Formalizing QVT-Relations to certify transformations at authoring-time

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2008-09-16
• Industrial-strength model transformations (or, why testing alone won’t cut it)

• QVT-Relations in a nutshell

• Finding bugs in the UML2RDBMS sample transformation, tooling used

• What others are doing, Future work
Some model transformations are “straightforward to get right”

(because they bridge a short gap between input and output languages)

(but that’s not representative of real-world transformations)

Other transformations are more like refactorings, with non-trivial preconditions and effects.


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Moreover, a toolchain may comprise transformations developed independently

- For example, a statechart may be fed as input to the transformation “Express state machine in pre/post constraints” [1]

- That’s for example what AutoJML [2] does:

  AutoJML is a JML specification generator. It generates specifications based on other, higher level, specification formalisms such as UML state diagrams, or security protocol specifications. The output is a combination of Java skeleton code and JML class and method specifications. JML stands for the Java Modeling Language.

- It would be great to make sure that the transformations in a pipeline collaborate as expected, much like each compilation phase (in a 3GL compiler) fulfills its contract.

Finally, a transformation should take into account dependent software artefacts

- Refactoring OCL annotated UML class diagrams [3]

- Rewriting queries to account for schema evolution (impact analysis upon logical schema changes) [4]

UML refactorings and their impact on the textual syntax of existing OCL constraints [3]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RenameClass</th>
<th>Rename context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RenameAttribute</td>
<td>Rename usages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RenameOperation</td>
<td>Rename usages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RenameAssociationEnd</td>
<td>Rename usages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PullUpAttribute</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PullUpOperation</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PullUpAssociationEnd</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PushDownAttribute (single target)</td>
<td>Relocate OCL constraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PushDownOperation (single target)</td>
<td>Relocate OCL constraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PushDownAssociationEnd (single target)</td>
<td>Relocate OCL constraint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExtractClass</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExtractSuperclass</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoveAttribute</td>
<td>Forward navigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoveOperation</td>
<td>Forward navigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoveAssociationEnd</td>
<td>Forward navigation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Many opportunities to overlook special cases, resulting in non-well-formed models

- Specially when the output is the Abstract Syntax Tree of programming language code (a particular case of model transformation)
  - Undeclared local variables
  - Unintended hiding (parameter name vs. class field, for example)
  - Type errors
  - API usage violations

- You may have heard of “tracing”, “visual debugging of transformations”, and so on (manual effort)

- What about having instead an automatic procedure to

  Obtain the assurance at authoring-time that the transformation being analyzed will produce valid output, for all possible runtime executions on valid input
QVT-Relations pros ...

- Dedicated syntax for object pattern matching
- Language-aware IDE support
  - tracing (depicts which objects match which patterns)
  - step debugging (the ups and downs of backtracking)
  - other goodies (Content Assist, AST view, navigation)

Screen captures reproduced from medini QVT technical documentation
... and cons

- **Other languages realize pattern matching without new constructs**
  - Scala provides it out of the box [5]
  - Java libraries exist to encapsulate that functionality (e.g. MatchO [6])
  - Manually implementing pattern matching is cumbersome because of backtracking (involving undoing tentative matches upon running out of choices)

- **If QVT-Relations is so good at pattern matching, then why are visitors equally concise?**
  - The case distinctions performed by the tree-walker code in a visitor require nested `if-then-else-endif` in QVT-Relations, one for each branching point in the AST inheritance hierarchy of the DSL being matched

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Every DSL should have its WFRs formulated in a machine-processable language (e.g., OCL)

A bird’s eye view of the static semantics of QVTR

context QVTTemplate::PropertyTemplateItem
inv property_part_of_class:
self.objContainer.referredClass.eAllStructuralFeatures
->includes(self.referredProperty)

context QVTTemplate::ObjectTemplateExp
inv bindingVariableTypeConformance:
not bindsTo->isEmpty()
implies assignmentCompatible(bindsTo.eType, referredClass)

context QVTRelation::DomainPattern
inv varOfRootTemplateEqRootVarOfRelDomain:
not templateExpression->isEmpty()
implies templateExpression.bindsTo = relationDomain.rootVariable

context QVTRelation::RelationCallExp
inv actualFormalsConformance :
argument->size () = referredRelation.domains!size ()
and
argument->forAll ( arg |
let i : Integer = self.argument!indexOf (arg ) in
assignmentCompatible(referredRelation . domain->at(i).eType, arg.eType ))

context QVTRelation::Relation
inv noInvocationsToTopLevels:
not self.where->isEmpty ()
implies
self.where.allRelationInvocations()->forAll ( ri |
ri.referredRelation.isTopLevel = false )

context QVTRelation::DomainPattern
def allRelationInvocations () : Set ( RelationCallExp ) =
self.oclAsType(Pattern).allRelationInvocations()->union ( collectRelationInvocations(templateExpression.where) )
Our tool of choice to certify QVTR transformations: Alloy

- Alloy (http://alloy.mit.edu/) allows declaring “possible worlds” consisting of mathematical relations connecting atomic symbols

- Three kinds of automatic analyses are possible:
  - *Model Finding*, whose output are (visual) depictions of concrete worlds that satisfy the specified constraints
  
  - Assertions can be given, which are claimed to follow from the rest of the spec. *Counterexample Finding* reveals concrete worlds that are conformant save for the broken assertion

  - For unsatisfiable predicates, *Unsat Core* can be used to highlight the relevant portions of the Alloy spec that contributed to unsatisfiability
relation AttributeToColumn
{
  checkonly domain.uml c:Class {};
enforce domain.rdbms t:Table {};
primitive domain.prefix:String;
where {
  PrimitiveAttributeToColumn(c, t, prefix);
  ComplexAttributeToColumn(c, t, prefix);
  SuperAttributeToColumn(c, t, prefix);
}
}

relation SuperAttributeToColumn
{
  checkonly domain.uml c:Class
  {general=sc:Class {}};
enforce domain.rdbms t:Table {};
primitive domain.prefix:String;
where {
  AttributeToColumn(sc, t, prefix);
}
}

pred AttributeToColumn[c:umlDomain/Class, t:rdbmsDomain/Table] { /* given that the string prefix being received as argument is constantly empty, it has been optimized away by applying the constant propagation optimization */
  PrimitiveAttributeToColumn[c, t]
  -- assume for now no ComplexAttributeToColumn[c, t]
  SuperAttributeToColumn[c, t]
  -- no other columns other than supported by the above conditions
  t.tableColumns.originatingClass = { cWithAttr:c.({general} | some cWithAttr.attributes }
  -- all col:t.tableColumns | col.name in col.originatingClass.attributes.name
}

pred SuperAttributeToColumn[c:umlDomain/Class, t:rdbmsDomain/Table] { all superC:c.(^general) | PrimitiveAttributeToColumn[superC, t] }
Counterexample for output well-formedness of the UML2RDBMS transformation
Ideally, the validation of model transformations would be supported by seamless tooling.

As of now it’s not seamless, but several building blocks are in place:

**OCL Editors**
1. http://squam.info/ocleditor

**OCL to Alloy**
http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/~bxb/UML2Alloy

**Eclipse plugin for Alloy**
http://code.google.com/p/alloy4eclipse/

**QVT-Relations to Alloy**
Would you like to contribute to this project? 😊
What about statically analyzing QVT-Operational?

- We plan to use JForge to validate transformations expressed in QVT-Operational (JForge allows Hoare-style verification of a Java subset)

  http://sdg.csail.mit.edu/forge/

- Yes, there’s also an Eclipse plugin for JForge

  http://sdg.csail.mit.edu/forge/plugin.html

```java
/**
 * Returns the node whose key is the ceiling of <tt>k</tt> in this tree, or null if no such node exists.
 */
@Ensures("return = null = " +
"(n : this.nodes | n.key >= k && " +
" (no m in this.nodes | " +
" m.key >= k && m.key < n.key))")
final @Pure
Node searchGTE(int k) {
  if (root == null)
    return null;
  Node c = root;
  while (true) {
    if (c.key == k) {
      return c;
    } else if (c.key > k) {
      if (c.left != null)
        c = c.left;
      else
        return c;
    } else {
      if (c.right != null)
        c = c.right;
      else
        return successor(c);
    }
  }
}
```
What others are doing (general theme: moving from research into practice)

• ICMT2008 - International Conference on Model Transformation
  http://www.model-transformation.org/ICMT2008

• twomde'08 - Transformation and Weaving Ontologies in Model Driven Engineering
  http://isweb.uni-koblenz.de/events/TWOMDE2008

• MoDeVVA 2008 - Model Driven Engineering, Verification, and Validation
  http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~ghosh/modevva2008/
  (previous editions at http://www.modeva.org/2007/)
Future Work for the MDSD community

- Establishing a repository of reusable, certified transformations

- Agreement on having DSL authors also define visual syntax in tandem with abstract and textual syntax (thus allowing automatic generation of IDEs)

- Improving the performance of model repositories

Have you heard about LINQ4EMF? 😊

Yes, you’re part of the MDSD community!