 2020b), where C is a set of concepts, but each concept in C has been improved its internal structure to organize its law information; R is a set of relations, those relations are between concepts, key phrases and database storing

the content of the law document; and RULES is a set of inference rules of the knowledge domain.

- (Key, Rel, weight) is a conceptual graph representing the relations between key phrases of legal documents. In which, Key is a set of key phrases of the law document, Rel is the set of arcs, and weight is a map from Key to binary similarly vector.

3.1 C – The Set of Concepts

The law includes general rules constituted based on concepts which are taken for granted. In the real-world, a concept in a legal document is defined based on its structure and relations in articles of the law document. The followed definition is about the structure of a concept in each law document d.

Definition 3.2: *The structure of a concept*

Each concept in C consists of five elements:

(Name, Content, InnerRel, Phrases, Attributes)

where:

- Name: The name of the concept in the law.

- Content: Content or meaning of the concepts.
- InnerRel: List of articles in the document d related to the corresponding concept.
- Phrases: The list of key phrases related to concepts in each article of the document d.
- Attributes: List of components (or other concepts) which are the foundation to build the corresponding concept (if necessary) in the document d.

Example 3.1: With the Vietnam Land Law 2013 in (Vietnam National Assembly, 2013), the components of the concept “Certificate of land use rights” are:

| Component | Content |
|------------|---|
| Name | Certificate of land use rights |
| Content | Certificate of land use rights is a legal certificate in which the State certifies the lawful land use rights and ownership of houses and land-attached assets of the person who has land use rights and ownership of houses and land-attached assets. |
| InnerRel | Article 3, Point 16. Article 11, Point 1. Article 75, Point 1. Article 97, Point 1,2. Article 100, Point 1,2,3,4,5. |
| Phrases | land use rights, ownership of houses, land-attached assets, land-attached houses |
| Attributes | Land use rights, Inheritance land-attached assets, Donation land-attached assets, Hand-over of land-attached gratitude house, Transfer of land use rights, Purchase of residential land-attached houses, Liquidation of residential land-attached houses. |

3.2 R – The Set of Relations

Set R is classified to three kinds of relations:

$$R = R_{\text{concept}} \cup R_{\text{keyphrases}} \cup R_{\text{database}}$$

- R_{concept} is a set of relations between concepts in C. Those relations are “is-a”, “has-a”, “a-part-of”, and other relations between concepts.

$$R_{\text{concept}} \subseteq C \times C$$

Some properties of each relation $r \in R_{\text{concept}}$ are considered: symmetric, transitive.

- $R_{\text{keyphrases}}$ is a set of relations between key phrases in the law document. It also includes some relations between key phrases and a concept which are characteristic to determine the concept’s meaning.

$$R_{\text{keyphrases}} \subseteq \text{Key} \times \text{Key} \\ \text{and } R_{\text{keyphrases}} \subseteq \text{Key} \times C.\text{Phrases}$$

- R_{database} is a set of relations between concepts and keyphrases which are connected to database of the law document.

3.3 RULES – The Set of Rules

The rules in the RULES-set represent the constraint and inferring relation between keyphrases, and concepts. Using deductive rules helps *to* reduce workload of a knowledge engineer when building ontology data. The RULES-set deduces the direct or indirect relationships between key phrases or concepts which are used to determine the semantic similarity among key phrases and concepts.

A rule $r \in \text{RULES}$ is a deductive rule on facts related to key phrases and concepts. It can be described as follows:

$$r: \{f_1, f_2, \dots, f_n\} \rightarrow \{g_1, g_2, \dots, g_m\}$$

with $\{f_1, f_2, \dots, f_n\}$ are hypothesis facts and $\{g_1, g_2, \dots, g_m\}$ are goal facts of the rule. There are three kinds of facts:

Table 1: Kinds of Facts.

| Kind | Meaning | Specification |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Show a property of a relation | $[\langle \text{rel} \rangle \text{ is } \langle \text{property} \rangle]$ $\text{rel} \in R$ is a relation. |
| 2 | Relations between concepts. | $[\langle c_1 \rangle \langle \text{rel} \rangle \langle c_2 \rangle]$ $c_1, c_2 \in C$ |
| 3 | Relations between key phrases. | $[\langle k_1 \rangle \langle \text{rel} \rangle \langle k_2 \rangle]$ $k_1, k_2 \in \text{Key}$ |
| 4 | Relations between key phrases and a concept. | $[\langle k \rangle \langle \text{rel} \rangle \langle c.\text{Phrases} \rangle]$ $k \in \text{Key}, c \in C$ |

Example 3.2: Some rules in the domain:

r_1 : if $[\Theta$ is symmetric] and $[k_1 \Theta k_2]$ then $[k_2 \Theta k_1]$

r_2 : if $[\theta$ is transitive] and $[k_1 \theta k_2]$ and $[k_2 \theta k_3]$ then $[k_1 \theta k_3]$

3.4 (Key, Rel, weight) – The Conceptual Graph

The structure of Rela-model (C, R, RULES) organizes the knowledge of a law document. However, in the practice, when retrieval a content of law, there are some main key phrases in the query sentence has been connected to the knowledge through their semantic. In this study, the semantic of key phrases are organized by a conceptual graph.

Definition 3.3: Given a document law d . The structure of the graph representing relations between key phrases in the document d is a tube:

$$(Key, Rel, weight)$$

where: • $Key = \{k \mid k \text{ is a key phrase of the legal document}\}$.

- $Rel = \{e = (k_1, k_2) \in Key \times Key \mid k_1 \text{ are } k_2 \text{ are key phrases appearing in the same article of the law document}\}$

- $weight: Key \rightarrow R \times R$ is a map to compute the similarly binary vector for each key phrases in Key . (R is the set of real number).

The measure for similarly key phrases is computed by the tube $(tf(v, d), idf(v, d))$, where $tf(v, d)$ is the term frequency representing the frequency of a key phrase v in a document d , and $idf(v, d)$ is the inverse articles frequency representing the specificity of the key phrase v in the document d . The formulas of $(tf(v, d), idf(v, d))$ are established as follows (Le et al., 2019):

$$tf(v, d) := c + (1 - c) \frac{n_{v,d}}{\max\{n_{v',d} \mid v' \in Key\}} \quad (1)$$

where, $n_{v,o}$ is the number of occurrences of the key phrase v in the document d ,

$c \in [0, 1]$ is a parameter which is the minimum value for every key phrases.

$$idf(v, d) := \log \left(\frac{\text{card} \left(\bigcup_{ar \in \text{Article}(d)} \text{keyphrases}(ar) \right)}{1 + \text{card}(\{ar \in \text{Article}(d) \mid v \in \text{keyphrase}(ar)\})} \right) \quad (2)$$

where, $\text{Article}(d)$ is the set of articles of the law document d .

$\text{keyphrase}(ar)$ is the set of key phrases of the article ar in the document d .

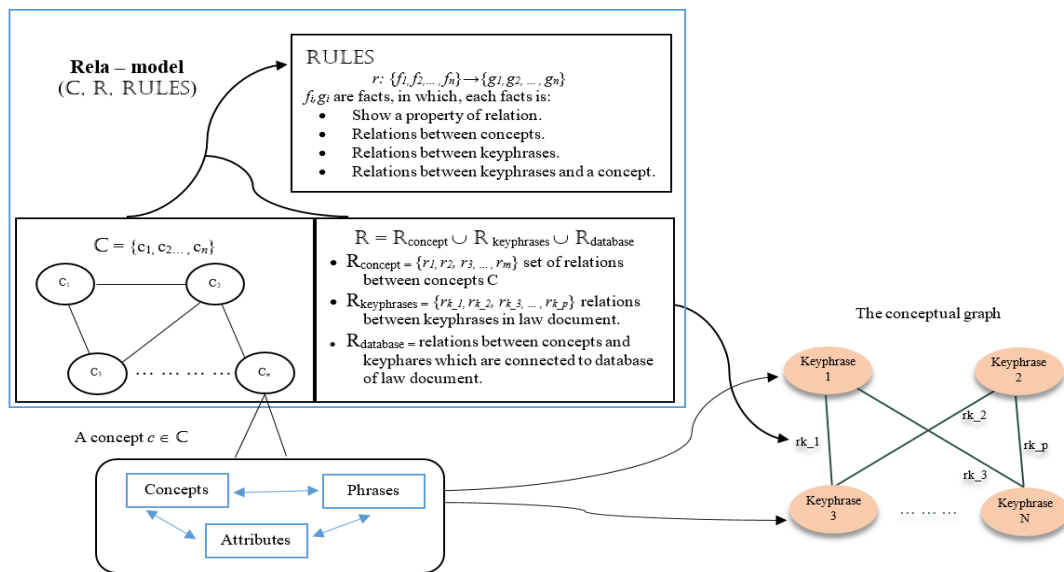


Figure 1: The structure of Legal Rela-model.

Figure 1 represents the structure of the ontology Legal Rela-model. In this structure, the Rela-model is combined with the graph of key phrases via key phrases and their relations. When key phrases are objects in the land law, those relations between them are behaviours of them which were determined in law.

4 KNOWLEDGE QUERYING ON A LEGAL DOCUMENT

Let \mathcal{K} be a knowledge domain of the law document d as ontology Legal Rela-model, and the database of the document d . When a query is inputted to retrieve the knowledge from \mathcal{K} , the searching system will process to extract some main key phrases and compare with the structure of the knowledge model's components through relations between key phrases leading to corresponding concepts. In the matching process, inference rules of the knowledge base help to deduce more relations related to the content of the query and retrieve results for the inputted query. Some of main problems are as follows:

- (1) **Problem 4.1:** Classifying the inputted query. From the query inputted as Vietnamese text, this problem extracts the main key phrases of the query to determine the meaning of the query and classify it.
- (2) **Problem 4.2:** Retrieving suitable articles in the document and searching the content of concepts based on matching the key phrases. Based on extracted key phrases, a method to compare the similarity between the meaning of the key phrases and the content in the knowledge base is proposed.

For the problem 4.1, in Vietnamese, the structure of a sentence includes subject and predicate. In this study, we only mention to the declarative sentence type. Besides, the query sentence is also classified into five kinds: queries about concepts/definitions in the Land Law, queries about procedures of this law, and queries about some knowledge related to current results. The solution for this problem is designed similarly to (Nguyen et al., 2021). Hence, this section presents the method to retrieve suitable articles in the document and searching the content of concepts based on matching the key phrases in the problem 4.2.

After extracting the key phrases and intents of the utterance, the system will match those key phrases with the content of the knowledge for defining and comparing texts based on ontology Legal Rela-model. The matching technique for the search engine can be designed based on the solution in (Nguyen et al., 2021), but it has some improvements as Figure 2.

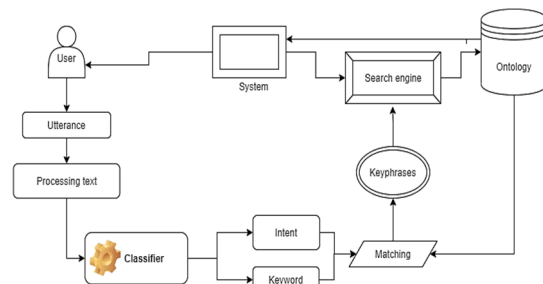


Figure 2: The matching technique for search engine.

After classifying of the inputted query, this process also extracts main key phrases of the query. Those key phrases are used to retrieve the suitable

content from the knowledge base in Problem 4.2. The key phrases dictionary is established from the knowledge base of the search system and from the experts in the law domain, such as lawyers, senior law employees, senior lecturers in the law domain.

Example 4.1: Some key phrases in the dictionary of the Vietnamese Land Law 2013 in (Vietnam National Assembly, 2013):

- Some individuals in the dictionary: Cadastral map, Transfer of land use rights, Certificate of land use rights, kinds of agricultural land (Land for cultivation of annual crops, Land for cultivation of perennial trees, Production Forest land, Aquaculture land, etc.), non-agricultural land (Residential land, Land for construction of offices, Land used for public purposes, etc.).

- The synonyms of a key phrases in the dictionary: “What is” is equivalent to “Define”, “How to use” is equivalent to “Usage”.

The extracted key phrases of the utterance are compared with the dictionary to create a set of key phrases. The search engine uses those key phrases to retrieve the knowledge of law from the knowledge base. The system also recommends some related knowledge through relations of obtained results and inference rules of the knowledge base.

Algorithm 4.1: Given the law document d which represented by the ontology Legal Rela-model.

Input: a query q .

Output: The set of knowledge content in the document d which matches the meaning of query q .

Step 1:

Extract keyphrases from the query sentence and establish set of key phrases of q .

$$W := keyphrases(q)$$

Expand the set of key phrases W based on relations in $R_{keyphrases}$.

- **Update** the set W .
 - **Mapping** keyphrases in W to the sub-graph G of the conceptual graph ($Key, Rel, weight$) with a weight vector for each key phrases.
- Step 2:** $Knowledge := \{\}$ // set of results.
 $Concept := \{\}$;
For each $phrase \in G$ **do**
- **Use** relations in $R_{keyphrases}$ and inference rules in $RULES$ for linking $phrase$ with a corresponding concept $c \in C$.
 - **Update** c into $Concept$.
- Expand** the set of concepts in $Concept$:
- Based on relations in $R_{keyphrases}$.
- Update** the set W .
- **Retrieve** knowledge from components of each concept $c \in Concept$
Update $Knowledge$.
- Step 3:**
Unification of facts in the knowledge model and compare the meaning using Problem 1.
Update $Knowledge$.
- Step 4: Return** results in $Knowledge$

The searching for the knowledge content returns a set of knowledge based on the meaning of an inputted query. The system determines the meaning of this query from its extracted keywords and comparing by using stored knowledge.

5 THE QUERYING SYSTEM FOR VIETNAM LAND LAW

Land resource is one of important resource in Vietnamese economic. It is attracted by investors because of its stability and increasing of value during the time (Tran, 2013). Legality is one of key factors determining the value of a land.

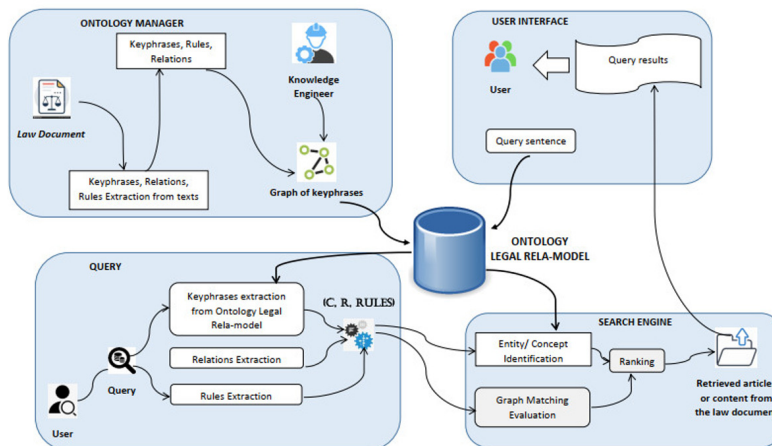


Figure 3: The architecture of the querying system on land law.

The land law is a document promulgated by a state agency, and contains general rules for conducting, commonly binding on agencies, organizations in the domain of land (Vietnam National Assembly, 2013, Tran, 2013). It will have some sub-law documents to detail instruct the process of this law. In this section, a querying system for the land law in Vietnam is designed. Its knowledge base is constructed based on the Vietnamese Land (Vietnam National Assembly, 2013) by using ontology Legal Rela-model. This system can help users to query some meaning of terminology in land law and some land-related administrative procedures. The structure of this system is presented in Figure 3.

5.1 Dataset and Organizing the Knowledge Base of Land Law Document

The Vietnamese Land Law 2013 includes 14 chapters with 212 articles (Vietnam National Assembly, 2013). It is a general rule for all working in the land domain. The content of this law is organized by a database as the structure of Chapter – Section – Articles – Paragraph - Point. Ontology Legal Rela-model is used to represent it's content and meaning.

There were 625 collected queries to training for classifying by Problem 4.1. It includes 521 in-scope queries covering three intent classes and 104 out-of-scope queries. Table 2 classifies the training queries and the results for training them in collected dataset.

Table 2: Classification of queries.

| Class | Meaning | Training | Tested |
|-------------------|---|------------|------------|
| Concept | Require to determine definition or attributes of a concept | 211 | 54 |
| Procedure | Require to determine list of documents for a procedure in land law. | 93 | 24 |
| Related knowledge | Require knowledge related to obtained results | 107 | 32 |
| Out of scope | Queries related to real-estate but they do not use land law. | 83 | 21 |
| Total | | 494 | 131 |

In-scope data were collected from the frequently asked questions (FAQs) in land law by the consulting of major lawyers (FAQs, 2022). The intents were grouped on the basis of the scope of the system in this study. Out-of-scope data were collected from FAQs related to real-estate but they do not use the knowledge of land law.

5.2 Search Engine

When a query sentence is inputted, its key phrases are extracted. Using the knowledge as ontology Legal Rela-model, some rules and relations will be applied to get more some related key phrases and their relations. By the problem 4.2, the set of knowledge content in the document d which matches the meaning of those key phrases is retrieved. The results are articles or content from the Land Law.

5.3 Experimental Results

This study implements the experiments about querying on some meaning of terminology in land law and some land-related administrative procedures. Its knowledge content is splitted into 05 kinds:

- Kind 1: Organize to manage land resource.
- Kind 2: The legal position of land users.
- Kind 3: Agricultural land.
- Kind 4: Non-agricultural land.
- Kind 5: Documents of Land-related procedures

When users input their queries, the system classifies those queries into concepts, procedures or related knowledge; then it retrieves results for users. The process of this system was checked by a lawyer and a law lecturer in land resource. Table 3 and Figure 5 show the testing results for each topic.

Table 3: Results of Querying on Vietnam Land Law.

| Content | Queries | Number of correct results | | | | Prop. (%) |
|--------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | | Concept | Procedure | Related Knowledge | Total | |
| 1 | 42 | 11 | 9 | 6 | 26 | 62% |
| 2 | 48 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 27 | 56% |
| 3 | 59 | 19 | 15 | 5 | 39 | 66% |
| 4 | 36 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 22 | 61% |
| 5 | 24 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 16 | 67% |
| Total | 209 | 54 | 49 | 27 | 130 | 62% |

Table 4 compares our system with some good systems, Aleph and AimeLaw, in ALQAC-2021 (Automated Question Answering Competition) at the task 1 - Legal Document Retrieval, and the task 2 - Legal Text Entailment (ALQAC-2021, 2021).

- Task 1 - Legal Document Retrieval: The requirement of this task is the retrieval of all the articles that are relevant to a statement.

- Task 2 - Legal Text Entailment: This task is built for yes/no question answering systems for legal queries. The system will answer whether the statement is true or false.

Tieu et al. (2021) built Aleph as an article ranking model by finetuning their own pre-trained model

VNLawBERT with a binary classification problem (Chau et al., 2020). It makes negative samples by choosing the closest candidate with the gold samples. AimeLaw in (Ngo et al., 2021) is an approach of combining scores of BM25 with Domain Invariant Supporting Model and Deep CNN Supporting Model using weighted sum function.

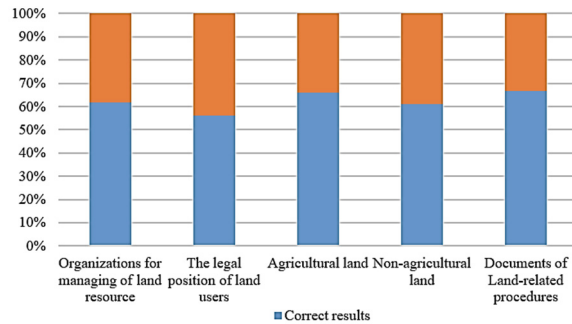


Figure 5: The precision of the querying system on each content of Vietnamese Land Law.

Table 4: Compare systems in tasks.

| System | Task 1 | Task 2 |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Aleph | 88.07% | 69.89% |
| AimeLaw | 80.61% | 69.89% |
| Our system | 62% | 62% |

Although the precision of our querying system gets more than 60%, it can retrieve the concepts in the document with related articles. Besides, some kinds of content in the Land Law have the precision more than 65%, such as Agricultural Land and Documents of Land-related procedures.

Moreover, the strengthen point of the built system is the organizing of the knowledge domain about the law document. It can represent the complex relations between legal entities in the document. It has more rooms to develop a querying system for supporting of a certain law field with many related legal documents.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This study proposed an integrating ontology for representing the knowledge of a law document, called Legal Rela-model. This model is integrated of ontology Rela-model and the graph of key phrases as a conceptual graph (Shi et al., 2017). The Legal Rela-model includes concepts in the law domain, relations between concepts, inference rules of this domain and relations between key phrases, concepts in the law document which connects to database storing law contents. The method for intellectual retrieval on this document is also studied by extracting key phrases

and matching the content of articles in the law document.

In addition, an intelligent support system for querying on Land Law of Vietnam National Assembly (2013) is constructed. Its knowledge base is organized by ontology Legal Rela-model. The designed system can help users to query some meaning of land law terminology land-related administrative procedures. The testing results show that the precision of the current method is more than 60%.

Moreover, the law domain of a field includes many related documents. The advantage of Rela-model is the ability to integrate multiple knowledge domains. Thus, using ontology Legal Rela-model, the connection between legal documents can be represented in which each document is organized by this ontology. This will make a completely legal document system for a certain field.

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