Generating Domain-Specific Property Languages with ProMoBox: application to interactive systems

Bart Meyers  
Modeling, Simulation and Design Lab (MSDL), University of Antwerp, Belgium  
firstname.lastname@uantwerp.be

Romuald Deshayes, Tom Mens  
Département d’Informatique, Université de Mons, Mons, Belgium  
firstname.lastname@umons.ac.be

Hans Vangheluwe  
Modeling, Simulation and Design Lab (MSDL), University of Antwerp / McGill University, Antwerp, Belgium / Montréal, Canada  
firstname.lastname@uantwerp.be

ABSTRACT
Domain-Specific Modeling allows domain experts with limited technical background to precisely model applications by using domain concepts. These domain-specific models can be simulated, optimized, transformed into other formalisms, and from these models executable code and documentation can be generated. Because of their syntactic simplicity they are suitable for analysis, which is nonetheless often neglected in current approaches. Especially in Human-Computer Interaction, verifying whether the model satisfies its requirements (specified as so-called properties) is essential. The ProMoBox approach presents a highly automated solution for the specification and verification of such properties. It provides a framework for model checking of temporal properties, where all visible artifacts (system designs, properties, simulation traces, etc.) are specified in the domain-specific way.

THE ProMoBox APPROACH
Domain-specific modeling (DSM) helps designing systems at a higher level of abstraction. By providing languages, “DSMLs” (defined by a metamodel), that are closer to the problem domain than to the solution domain, low-level technical details can be hidden. An essential activity in DSM is the specification and verification of properties to increase the quality of the designed systems [3]. Providing support for these tasks is therefore necessary to provide a holistic DSM experience to domain engineers. Unfortunately, this has been mostly neglected by DSM approaches. At best, support is limited to translating models to formal representations on which properties are specified and evaluated with logic-based formalisms [6], such as Linear Temporal Logic (LTL). This contradicts the DSM philosophy as domain experts desiring to specify and verify domain-specific properties are not familiar with such formalisms. We propose the ProMoBox framework to shift property specification and verification tasks up to the DSM level. The scope, assumptions and limitations of this approach are presented in [5].

We applied ProMoBox to Gismo [1], a DSML for executable modeling of gestural interaction applications [2]. The ProMoBox approach for Gismo is illustrated in Fig. 1. The ProMoBox framework consists of (i) generic languages for modeling all artifacts that are needed for specifying and verifying properties, (ii) a fully automated method to specialize and integrate these generic languages in a given DSML, and (iii) a verification backbone based on model checking that is directly pluggable to DSM environments such as AToMPM [7]. Properties in ProMoBox are translated to LTL and a Promela model is generated that includes a translation of the system, its environment and its rule-based operational semantics. The Promela model is checked with the SPIN model checker [4] and if a counter-example is found it is translated back to the DSM level.

The ProMoBox framework [5] relies on a family of fully automatically generated modeling languages based on the DSML metamodel. These languages are required to modularly support specification and verification of model properties. The design language (GismoD in Fig. 1) allows DSM engineers to design the static structure of the system. The runtime lan-
For fifteen properties, we verified whether the model shown in Fig. 2 satisfies them. The above properties are transformed to LTL, and are inserted in Promela code consisting of the

system shown in Fig. 2 with initial state, the environment and rule-based model of the DSML’s semantics as shown in step 1 of Fig. 1. In step 2, SPIN verifies whether the system satisfies the formula, returning “True” if it does. If there is a counter-example, steps 3 to 5 are followed: the counter-example trace is played back by SPIN, and a readable trace is printed (step 3), this trace is converted automatically to the counter-example output model (step 4), and this counter-example can be played out state by state by showing a runtime model for each state (step 5).

Because of these counter-examples, we were able to find and fix an error in our bow model of Fig. 2. In another instance, we were able to find and correct an error in one of the semantics model’s rules. The performance in terms of time and memory consumption is good: evaluation never takes more than a second on an average laptop, and never requires more than 100 MB of memory.

The limitations of the framework are related to the mapping to Promela as explained in [5]. In its current state, ProMoBox does not allow dynamic structure models. Because of the nature of Promela, boundedness is ensured in the translation. Other constraints can be circumvented by abstracting the metamodel to make it suitable for model checking.

REFERENCES