Software Engineering using Formal Methods

Modeling Distributed Systems

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This Lecture

You know you have a distributed system when the crash of a computer you've never heard of stops you from getting any work done. –*Leslie Lamport*

Using PROMELA channels for modeling distributed systems

Modeling Distributed Systems

Distributed systems consist of

- nodes connected by
- communication channels
- protocols dictates how nodes communicate with each other

Distributed systems are very complex

Models of distributed systems abstract away from details of networks/protocols/nodes

In PROMELA:

- nodes modeled by PROMELA processes
- communication channels modeled by PROMELA channels
- protocols modeled by algorithm distributed over the processes

Channels in PROMELA

In PROMELA, channels are first class citizens

Data type **chan** with two operations for sending and receiving

A variable of channel type is declared by initializer:

chan *name* = [*capacity*] **of** {$type_1, \ldots, type_n$}

name	name of channel variable
capacity	non-negative integer constant
$type_i$	PROMELA data types

Example:

```
chan ch = [2] of { mtype, byte, bool }
```

Meaning of Channels

chan *name* = [*capacity*] **of** {$type_1, ..., type_n$}

Creates a channel, which is stored in *name*

Messages communicated via the channel are *n*-tuples $\in type_1 \times \ldots \times type_n$

Can buffer up to *capacity* messages, if $capacity \geq 1$
$\Rightarrow$ *"buffered channel"*

The channel has *no* buffer, if $capacity = 0$
$\Rightarrow$ *"rendezvous channel"*

Meaning of Channels

Example:

chan `ch = [2]` **of** { **mtype**, **byte**, **bool** }

Creates a channel, which is stored in `ch`

Messages communicated via `ch` are 3-tuples $\in$ **mtype** $\times$ **byte** $\times$ **bool**

Given, e.g., **mtype** `{red, yellow, green}`,
an example message can be: `green, 20,` **false**

`ch` is a *buffered channel*, buffering up to 2 messages

Sending and Receiving

send statement has the form:

name ! $expr_1, \ldots, expr_n$

- *name*: channel variable
- $expr_1, \ldots, expr_n$: sequence of expressions, where number and types match message type
- sends *values* of $expr_1, \ldots, expr_n$ as *one* message
- example: `ch ! green, 20,` **false**

receive statement has the form:

name ? $var_1, \ldots, var_n$

- *name*: channel variable
- $var_1, \ldots, var_n$: sequence of variables, where number and types match message type
- *assigns* values of message to $var_1, \ldots, var_n$
- example: `ch ? color, time, flash`

Client-Server

```
chan request = [0] of { byte };

active proctype Client0() {
  request ! 0;
}

active proctype Client1() {
  request ! 1;
}

...
```

`Client0` and `Client1` send messages 0 and 1 to `request`

order of sending is nondeterministic

Client-Server

```
chan request = [0] of { byte };

...

active proctype Server() {
  byte num;
  do
    :: request ? num;
       printf("serving␣client␣%d\n", num)
  od
}
```

`Server` loops on:

- receiving first message from `request`, storing value in `num`
- printing

Executability of receive Statement

`request ? num`

executable only if a message is available in channel `request`

⇒ receive statement frequently used as guard in **if**/**do**-statements

```
do
  :: request ? num ->
     printf("serving␣client␣%d\n", num)
od
```

Rendezvous Channels

```
chan ch = [0] of { byte, byte };

/* global to make visible in SpinSpider */
byte hour, minute;

active proctype Sender() {
  printf("ready\n");
  ch ! 11, 45;
  printf("Sent\n")
}

active proctype Receiver() {
  printf("steady\n");
  ch ? hour, minute;
  printf("Received\n")
}
```

Which interleavings can occur? ⇒ ask SpinSpider

Rendezvous are Synchronous

On a rendezvous channel:

transfer of message from sender to receiver is synchronous, i.e., one single operation

Sender		Receiver
⋮		⋮
(11,45)	⟶	(hour,minute)
⋮		⋮

Rendezvous are Synchronous

Either:

1. Sender process' location counter at send ("!"):
   "offer to engage in rendezvous"
2. Receiver process' location counter at receive ("?"):
   "rendezvous can be accepted"

or the other way round:

1. Receiver process' location counter at receive ("?"):
   "offer to engage in rendezvous"
2. Sender process' location counter at send ("!"):
   "rendezvous can be accepted"

in any cases:

location counter of both processes is incremented at once

only place where PROMELA processes execute synchronously

Reconsider Client Server

```
chan request = [0] of { byte };

active proctype Server() {
  byte num;
  do :: request ? num ->
        printf("serving␣client␣%d\n", num)
  od
}
active proctype Client0() {
  request ! 0
}
active proctype Client1() {
  request ! 1
}
```

so far no reply to clients

Reply Channels

```
chan request = [0] of { byte };
chan reply = [0] of { bool };

active proctype Server() {
  byte num;
  do :: request ? num ->
        printf("serving␣client␣%d\n", num);
        reply ! true
  od
}
active proctype Client0() {
  request ! 0;   reply ? _
}
active proctype Client1() {
  request ! 1;   reply ? _
}
```

(anonymous variable "_" used if interested in receipt, not content)

Reply Channels - Single Server

```
chan request = [0] of { mtype };
chan reply = [0] of { mtype };
mtype = { nice, rude };

active proctype Server() {
  mtype msg;
  do :: request ? msg; reply ! msg
  od
}
active proctype NiceClient() {
  mtype msg;
  request ! nice; reply ? msg;
  assert(msg == nice)
}
active proctype RudeClient() {
  mtype msg;
  request ! rude; reply ? msg
}
```

Is the assertion valid? Ask SPIN.

Several Servers

More realistic with several servers:

```
active [2] proctype Server() {
  mtype msg;
  do :: request ? msg; reply ! msg
  od
}
active proctype NiceClient() {
  mtype msg;
  request ! nice; reply ? msg;
  assert(msg == nice)
}
active proctype RudeClient() {
  mtype msg;
  request ! rude; reply ? msg
}
```

And here? Analyse with SPIN.

Sending Channels via Channels

One way to fix the protocol:

clients declare local reply channel + send it to server

Sending Channels via Channels

```
mtype = { nice, rude };
chan request = [0] of { mtype, chan };

active [2] proctype Server() {
  mtype msg; chan ch;
  do :: request ? msg, ch;
        ch ! msg
  od
}
active proctype NiceClient() {
  chan reply = [0] of { mtype };  mtype msg;
  request ! nice, reply;   reply ? msg;
  assert( msg == nice )
}
active proctype RudeClient() {
  chan reply = [0] of { mtype };  mtype msg;
  request ! rude, reply;   reply ? msg
}
```

verify with Spin

Scope of Channels

channels are typically declared global

global channel

- usual case
- all processes can send and/or receive messages

local channel

- rarely used
- dies with its process
- can be useful to model security issues
  example:
  local channel could be passed
  through a global channel

Sending Process IDs

used *fixed constants* used for identification (here `nice`, `rude`)

- inflexible
- doesn't scale

Alternative:
processes send their own, unique process ID, `_pid`, as part of message

example, clients code:

```
chan reply = [0] of { byte, byte };
request ! reply, _pid;
reply ? serverID, clientID;

assert( clientID == _pid )
```

Limitations of Rendezvous Channels

- rendezvous too restrictive for many applications
- servers and clients block each other too much
- difficult to manage uneven workload
  (online shop: dozens of webservers serve thousands of clients)

Buffered Channel

buffered channels queue messages;
requests/services no not immediately block clients/servers

example:

```
chan ch = [3] of { mtype, byte, bool }
```

Buffered Channels

buffered channels, with capacity *cap*

- can hold up to *cap* messages
- are a FIFO (first-in-first-out) data structure:
  always the 'oldest' message in channel is retrieved by a receive
- (normal) receive statement reads and removes message from *cap*
- Sending and Receiving to/from buffered channels is asynchronous,
  i.e. interleaved

Executability of Buffered Channel operations

given channel `ch`, with capacity *cap*, currently containing *n* messages

receive statement `ch ? msg`
is executable iff `ch` is not empty, i.e., $n > 0$

send statement `ch ! msg`
is executable iff there is still 'space' in the message queue, i.e., $n < cap$

An non-executable receive or send statement will block until it is executable again

(There is a Spin option, `-m`, for a different send semantics: attempting to send to a full channel does not block, but the message gets lost instead.)

Checking Channel for Full/Empty

this can save from unnecessary blocking:

given channel `ch`:

full(`ch`) checks whether `ch` is full
nfull(`ch`) checks whether `ch` is not full
empty(`ch`) checks whether `ch` is empty
nempty(`ch`) checks whether `ch` is not empty

illegal to negate those
avoid combining with **else**

Copy Message without Removing

with

`ch ? color, time, flash`

you

- assign values from the message to `color, time, flash`
- remove message from `ch`

with

`ch ? <color, time, flash>`

you

- assign values from the message to `color, time, flash`
- leave message in `ch`

Dispatching Messages

Recurring task: Dispatch action depending on message type.

```
mtype = {hi, bye};
chan ch = [0] of {mtype};

active proctype Server () {
   mtype msg;
read:
  ch ? msg;
  do
    ::  msg == hi -> printf("Hello.\n"); goto read
    ::  msg == bye -> printf("See␣you.\n"); break
  od
}
...
```

Boring to write ..., but there is a better way!

Pattern Matching

Receive statement allows also values as arguments:

$$ch \ ? \ exp_1, \ldots, exp_n$$

- $exp_1, \ldots, exp_n$ any(!) expressions of correct type
- statement is executable, if message $msg_1, \ldots, msg_n$ in channel *ch* matches arguments, i.e. if
  - exp_i is a value, e.g. 23, msg_i must have same value
  - exp_i is a variable, then any value of msg_i (of correct type) matches and is assigned if statement is executed

Example

```
chan ch = [0] of {int, int};
int id = 5;
```

Does `ch ? 0, id` match message

- `[0, 5]` ? ✔   `[0, 7]` ? ✔
- `[1, 7]` ? ✘

Hint: To match the value stored in a variable *var* use `eval(var)`

Dispatching Messages Revisited

Recurring task: Dispatch action depending on message type.

```
mtype = {hi, bye};
chan ch = [0] of {mtype};

active proctype Server () {
  int i;
  do
    :: ch ? hi  -> printf("Hello.\n")
    :: ch ? bye -> printf("See␣you.\n"); break
  od
}
...
```

Random receive ?? (for buffered channels)

- Executable if matching message exists in channel.
- If executed, first matching message removed from channel.

Nicer Message Formatting

PROMELA provides an alternative, but equivalent syntax for

```
ch ! exp1, exp2, exp3
```

namely

```
ch ! exp1(exp2, exp3)
```

Increases readability for certain applications, e.g. modeling of protocol modelling:

`ch!send(msg,id)`	vs.	`ch!send,msg,id`
`ch!ack(id)`	vs.	`ch!ack,id`

And finally

Buffered channels are part of the state!

State space gets much bigger using buffered channels

Use with care (and with small buffers).