Model Checking Business Processes

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Introduction
- Motivation

Theoretical Background
- Polyadic $\pi$-calculus
- Modal $\mu$-calculus

WS-BPEL
- Language Concepts
- Translations
Web Services are the latest evolutionary step in Distributed Computing Technologies

Core benefits are
- loosely coupled
- ease of integration
- allow service reuse

Alone, Web Services are not that interesting; combining them and creating workflows is much more interesting

OASIS has proposed the Business Process Execution Language (BPEL) that allows the Web Service coordination for creating long lasting business processes.
Create a system based on formal methods that allows the property checking of real-world business processes.

Useful for complex systems which are additionally:

- **Concurrent**: Distributed systems give rise to concurrency
- **Quality-critical**: Applications where failure is not dangerous but economically expensive
- **Safety-critical**: Applications where failure may endanger human life
- **Security-critical**: Applications where failure means unauthorized access to sensitive information
Aims & Contributions

- Provide a formal semantics in π-calculus for a subset of the BPEL language
- Implement an automated tool for property checking of business processes expressed in BPEL
- Use the tool on real world examples to identify problematic situations
The π-calculus is a process algebra (a mathematical model) for describing and analysing systems consisting of agents/processes, whose configuration (interconnections) or neighbourhood is continually changing.

The propositional modal μ-calculus is a powerful language for expressing properties of transition systems by using least and greatest fixpoint operators. It is interesting because there exist efficient model checking algorithms for this formalism.
Assumptions

We assume

- the existence of the infinite set $\mathcal{N}$ of Names\textsuperscript{1}; they have no structure. Lower case English letters are members of the set $(x, y, z, \ldots \in \mathcal{N})$
- finite sequences $\tilde{a}$. ($\tilde{u} \overset{\text{def}}{=} u_1, u_2, \ldots, u_n$)
- the existence of a basic kind of entity, a process and an associated infinite set $\mathcal{P}$ of Processes. Uppercase English letters are members of the set ($P, Q, R, \ldots \in \mathcal{P}$)

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Set Symbol & Name & Members in Set \\
\hline
$\mathcal{N}$ & Names & $a, b, c, \ldots$ \\
\hline
$\overline{\mathcal{N}}$ & Conjugate Names & $\overline{a}, \overline{b}, \overline{c}, \ldots$ \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Names}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{1}Naming and Computers
### $\pi$-calculus syntax

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$P ::= M$</th>
<th>(Normalised Process)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>P_1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>!P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>(\text{new } x) P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M ::= \emptyset$</td>
<td>(Nil Process)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>\pi.P$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>M_1 + M_2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\pi ::= \overline{a}\langle\tilde{x}\rangle$</td>
<td>(Output)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>a(\tilde{x})$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>\tau$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
<td>[x = y]\pi$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table:** $\pi$-calculus Language Syntax
μ-calculus formulas ($\Phi$) are built up from:

- **boolean connectives** ($\land, \lor, \lnot$)
- **modal operators** ($\langle \rangle, [\ ]$)
- **maximum fixed points** ($\mu, \nu$)
- **variables** ($Z$)
- **actions** ($K \subset A$)

According to the following syntax:

$$\Phi ::= \texttt{tt} \mid \texttt{ff} \mid \lnot \Phi \mid \Phi_1 \land \Phi_2 \mid \Phi_1 \lor \Phi_2$$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$[K]\Phi$</th>
<th>$\langle K \rangle \Phi$</th>
<th>$\nu Z. \Phi$</th>
<th>$\mu Z. \Phi$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Table: μ-calculus Language Syntax*
Formulas in the $\mu$-calculus are interpreted relative to a transition system (Kripke Structure). Equiped with a Kripke Structure $M = (S, S_0, R, L)$ and an environment $\epsilon : Z \rightarrow 2^S$, a formula $\Phi$ is interpreted as a set of states in which $\Phi$ is true, denoted $[[\Phi]]_{M,\epsilon}$. The set $[[\Phi]]_{M,\epsilon}$ is defined recursively as follows:

- $[[p]]_{M,\epsilon} = \{s \mid p \in L(s)\}$
- $[[Q]]_{M,\epsilon} = \epsilon(Q)$
- $[[\neg \Phi]]_{M,\epsilon} = S \setminus [[\Phi]]_{M,\epsilon}$
- $[[\Phi_1 \land \Phi_2]]_{M,\epsilon} = [[\Phi_1]]_{M,\epsilon} \cap [[\Phi_2]]_{M,\epsilon}$
- $[[\Phi_1 \lor \Phi_2]]_{M,\epsilon} = [[\Phi_1]]_{M,\epsilon} \cup [[\Phi_2]]_{M,\epsilon}$
Semantics II

- $\llbracket \langle a \rangle \Phi \rrbracket_{M,\epsilon} = \left\{ s \mid \exists t \in S. s \xrightarrow{a} t \text{ and } t \in \llbracket \Phi \rrbracket_{M,\epsilon} \right\}$
  - or intuitively,
  - “It is possible to make an $a$-transition to a state where $\Phi$ holds.”

- $\llbracket [a] \Phi \rrbracket_{M,\epsilon} = \left\{ s \mid \forall t \in S. s \xrightarrow{a} t \text{ implies } t \in \llbracket \Phi \rrbracket_{M,\epsilon} \right\}$
  - or intuitively,
  - “$\Phi$ holds in all states reachable (in one step) by making an $a$-transition.”

- $\llbracket \mu Z. \Phi \rrbracket_{M,\epsilon}$ is the least fixed point solution
  - “The smallest set of tasks such that $Z = \Phi$”

- $\llbracket \nu Z. \Phi \rrbracket_{M,\epsilon}$ is the greatest fixed point solution
  - “The largest set of tasks such that $Z = \Phi$”
Satisfiability and Validity

Glueing the two theories together!

For any modal formula $\Phi$ and a set of processes $\mathcal{P}$ we say that,

### Satisfiability

A process $P \in \mathcal{P}$ has, or satisfies, the property $\Phi$, if some process satisfies it and we write

$$P \models \Phi \iff \exists P \in \mathcal{P}. \Phi \text{ holds}$$

### Validity

A formula $\Phi$ is valid is all processes $P \in \mathcal{P}$ satisfy it.
For the purposes of business processes, we will check the following properties:

**Deadlock**
A process $P \in \mathcal{P}$ is deadlocked is expressed as

$$P \models [.] \text{ff}$$

Or any other properties that can be expressed in the $\mu$-calculus (an order gets eventually shipped, a bank account will eventually be credited)

**Cancelation**
A process can be cancelled, expressed as

$$P \models \mu \text{cancel}.\langle-\rangle \text{tt \land [cancel]} \text{ff}$$
Introduction

The Business Process Execution Language (BPEL) is an imperative, XML-based language, used for specifying business process behaviour based on Web Services.

Currently in version 2.0 part of the OASIS specifications undergoing standardisation.
Business Processes can be described in two ways; Executable business processes model actual behaviour of a participant in a business interaction. Abstract business processes are partially specified processes that are not intended to be executed; they have descriptive role.

A Partner represents both a consumer of a service provided by the business process and a provider of a service to the business process. Partner Links model interactions between the process and partner services and Partner Link Types characterises the conversational relationship between two services by defining specific “roles”.
**Variables**

Variables provide the means for holding messages that constitute the state of a business process.

**Correlation Set**

A named group of properties that, taken together, serve to define a way of identifying an application-level conversation within a business protocol instance.
### Basic Activities

- **receive**
  Do a blocking wait for a matching message to arrive

- **reply**
  Send a message in reply to a formerly received message

- **invoke**
  Invoke a one-way or request-response operation

- **assign**
  Update the values of variables or partner links with new data

- **empty**
  No-op instruction for a business process

- **throw**
  Generate a fault from inside the business process

- **rethrow**
  Forward a fault from inside a fault handler

- **exit**
  Immediately terminate execution of a business process instance

- **wait**
  Wait for a given time period or until a certain time has passed

- **compensate**
  Invoke compensation on an inner scope that has already completed
Structured Activities

- **Flow**
  Contained activities are executed in parallel, partially ordered through control links

- **Sequence**
  Contained activities are performed sequentially in lexical order

- **While**
  Contained activity is repeated while a predicate holds

- **RepeatUntil**
  Contained activity is repeated until a predicate holds

- **Pick**
  Block and wait for a suitable message to arrive (or time out)

- **If then else**
  Select exactly one branch of activity from a set of choices

- **Scope**
  Associate contained activity with its own local variables, fault handlers, compensation handler, and event handlers
Scopes & Handlers

Scope
The behaviour context for each activity is provided by a scope. Scopes can provide local variables, links, correlation sets, subordinate activities and handlers.

Handlers
- **Event handlers**: Allow a process to act on message events or timer events.
- **Fault handlers**: Undo partial or unsuccessful work of a scope by dealing with exceptional situations (internal faults).
- **Compensation handler**: Allow the undoing of persisted effects of already completed activities.
- **Termination handler**: Permits the dealing with forced scope termination (external faults).
Abstract Syntax

\( \langle \text{bpelProcess} \rangle ::= \text{'process'} \ \text{name} \ \langle \text{parterLinkDef} \rangle ? \ \langle \text{variableDef} \rangle ? \ \langle \text{faultHandlersDef} \rangle ? \ \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle \)

\( \langle \text{parterLinkDef} \rangle ::= \text{'pLink'} \ \text{name} \ p\text{LinkType} \)

\( \langle \text{variableDef} \rangle ::= \text{'var'} \ \text{name} \ \text{messageType} \)

\( \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle ::= \langle \text{basicActivityDef} \rangle \)
\( \quad \mid \langle \text{structuredActivityDef} \rangle \)

\( \langle \text{basicActivityDef} \rangle ::= \langle \text{receiveOperation} \rangle \)
\( \quad \mid \langle \text{replyOperation} \rangle \)
\( \quad \mid \langle \text{invokeOperation} \rangle \)
\( \quad \mid \langle \text{assignOperation} \rangle \)
\( \quad \mid \langle \text{emptyOperation} \rangle \)
\( \quad \mid \langle \text{exitOperation} \rangle \)
\( \quad \mid \langle \text{waitOperation} \rangle \)
Abstract Syntax

\[
\langle \text{receiveOperation} \rangle ::= \text{`in`} \langle \text{msg} \rangle \\
\langle \text{replyOperation} \rangle ::= \text{`out`} \langle \text{msg} \rangle \\
\langle \text{invokeOperation} \rangle ::= \text{`out`} \langle \text{msg} \rangle (\text{`in`} \langle \text{msg} \rangle)? \\
\langle \text{assignOperation} \rangle ::= \text{`assign`} \text{ name value} \\
\langle \text{emptyOperation} \rangle ::= \text{`empty`} \\
\langle \text{exitOperation} \rangle ::= \text{`exit`} \\
\langle \text{waitOperation} \rangle ::= \text{`wait`} \langle \text{timeExpr} \rangle \\
\langle \text{timeExpr} \rangle ::= \text{`for`} \alpha \\
| \text{`until`} \alpha \\
\langle \text{msg} \rangle ::= \text{pLink/pType/operation/msgname}
\]
Abstract Syntax

\[
\langle \text{structuredActivityDef} \rangle ::= \langle \text{flowOperation} \rangle \\
\quad | \langle \text{ifThenElseOperation} \rangle \\
\quad | \langle \text{sequenceOperation} \rangle \\
\quad | \langle \text{whileOperation} \rangle \\
\quad | \langle \text{repeatOperation} \rangle \\
\quad | \langle \text{pickOperation} \rangle \\
\quad | \langle \text{onMessage} \rangle \\
\quad | \langle \text{onAlarm} \rangle
\]

\[
\langle \text{flowOperation} \rangle ::= \text{flow} \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle^* \\
\langle \text{ifThenElseOperation} \rangle ::= \text{if} \ \beta \ \text{then} \ \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle \ (\text{else} \ \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle)^? \\
\langle \text{sequenceOperation} \rangle ::= \text{seq} \ \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle^* \\
\langle \text{whileOperation} \rangle ::= \text{while} \ \beta \ \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle \\
\langle \text{repeatOperation} \rangle ::= \text{repeat} \ \langle \text{activityDef} \rangle \ \text{until} \ \beta \\
\langle \text{pickOperation} \rangle ::= \text{pick} \ \langle \text{onMessage} \rangle^? \ \langle \text{onAlarm} \rangle^* 
\]
Translation framework

The translation is performed through an inductively defined relation on the phrases of the abstract BPEL syntax

\[ Tr : \text{BPELStmt} \rightarrow \pi \text{Expr} \]

Each non-tivial syntactic entity is represented as a parametrised agent of the following form

\[ [S] \overset{\text{def}}{=} (h, r, \tilde{g}, \tilde{p}, \text{in}, \tilde{n}).P_S \text{ where} \]

- \( h \) is a channel to signal process has finished
- \( r \) is used to return the result to some process
- \( \tilde{g} \) is used to get the values of variables that occur in \( S \)
- \( \tilde{p} \) is used to put values to variables
Some BPEL constructs correspond trivially to π-calculus expressions.

- $Tr(msg) = pLink/pType/operation/msgname$
- $Tr('in'\langle msg\rangle) = Tr(msg)(\tilde{x})$
- $Tr('out'\langle msg\rangle) = Tr(msg)\langle\tilde{x}\rangle$
- $Tr('empty') = \tau$
- $Tr('exit') = cancel.\emptyset$
A sequence of N activities

\[
\begin{align*}
\left[\text{`seq'}S_1 S_2 \ldots S_n\right] & \overset{\text{def}}{=} (h, \ldots). (\text{\texttt{new}} h_1 \ldots h_{n-1}) \\
& (\left[S_1\right]\langle h_1, \ldots \rangle \mid h_1(z_1).\left[S_2\right]\langle h_2, \ldots \rangle \mid \cdots \mid h_{n-1}(z).\left[S_n\right]\langle h, \ldots \rangle)
\end{align*}
\]

N parallel activities

\[
\begin{align*}
\left[\text{`flow'}S_1 S_2 \ldots S_n\right] & \overset{\text{def}}{=} (h, \ldots). \\
& (\left[S_1\right]\langle h, \ldots \rangle \mid \left[S_2\right]\langle h, \ldots \rangle \mid \cdots \mid \left[S_n\right]\langle h, \ldots \rangle)
\end{align*}
\]

Selecting a single activity

\[
\begin{align*}
\left[\text{`pick'}S_1 S_2 \ldots S_n\right] & \overset{\text{def}}{=} (h, \ldots). (msg_1(z_1).\left[S_1\right]\langle h, \ldots \rangle + \\
& msg_2(z_2).\left[S_2\right]\langle h, \ldots \rangle + \cdots + \tau.\left[S_n\right]\langle h, \ldots \rangle)
\end{align*}
\]
More complicated translations
If, Switch, While

If-then-else
\[
\begin{align*}
\left[\text{`if'} \beta \text{ `then'} S_1 \text{ `else'} S_2 \right] & \overset{\text{def}}{=} (h, \ldots). (\text{new } t, f) \overline{b}(t, f). (t().[S_1]\langle h, \ldots \rangle + f().[S_2]\langle h, \ldots \rangle)
\end{align*}
\]

Switching based on conditions
\[
\begin{align*}
\left[\text{`switch'} S_1 S_2 \ldots S_n \right] & \overset{\text{def}}{=} (h, \ldots). \\
(\tau. [S_1]\langle h, \ldots \rangle + \tau. [S_2]\langle h, \ldots \rangle + \cdots + \tau. [S_n]\langle h, \ldots \rangle)
\end{align*}
\]

While
\[
\begin{align*}
\left[\text{`while'} \beta S \right] & \overset{\text{def}}{=} (h, \ldots). (\text{new } h_1, h_2, g)(\overline{g} \mid g(z). ([E]\langle h_1, \ldots \rangle \mid \\
h_1(v).IF(v \rightarrow [S]\langle h_2, \ldots \rangle, \neg v \rightarrow \overline{h})\mid h_2(z).\overline{g}))
\end{align*}
\]
Why all this?

All this theory has allowed us to automate the whole procedure of checking properties of real world, executing and deployed business processes. How?

1. We point the tool to the BPEL description for the process.
2. An automatic transformation takes place producing $\pi$-calculus specifications of the running business process. These are in a format the Mobility Workbench (MWB) can understand.
3. We load a file with predefined (and interesting) properties and we can model check the $\pi$-calculus specifications against the properties.
4. Feeding all this to MWB (or any model-checker) will give us a YES/NO answer!
In this talk

- we presented the theoretical foundations for enabling the model checking of business processes
- gave the outline of a formalisation of the BPEL language semantics in the $\pi$-calculus

Future Directions

- Find existing real world uses of BPEL to run the model checker on
- Finish the implementation and integration of the system with the Mobility Workbench (MWB)
- Experiment with alternative model checkers (abc, concurrency workbench)
My supervisor, Dr David Greaves, for his continuous support and feedback on this work,
Professor Robin Milner for his initial suggestions and directions,
Dr. Andy Gordon for having valuable discussions on potential real world applications

Thank you! Any questions?