

CYCLICL - AN APPROACH TO
AUTOMATED REQUIREMENT
TRACEABILITY IN PRODUCT LINE
ENGINEERING

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

PhD

McMaster University

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PHD (Jan, 2021)

McMaster University

(Software Engineering)

Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: CyclicL - An Approach to Automated Requirement
Traceability in Product Line Engineering

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NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 37

Lay Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to

Abstract

Product Line Engineering (PLE) has become a common engineering practice for managing system complexity across multiple industries. The practice is used for identifying reusable pieces of code, composing software components together, and modelling product variation. There exists a gap however with generating system traceability when using PLE as a technique. Specifically, it is a colossal problem to get traceability from a feature model, the modelling environment for PLE, through requirements to design elements. Further, traceability itself is both a costly and tedious task that is often completed at the end of development and even more difficult to maintain throughout a products life-cycle. With the methodology proposed in this thesis, along with its supporting tool CyclicL, we aim to address the gap that exists between PLE and requirement engineering to push traceability out of a retrospective task to an active portion of development.

Acknowledgments

An expression of thanks to supervisors, industry partners, colleagues, family, or friends.

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List of Acronyms

MDE Model-Driven Engineering	5
EMF Eclipse Modeling Framework	32
DSL Domain Specific Language	9
PLE Product Line Engineering	iv
FDD Feature-Driven Development	1
FODA Feature-Oriented Domain Analysis	3
FORM Feature-Oriented Reuse Method	3
UCD Use Case Diagram	ix

Declaration of Academic Achievement

The student will declare his/her research contribution and, as appropriate, those of colleagues or other contributors to the contents of the thesis.

Chapter 1

Introduction

What came first, the chicken or the egg? It is a silly question that people will often debate about over dinner or on the bus. But let's change the context to engineering; what came first, the feature or the requirement? Very often when we do engineering work we consider what we want to build in parallel to actually thinking about building it; exploring the problem space often gets overlooked in favor of exploring the solution space. As a result, an engineer may have to backtrack to their requirements when they hit a wall during development. They may find that their requirements were incomplete for their feature. Perhaps the scope of their feature is much bigger than they anticipated; maybe what was originally considered to be a single feature could in fact be multiple features. Thus, the engineer will iterate back and forth between features development and requirement development, incrementally changing each until they get to a system state that they consider to be complete, or at the very least a minimum viable product.

How do we capture this process? Feature-Driven Development (FDD) is a common practice for agile development styles whereby the engineers will

identify a set of features that will be built together to create a system. They will then work to identify acceptance criteria, or descriptions of each feature to specify what needs to be done for each feature and how to know when it is complete. These descriptions end up behaving very similarly to requirements for the features, if not outright being written as requirements for the feature. Therefore, it's safe to say that before we have requirements, we have features. Features come first and thus we should focus on identifying features before we start to think about what requirements we need for a given system.

There is a slight assumption made in this scenario; are there not already existing requirements before we begin to identify features? For more mature development teams and industries, it is very rare to start from scratch without any requirements, and even more rare to jump right into identifying solutions without first having an idea of what the problems are. Thus, even if limited, there are at least some guiding requirements before engineers begin to identify features of their system that will solve their problems. Therefore, we say that requirement come before the features.

In reality, both scenarios are likely to happen, perhaps even within the same company. We may find that we have a vague idea of what the problem is, perhaps even some simple drafts of the problems and what requirements we may have to solve them. However it can very often happen that we know what we want to build before we specify anything of the system as we already have some domain knowledge and can predict what problems we will solve with a given solution. Thus we begin to identify features of our solution and later will go to specify our system what requirements apply to our given features.

This generates a couple of problems for development. The relationship between requirements and features becomes somewhat ambiguous. In fact,

what is a feature? What is a requirement? For this thesis, we will follow the definition of a feature from the original work of Kyo Kuang et al. [1, 2] for their Feature-Oriented Domain Analysis Feature-Oriented Domain Analysis (FODA) and Feature-Oriented Reuse Method Feature-Oriented Reuse Method (FORM). According to their original definition, a feature is "a prominent or distinctive user-visible aspect, quality, or characteristic of a software system or systems." Based on how we interpret this definition, we could consider that any portion of a system that a user can interface with is viable to become a feature. In fact for the sake of inclusion, we extend this definition to not only be user-visible, but simply user-interface-able, taking into account the multiple different senses that a user can use to interact with our system. This will increase the scope of a feature beyond what is only visible, including sound, touch, smell, and taste.

What is a requirement? This is well developed and studied topic. To answer, we look to Axel van Lamsweerde [3] where he outlines the purpose of requirements engineering is to answer three question; what, why, and who? What is the problem we are trying to solve? Why is it worth solving? Who should be involved in the solution? There are many more requirements engineering approaches and strategies that we can and will use to develop our methodology, however as a base line when understanding what a requirement is it should answer what the problem is that we are solving supported by sound reasoning for why it is worth being solved and who is involved in solving the problem.

As such, what are the problems we are trying to solve with this thesis? For one, iterations between features and requirements do not happen in isolation. There is usually a lot of supporting documentation and software that

surrounds and depends on both the requirements and identified features. This is usually expressed through traceability documentation, most commonly in a traceability matrix. However, maintaining a traceability matrix with all the incremental changes that happen between requirements and features is an extremely tedious and time consuming task. For each change it is usually a low return for high effort task, until such a time that the traceability matrix is so out of sync with both the requirements and features that it is no longer usable. Which means we create a whole new traceability matrix and thus the cycle continues. Therefore, traceability documentation is a very large problem during iterative and incremental development.

FDD as a development style misses a very key component. How do all the features fit together? This is a problem that is addressed by Product Line Engineering PLE. Originally conceptualized by Kyo Kuang et al. [1, 2], it has since evolved into a highly researched topic with supporting tools like FeatureIDE [4, 5] which supports feature composition of software artifacts. Or a tool like GEARS [6] which emphasizes its 3-tiered software product line methodology. There is also formal methods research for PLE such as the work of Peter Höfner et al. [7, 8], which created a formal algebra for how to compute product lines and feature models. What these tools lack however is a self-contained way to manage traceability between features and requirements; FeatureIDE focuses on code composition where GEARS requires hooking into separate requirements engineering tools and does not have a way to handle requirements independently. Thus we identify a lack of tool support for traceability and iterations between requirements and features as another problem.

What comes first, the feature or the requirements? This is another problem due to ambiguous relationship between them and the different development

styles that exist. As there are dependencies between them setting a definition of the relationship between them may help with both making sure that we elicit requirements that are correct and reasonably complete. At the same time, it can help to ensure that the features we identify are correct and reasonably complete.

Finally, the problem of how we accomplish all of these tasks? What is the methodology to help make sure the features we identify are correct and sufficiently complete? What is the methodology to make sure that we identify requirements that are correct and sufficiently complete? How can we be sure that our mappings between requirements and features also make sense? This is another problem as we want to make sure that the mappings between features and requirements are correct and complete for development tasks as much as for assurance purposes. We want developers to be developing the correct features, and we want to be capable of reasoning about those features so that we can develop assurance that properties of our system are true. This is the final we have identified.

A confounding variable in all of these problems that we have not yet identified PLE is usually a Model-Driven Engineering (MDE) process. As a result, we want to further examine these problems through the lens of MDE; can we solve these problems using MDE techniques and processes?

In summary, these problems culminate into the following research questions:

RQ1: How can we improve requirement elicitation and feature identification processes in FDD?

RQ2: How can we improve traceability maintenance between features and re-

quirements?

RQ3: How can we improve tool support for iterative and incremental development between features and requirements?

RQ4: How can we leverage MDE techniques for domain analysis, problem space exploration, and requirement specification?

1.1 Motivation

In many industries, we can find companies that have a catalog of products they offer to customers. There are also many industries that focus on safety-critical application development. One area where these two categories overlap is the automotive domain. Within this industry, companies offer a range of vehicles customers can choose for purchase. Further, each of the vehicle models on offer can have variants available. These vehicle model variations can be due to aesthetic difference or functional differences. There can also be variations due to where in the world the vehicle is being sold, such as the driver seat location depending on if the country of sale drives on the left or right side of the road.

Further, vehicles are inherently dangerous products to be sold. According to the Canadian government, there were a total of 91533 vehicle collisions reported in 2022, resulting in 1931 total fatalities [9]. It is beyond reasonable doubt that automotive development can be considered a safety-critical industry as well to improve the safety of vehicles to reduce accidents, fatalities, and injuries. Thus, we can see that the automotive industry is one that requirement PLE to help with managing the product catalog, requires help with managing documentation to develop safety cases (or assurance cases in general), and help

with iterative and incremental development as they release new vehicles year after year.

Throughout this thesis we will be using examples from the automotive domain. These examples will aim to help provide context for the work and aid in the evaluation of the methodology and tooling.

1.2 Hypothesis

With the research questions defined and the motivation outlined, we can start to take some guesses at how to answer them. Beginning with RQ1, there are several modelling techniques to use. For the domain analysis and identification of system features, we propose the use of UCD from SysML [10]. As a modelling technique it is quite informal, however it is also easy to use for analysis and problem space exploration. The biggest reason to use UCDs is the requirement to identify actors/stakeholders of the system and how they might use the system. The idea of a use case is very similar to what a feature of a system is and thus allows for a relatively easy mapping between system use cases and features.

Another MDE technique we use for domain analysis and problem space exploration is Goal Diagrams as outlined in Axel Van Lamsweerde’s requirements engineering textbook [3]. Lamsweerde has formal semantics defined for goal diagrams which helps with making sure that we can properly reason about the goals of the system, as well as the goals of the users. However, in spite of the formal semantics Lamsweerde has prescribed to goal diagrams, there are variant syntaxes that exist for goal diagrams that do not strictly adhere to the syntax and thus the semantics that Lamsweerde has defined. This has pros

and cons. As a benefit, the reduction of formality can lower the barrier for entry, thus making it easier to use across professions as back of the envelope forms of expression. The loss of semantics however makes it more difficult to use as a method of reasoning around goals and the possible requirements they can be used to derive. This flexibility does help overall however with the usability of goal diagrams and their use for exploring the problem space to elicit requirements.

The reason we chose these two MDE techniques is part of the answer to RQ1. For this we turn to the Handbook of Requirements and Business Analysis by Bertrand Meyer [11]. In his book, Meyer outlines several steps towards the requirement elicitation process, which also apply themselves well to feature identification. Parts of his book outline the importance of identifying goals of both the system and the users, along with identifying the importance of user stories and use cases. Further, he supports the use of both formal and informal methods, leaving it up to the engineer to decide when it is necessary to use one over the other based on context. We support that notion and much of the methodology we outline is inspired from his book. The UCDs created for analysis will also be used to outline user stories to refine and justify the identified features. The goal diagrams from Lamsweerde’s requirements engineering are used to support the goals book from Meyer in either a formal or informal capacity based on the engineer’s discretion.

For RQ1, we propose the following hierarchy; features shall encapsulate requirements. The reason for this proposal is two-fold. For one, there are many more semantics around feature modelling and PLE compared to requirement modelling. And for the second point, in FDD we often list requirements as scoped by a feature. As many engineers and developers are familiar with

this type of development we felt it would be easier for them to adapt to this type of relationship as opposed to the other way around. By having features encapsulate requirements, we can get feature-scope requirement traceability as every requirement will be owned by a feature. We will hence forth refer to this as feature-requirement traceability.

This also helps with RQ1 as the encapsulation will help with supporting traceability. By formalizing the relationship between features and requirements, tool development becomes simplified as we can leverage existing Object-Oriented techniques to develop a Domain Specific Language (DSL) to support iterative and incremental development of both features and requirements. We can leverage a tool that is self-contained to attempt to partially automate traceability maintenance when making changes to either features or requirements in either a feature model or requirement model.

In summary, the hypothesis is that we propose that we let features encapsulate requirements for supporting traceability. Leveraging this definition we can build a tool that supports partial automation of feature-requirement traceability. We can use existing MDE techniques in UCDs and goal diagram for domain and problem space analysis inspired by Bertrand Meyer’s style of requirements engineering.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Research Method

There were three main pillars that were used to direct this literature review; MDE, PLE, traceability, and requirement engineering. The scope for traceability is limited to connections between PLE, feature models, and requirements. Since another focus for this research is using MDE techniques and tooling we also scope all results to include some sort of MDE. Thus, the search strings used for this literature review are as follows:

- (“model driven engineering” OR “model based engineering”) AND (“product line engineering” OR “feature modelling”) AND “tools”
- (“model driven engineering” OR “model based engineering”) AND “traceability” AND “tools”
- “traceability” AND (“product line engineering” OR “feature modelling”) AND “tools”

- “traceability” AND (“requirement modelling” OR “requirement diagrams”) AND “tools”

Results using these search strings were chosen from the initial search results from Google Scholar and the following conferences:

- International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE).
- International Conference on Model Driven Engineering Languages and Systems (MODELS).
- Software Product Line Conference (SPLC).
- Variability Modelling of Software-Intensive Systems (VaMoS).

2.2 Inclusion Criteria

In order to deem a resulting publication to be relevant to this body of work the following criteria needed to be met:

- The publication should use MDE techniques AND address PLE OR requirement engineering. The publication can focus on development in any applied domain, though of particular interest are automotive and medical device development.
 - Of particular interest are applications of feature modelling in industry.
 - Of particular interest are application of MDE techniques for requirement engineering and modelling.

- The publication should explore traceability. This can be done either for requirements OR PLE though ideally the publication should explore traceability explicitly between PLE and requirements. This also includes methodologies for automated traceability.
- The publication should have tool support for traceability, PLE, or/and requirement modelling.

2.3 Product Line Engineering

2.4 Requirement Engineering and Modelling

2.5 Traceability

Chapter 3

Methodology

For this work we focus our attention on the automotive domain as it is both safety-critical and complex with many product variants. The overall methodology is heavily inspired by the Goals and Systems books from Meyer’s requirement engineering book [11]. The steps of the methodology are as follows:

1. Identify stakeholders, users, and customers.
2. Identify stakeholder, user, and customer goals.
3. Identify stakeholder, user, and customer use cases for a designated system. Each use case should work to satisfy at least one goal.
4. Identify system features based on use cases. These are the high-level features for our system.
5. Refine goals to requirements.
6. Decompose high-level features into feature model.
7. Map features from feature model to goals.

8. Use features to encapsulate requirements.

Once we have identified our stakeholders, we then consider their goals. This also ties into the categories we define. The goal of a pedestrian is different than that of a driver. While a stakeholder can be both a driver or a pedestrian, their goals will likely be very different based on their current role. However the goals between various stakeholder within a category, such as a 20-year-old male or a one-armed 25-year-old female may be quite similar. As such, by identifying the goals of the categories should facilitate eliciting requirements of the stakeholders in each role.

3.1 Domain Analysis

Before any engineering work can take place, we must answer the question of who we are building this system for. Without knowing who we are building for it is impossible to properly identify features of the system as we will have no idea who will be interfacing with our system. Further, without knowing who we are building for we have no idea what goals the system will satisfy, and therefore what requirements we want to implement. This is evermore important as we consider the safety implications of who will be using our system and who will be affected by our system. In the case of the automotive domain, at least two of our stakeholders would be the driver and a pedestrian. Driver as a category however is still quite broad; drivers come in all sorts of different shapes and sizes. Would a young 20 year old male interact with a vehicle the same way a 40 year old female would? What about a 80 year old, healthy male compared to a 30-year-old, overweight male? Or perhaps a 25-year-old female with dwarfism compared to a 25-year-old female with only 1

hand. In all these examples would they all interact with the vehicle the same way? When we consider how they may all use a vehicle, their use cases, these will eventually be refined into features. The features identified should allow for the widest range of stakeholders to interface with the vehicle. A unique part of the automotive domain is that all stakeholders identified as a driver are equally pedestrians. Therefore we must consider not only how they will interact with the vehicle, but also how the vehicle will interact with them. Would a blind spot sensor identify only vehicles or also pedestrians. How big does a pedestrian need to be for the front object detection system to recognize it as a person?

As such there are some clarifying assumptions that we must make as part of our stakeholder identification. For automotive we can make some of the following simplifying assumptions (as these are assumptions we anticipate the possibility they may change as development continues or new information is gathered):

- We assume that drivers are at or above the legal driving age in Canada (16 years old).
- We assume that drivers are at or below 80 years old.
- We assume that drivers are able bodied enough to legally operate a motor vehicle.
- Assume height between 151.895cm and 183.24cm. [12] Average range determined between 5th and 95th percentile of male and female population in Canada.
- Assume weight between 48.82kg and 106.60kg. [13] Average range deter-

mined between 5th and 95th percentile of male and female population in Canada.

3.1.1 Goals

Once we have identified our stakeholders, we then consider their goals. This also ties into the categories we define. The goal of a pedestrian is different than that of a driver. While a stakeholder can be both a driver or a pedestrian, their goals will likely be very different based on their current role. However the goals between various stakeholders within a category, such as a 20-year-old male or a one-armed 25-year-old female may be quite similar. As such, identifying the goals of the categories should facilitate eliciting requirements of the stakeholders in each role.

This is where we propose the use of goal diagrams to capture this knowledge and information. Goal diagrams present a unique method of capturing this knowledge as it can be both formal or informal to suit the engineers needs. This flexibility supports the notion of formal picnics explained in Meyer’s requirement engineering book [11]. The engineer can start informal if needed and can later formalize the model if required to support further analysis.

According to Lamsweerde, “a goal is a prescriptive statement of intent that the system should satisfy through the cooperation of its agents”, where an agent can be a human, a device such as sensors or actuators, existing software, or new software [3]. Based on our interpretations, we equate these definitions of an agent to our stakeholders of the system so we will carry on referring to them as stakeholders. Thus for a high-level of abstraction at the vehicle-level, we consider the driver, the pedestrian, and the vehicle as agents

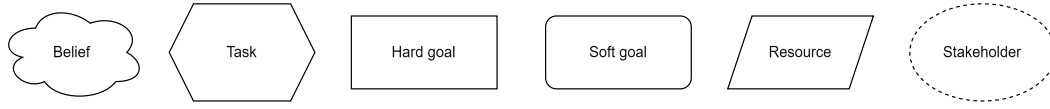


Figure 3.1: Legend of goal diagram elements.

of our system. As we reduce the scope of our system to smaller portions of a vehicle, to automatic braking, cruise control, or lane-keeping assist, we may consider other sub-systems in the vehicle as our stakeholder and consider what goals those agents may have for the new system boundary.

For an informal approach, we propose a syntax which loosely follows the syntax from i* Strategic Rational Diagram [14, 15]. The legend is shown in figure 3.1. As we are initially using an informal approach we are not as concerned with how the model elements work together or patterns. What we want to convey at this point is what the goals of a stakeholder are, what they might be informed by, and what they might do or use to satisfy those goals. An example goal diagram at the vehicle level can be found in figure 3.2. This goal diagram captures, at a high-level, what the goals of a driver might be when using their vehicle.

Generally, we propose that a driver will use their vehicle to go from one place to another. They are also likely to either carry cargo, people, or both during the commute. They may have some variation in terms of how much cargo or how many people as well. They will also have to drive the vehicle as a task since that is still the main way that people use their vehicle. As part of that task, they will typically want to drive safely to make sure that they get to their destination without issue. While still relatively simple, and without diving very deeply into formally defining the relationship between the model elements we have been able to convey what the goals of a driver could

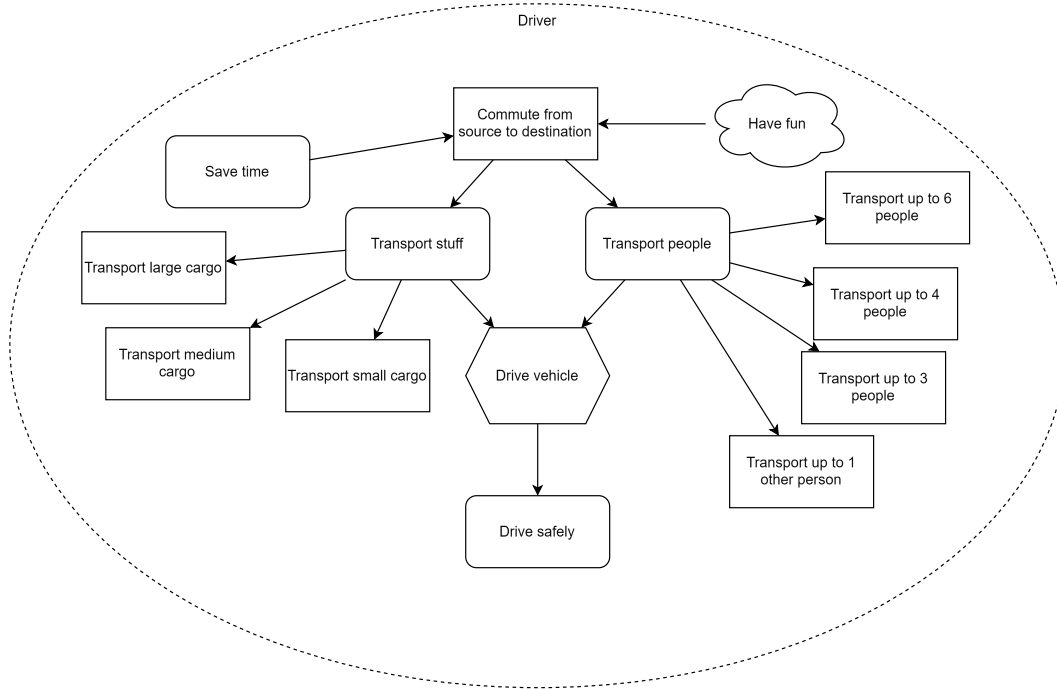


Figure 3.2: Example goal diagram outlining the goals of a driver using a vehicle.

be, introduce some possible variations in goals, and highlight possible goal decompositions. As this is still informal a different engineer may come up with a different goal model for what a driver might do, but they can still be relatively easily merged manually and convey the story of what goals a driver might have as a stakeholder for a vehicle.

As we we will be introducing more formalism later on with the feature modelling and requirement modelling, there is little benefit to introducing that complexity in this stage of development in comparison to the ease of use that we can have with an informal approach to goal modelling.

3.2 Use Cases

The purpose of the goal diagram is to provide the context of why our identified stakeholders would want to use our system, it does give us answer to what the connections are between our stakeholders and the system. In other words, along with the goals of the stakeholders and our system, we need to identify how the stakeholders will use our system to satisfy their goals. This allows us to capture what the stakeholders will use the system for, supported by the goals of both parties. We may find during this stage that we missed some goals to provide context for some use cases identified. This is also the first opportunity for iteration in the methodology. As we explore the problem space more thoroughly we hope to fill in these gaps as much as possible before we get to the feature modelling and requirement modelling.

In figure 3.3, we show the parts of the cabin that a driver is likely to use. It is easier to justify some of the use cases compared to others based on the goal diagram we have already created. For example, the goal of 'have fun' is hard to trace to any single use case and can be ambiguous with traceability and justification. Drive safely however can be traced to several use cases, such as brakes, gas pedal, and steering wheel. We can see our goals of 'Transport stuff' and 'Transport people' are also untraceable to the current UCD as we have not specified any use cases around cargo space or passengers. This highlights the first possibility for misalignment between these two modelling efforts; system scoping. The goals of the driver are focused primarily around why they would use a vehicle. However the UCD has been written with an implied assumption; a driver only interacts with the driver cabin. During its inception it did not consider what other parts of the vehicle might interact with outside of the

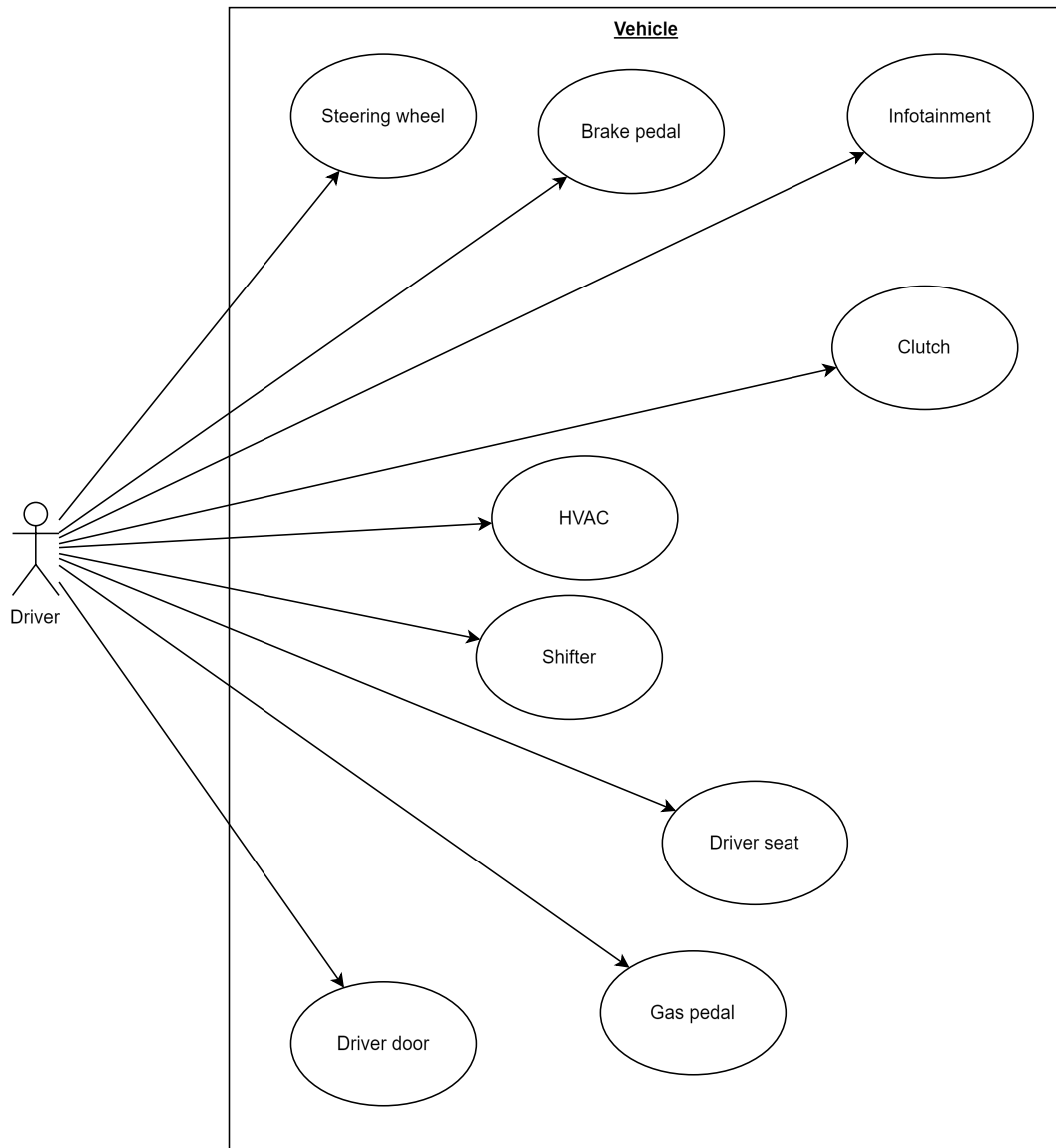


Figure 3.3: A use case diagram outlining what parts of the vehicle a driver will use.

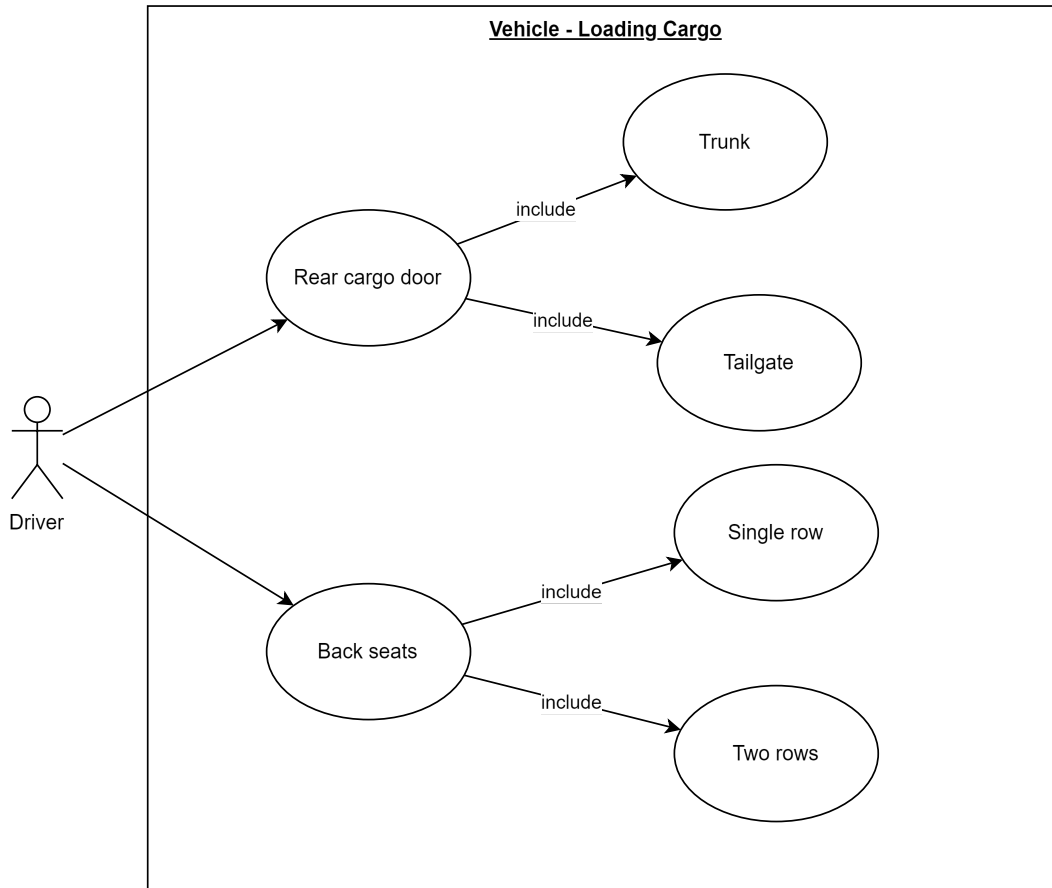


Figure 3.4: UCD scoped by the loading cargo goals

driver cabin. These kinds of assumptions are typically easy to make and hard to detect. As a helpful convention to handle complexity, we consider scoping the system boundary based around the individual goals from the goal diagram. Thus we can re-title the system boundary from figure 3.3 to 'Vehicle - Drive Vehicle'.

This is a simple convention that helps with limiting state space explosion with a UCD of complex system, such as a vehicle, and also helps with scoping the UCD to facilitate traceability to the goal diagram for justification. We can create another UCD to specifically target another goal; 'Transport stuff'. For this convention we recommend maintaining a syntactic match between the

goal and the system boundary, however this is not always possible. For the UCD in figure 3.4, we label the boundary ‘Loading Cargo’ as this is the specific portion of the goal that we are focused on; the original goal of ‘Transport stuff’ also has the implication of driving built into it. With this we can separate the UCD by goals to identify what use cases will work together to satisfy a goal. This is critical as with this proposed methodology, the identified use cases will be equivalently treated as the features of our system. The requirements for the features can therefore also be traced directly to the goals that are used to scope them.

3.3 Features

With some preliminary work done to identify stakeholders, goals, and use cases, we can begin to identify features of the system. Generally, we want an equivalency mapping between use cases and features. Therefore the UCD serves two purposes: it identifies what parts of our system a stakeholder will use to satisfy a goal and what features are likely to exist in our system. However, in feature modelling we can have more granularity in how we decompose features compared to in a UCD. This mapping only holds true at the top-level as the UCD is not meant to handle use case decomposition beyond the inclusion and extension relationships as is shown in figure 3.4. These relationships can sometimes show a use case composition, and by extension a feature composition, but we do not have any semantics around mandatory and optional features. We define the relationship between use cases and features as follows:

Let \mathcal{U} be the set of all use cases. (3.1)

Let \mathcal{F} be the set of all features. (3.2)

We define $\mathcal{U} \subseteq \mathcal{F}$ (3.3)

We get the definition above based on system complexity. For a simple system, it may be that no further decomposition of features are required after equating use cases to features. However, for the majority of system development we find that feature decomposition is necessary to create a sufficiently complete feature model and capture all components and configuration possibilities of a system. What the mapping between UCDs and features enables is the identification of the features closest to the root of the feature model, the top-most layer. We can see in figure 3.5 what a possible initial feature model can look like based on the previous UCDs.

We have defined the clutch as optional, along with both the rear door features and the back seat features. This is where traditional feature modelling takes over.

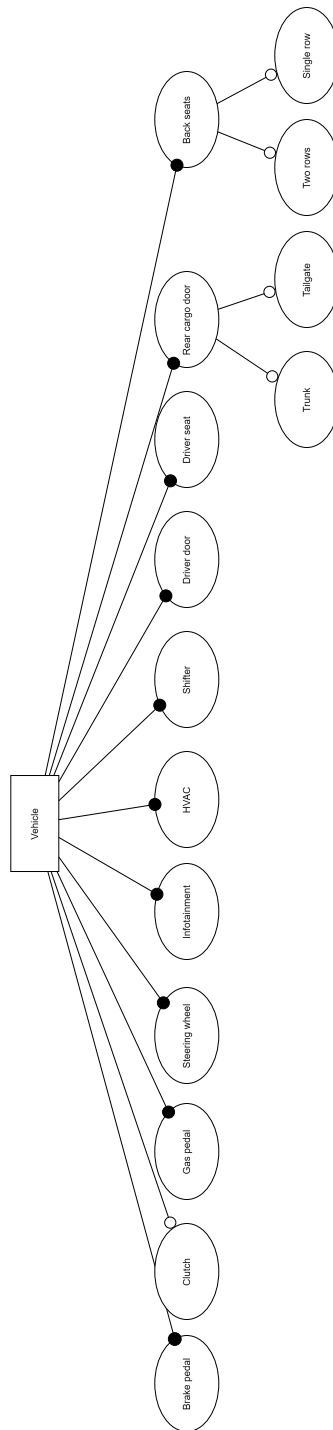


Figure 3.5: Initial attempt at a feature model based on use cases identified in UCD.

3.4 Feature-Requirement Traceability

3.5 Requirement Refinement

3.6 Feature Composition

3.7 Requirement Composition

Chapter 4

Implementation

4.1 Implementation Objectives

4.1.1 Goals and Limitations

4.1.2 Use Cases and Features

4.1.3 Requirements

4.2 Abstract Syntax

4.3 Concrete Syntax

4.3.1 Design Decisions

4.4 Composition Implementations

Chapter 5

Evaluation

5.1 Automotive

5.1.1 Coherence in Automotive Development

5.1.2 Relevance in Automotive Development

5.1.3 Impact in Automotive Development

5.1.4 Efficiency in Automotive Development

5.1.5 Effectiveness in Automotive Development

5.2 Medical Device

5.2.1 Coherence in Medical Device Development

5.2.2 Relevance in Medical Device Development

5.2.3 Impact in Medical Device Development

5.2.4 Efficiency in Medical Device Development

5.2.5 Effectiveness in Medical Device Development

Chapter 6

Future Work

While the results of our proposed methodology and tooling are promising, there are some definite short-comings at present. While CyclicL is self-contained with regards to features and requirements, there is no traceability between the UCD and goal diagram to the tool. This presents another challenge of traceability and justification. It requires the engineer to be aware of the links between the domain and problem space analysis and the feature and requirement models in the tool. This implicit knowledge will eventually need to be documented somewhere to support both future development changes and assurance for safety-critical development. As a result, one potential path is creating a bridge between the domain analysis modelling and the current tool to extend the traceability all the way up to the concept phase of development. While we expect UCD and goal diagrams to remain mostly static once they are created, the direct traceability could be helpful documentation for onboarding new employees to help them get familiar with why certain decisions were made, support change impact analysis justifications, and aid the development of assurance case by having complete end-to-end traceability between the problem

space and the solution space.

The implementation of the tool, CyclicL, is still incomplete as we have only demonstrated the capability of the minimum viable product. There are many functions we will need to add to have a more complete tool. There are currently no syntax constraints in the tool to ensure that all user created models are valid according to the metamodel. Thus there is potential for users to create semantically meaningless models even if the syntax is shown as correct. We are currently relying on conventions and good engineering to create semantically meaningful models but this is very difficult to maintain at scale within a company or industry. Another lane of development would be in allowing users to create these models textually as well as graphically. Very often adoptability of a tool, especially an MDE tool is difficult as many engineers are unfamiliar with MDE techniques and approaches. Creating a textual environment for creating these models may help with usability and approachability of CyclicL for use in industry. Most importantly, we would want to implement a method of consistency checking within the tool. This would remove a lot of the burden from the engineer to ensure that their features are consistent and their requirement are consistent between features. This is a unique challenge as the requirements are specified using the Gherkin behavioral approach and thus may require us to re-evaluate what type of specification language we implement within the requirement canvases of CyclicL.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

What comes first, the requirement or the feature? In this thesis we have attempted to outline an answer to this question. Neither, it is the customer use cases and the user goals that come first. Those allow us to identify features and elicit requirements in parallel. We have shown that following Meyer’s requirements engineering approach we can leverage both informal and formal MDE techniques to perform a domain and problem space analysis. We can identify who our customers/users/stakeholders are, what we expect them to do with our system, and why they would want to use our system to satisfy their goals. We have shown to we can map the identified use cases to features of our system. We have shown how we can derive high-level requirement from our goal diagram and how we can refine and decompose those requirements. Thus we have shown satisfaction of RQ1.

Thanks to this process contribution, we are also able to identify features and elicit requirements in parallel. The next step we need to do is decide which features own which requirements. This is first done at a high-level as we map which features satisfy a user goal or goals. Then we can refine

those goals into requirements that are owned by the feature, all scoped by the feature to ensure relevance. We have shown an added bonus to this approach using the feature decomposition in the feature model. This implies a natural decomposition in the requirements as well as they are scoped by the features that own them. Overall, there is a much clearer path to specifying features in a FDD environment with the supporting methodology and tool. This satisfies RQ1.

One of the main highlights of our methodology is the feature-requirement encapsulation. By defining this hierarchy, we have shown how it facilitates traceability between features and requirements. We can show what features own the requirements, dependency between features, and by extension, dependencies external features and requirements. We have demonstrated how this hierarchy enables increased granularity of traceability through our implementation of CyclicL. We were able to define a formal metamodel to capture this hierarchy and implement a tool to show satisfiability of this proposal. Through CyclicL, we exposed the benefit of this hierarchical relationship between features and requirements in the semi-automated maintenance and generation of traceability matrices between features and requirements, satisfying RQ1.

Finally, CyclicL has shown the potential of a PLE tool that is self contained with requirements as part of the tool. We have shown that we can support incremental and iterative development of both feature models and requirement models in CyclicL. By leveraging Eclipse Modeling Framework (EMF) and Sirius, we were able to show the possibilities enabled by a tool that will maintain traceability through both requirement and architectural changes without dependencies on external support. While there are still some limitations in the current tool capabilities, we have demonstrated how future development

can continue to address these short-comings. Therefore, we believe that we have satisfied RQ1 and the potential of a tool that supports iterative and incremental development of traceability in parallel to feature and requirement development.

Appendices

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