Verification of the CD2RDBMS Transformation Case in Flora-2: VOLT 2015 Case Study Technical Report

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Abstract. Model transformations are the enablers of models, which are the first class entities of MDE. Transformations are used to generate, refactor, synthesize, reverse engineer and simplify models among others. The accuracy of transformation will impact not only transformations themselves, but also the models. The correctness of transformation will be defined by its verification, which makes them critical for models. VOLT workshop has been addressing this important research area for several years. As a solution for the VOLT-2015 case on transformation between class diagrams and RDBMS models, we provide a verification approach, namely MOTIF, in Flora-2 language. With specifying models, transformations and verification in the same language, we aim at closing the gap between models and verification formalism.

Keywords: model transformation verification, model transformation, Flora-2

1 Introduction

Model transformations are means that connect abstract models to concrete (synthesis and reverse engineering), complex models to simplified (simplification and normalization), models written in one language to another (migration), models with certain operational quality to improved ones (optimization) and many more [17]. These means can serve as bridges when source and target models reside in different technical spaces. In the role of enabling means and bridges the impact of transformations is critically important within the context of models, which was experienced in Model Driven Engineering (MDE) world in the last decade.

Consequently, transformation languages and tools are success factors of model transformations. Verification of model transformation is one of the success criteria of these languages and tools [17]. Verifying transformations is more complex than verifying models [112]. The Verification of Model Transformation Workshop (VOLT) has been addressing the verification from different perspectives. Within this year’s VOLT 2015, we introduce a different verification approach for
one of the specified cases using the Flora-2, a dialect of F-Logic with numerous extensions. It is a single language framework for all artifacts involved in model transformation, namely models, transformations and verification properties.

The motivations to use a single language framework are:

- No need for the transformation from modeling environment to verification formalism. It closes the gap, which is one of the research challenges in the intersection of MDE and validation and verification techniques [10].

- Smooth learning curve for users, e.g. modelers or domain engineers, since they learn a single language for modeling, transformation and verification.

- Existing models in other modeling languages (such as UML and EXPRESS) can benefit from reasoning features of MOTIF by transforming them into Flora-2. The difference from similar verification approaches [7,20,19] is that they transform a verification problem (derived from the underlying (meta-)models) to a particular verification formalism, where MOTIF transforms the underlying model and verifies properties on the original model.

- In MOTIF, verification results and diagnostics can be reported directly to users, without translating them into modeling formalism. User receives verification feedback in terms of modeling concepts, which he/she uses on a daily basis [10].

- A single language transparent to users, in a sense that they can see through models, transformations and verification properties from the perspective of the same language [10].

- It provides easier tool support. No need for verification plugins or add-ons as modeling language extensions [10].

Besides verification based on both source and target model properties, it verifies model transformation rules in transformation specification. The approach is called Model Transformation Verification in Flora-2 (MOTIF). Besides verifying correctness properties [18], MOTIF provides a flexible rule writing mechanism to address custom and domain specific verification properties.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces modeling of VOLT case in Flora-2. The framework of transformation and verification rules and verification options are discussed in Section 3. The properties for provided cases are verified in Section 4. Related work in verification of model transformation is analyzed in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 concludes and highlights future research.

2 UML Class Diagrams To Relational Database Management System Transformation Case (CD2RDBMS)

Initially, we give a brief introduction to Flora-2. Afterwards, we represent source and target models of the transformation cases. Models will be built from facts and eventually both source and target models will be represented in the knowledge base of Flora-2, which will enable transformation, querying and verification.
Flora-2 stands for F-Logic Translator and is a dialect of F-Logic knowledge representation and ontology language [15], which has simple and expressive syntax with well-defined declarative and object-oriented frame-based semantics. It is a unified language of F-logic [14], HiLog [9], Transaction Logic [5,4] and defeasible reasoning [21]. It benefits from a natural way to do meta-programming in the style of HiLog, logical updates in the style of Transaction Logic, and a form of defeasible reasoning [15]. Flora-2 has observed several improvements to make the system more user-friendly and practical and it differs in many ways from the original version of F-logic, as described in [14], and from an earlier implementation, Flora-1.

These characteristics make it practical to apply to model transformations. Its dynamic module system makes the language extensible and flexible. Source and target model semantics can be compactly expressed and queried, the constraints can be checked, and verification rules can be applied.

Flora-2 represents higher-order and object-oriented concepts both syntactically and semantically [14]. Its reasoning power is enhanced by defeasible reasoning, which is a form of non-monotonic logical reasoning where some rule instances can be defeated by other rule instances. The defeated rules do not need to be satisfied by the intended model of the knowledge base [15]. It helps when one works with big industrial models with a large number of transformation and verification rules in the rule base.

The knowledge base is formed from facts that are represented as $a [ \text{prop}\{\text{min: max}\} \rightarrow b]$. It means an object ‘$a$’ has the property ‘prop’ with value ‘b’. The cardinality constraints of a property can be defined between lower (min) and an upper (max) bounds. The property can be inherited by $\Rightarrow$ operator. The operators $: :$ and $:$ represent generalization and classification relationships respectively.

The transformation case considers the classical transformation between UML class diagrams and relational database schemata. Both source and target meta-models (Figure 1) are represented in Flora-2.

Listing 1.1 illustrates Class meta-model in Flora-2. classifier, association and attribute model elements have a property called name (lines 1,4 and 11). Type of the name property is _string_.

```flora
1 classifier [name=>_string].
2 primitiveDataType :: classifier.
3 class :: classifier.
4 association [name=>_string].
5 association [src=>class].
6 association [dst=>class].
7 class [is_persistent=>_boolean].
8 class [parent=>class].
9 class [attrs[0:*]=>attribute].
10 attribute [is_primary=>_boolean].
11 attribute [name=>_string].
12 attribute [type=>primitiveDataType].
```

Listing 1.1: Class meta-model in Flora-2
primitiveDataType and class are subclasses (denoted by ::) of classifier. The association ends src and dst that refer to class are represented with the relevant properties to class model element (lines 5-6). Similarly, class refers to class itself and attribute model element with parent and attrs properties respectively (lines 8-9). The cardinality constraint for attrs is defined between zero and infinity (line 9, \{0:*\}). The boolean properties are defined with is_persistent and is_primary properties in class and attribute model elements respectively (lines 7 and 10). Finally attribute and primitiveDataType model elements are connected with type property (line 12).

Identically, RDBMS meta-model is represented in Flora-2 in Listing 1.2. Flora-2 uses properties both to define type signatures and relate to other model elements. The examples for the former can be seen in _string properties in lines 1,7 and 8 (Listing 1.2). The rest of the lines are examples of relating to other model elements by means of properties (lines 2-6). The multiplicities of attributes are defined between zero and infinity(\*) in lines 2-4 and 6. Uniqueness of table names is assumed and it is verified in Section 4.

```
1  table [name=">_string ].
2  table [fkeys\{0:*\}==>fKey ].
3  table [pkey\{0:*\}==>column ].
4  table [cols\{0:*\}==>column ].
5  fKey [references==>table ].
6  fKey [cols\{0:*\}==>column ].
7  column [type=">_string ].
```
The knowledge base has been built from both class (Listing 1.1) and RDBMS meta-models (Listing 1.2). In the next section we will extend the knowledge base with transformation rules to enable transformation from source (UML class diagrams) to target (RDBMS) models.

3 Transformation and verification rules

This section introduces rules, particularly transformation and verification rules within Flora-2. First, we present a conceptual framework to design transformation and verification rules. Later, we consider verification options for model transformations.

3.1 A conceptual framework for transformation and verification rules

A conceptual framework for model transformations in Flora-2 is displayed in Figure 2. All aspects (models, transformations and their execution) are specified within Flora-2. It involves source and target models both in Flora-2. The transformation between them is realized by a transformation engine, which uses different transformation rules to transform from source to target.

The transformation framework is expressed via F-Logic rules. The rule consists of a head and a body part (e.g. rule head(p1, p2, ...) :- body). The head consists of a name and an arbitrary numbers of parameters of a transformation rule. These parameters are used in the body to assess conditions. The body comprises of source (pre-conditions), target and post-conditions sections (Figure 2). Pre-conditions and patterns that should be matched in a source model are addressed in the source model section of the transformation rule. The facts that should be added to the target model, as a result of match in source model, take place in the target model section, while the post-transformation section contains conditions that should be satisfied after the rule’s application. Different transformation rules can be applied on the same knowledge base. The negation is represented by “\+” sign.

Listing 1.3: Class2Table transformation rule

Listing 1.3 illustrates a transformation rule to transform a class to a table. The rule contains its name (%TransformClass2Table) and two arguments for class and table instances and two arguments for source and target modules (line 1).
1). The prefixed percentage (%) in a rule name indicates verification rule (predicate) uses tabling(cashing), a technique that enhances top-down query evaluation with a mechanism that remembers the calls made previously in the process. Source and target models are organized in two different Flora-2 modules. The rule fetches all instances (?CLASS) of class which are persistent (line 2) and top class (line 3 - ?CLASS should have no superclass). Later it stores their name in the ?_NAME variable for further use (line 2). The “don’t care” variables (e.g. ?_NAME) are anonymous variables which are not printed out and used to store intermediate values. The names of the matched instances from source model are used to insert table instances with the same name in the target model (line 3).

Similarly, verification rules are also built using the same conceptual framework (see Figure 2). The difference is that a verification rule has no target model manipulation section, their pre-conditions and post-conditions are merged, and their scope covers both models and transformation specification. The verification rule outputs results which indicate whether properties are satisfied and can point out specific model elements that caused the verification error. The concept will be exemplified by verifying correctness properties in the next section.

3.2 Verification options

Transformation process involves three artifacts: the source (meta-)model, the target (meta-)model and the transformation specification itself. Verification pro-
cess considers the information received from these artifact sources to verify a specific correctness property. In this sense, transformation can be verified in two ways: (1) based on (the information of) the properties of the source and the target model and (2) based on (the information obtained from) the transformation specification, particularly on the transformation rules. Particularly in our case, for example, the former option can be used to verify whether the target model contains a table with the same name as a persistent class in the source model. The latter option is to query the transformation rule within the transformation specification, that it contains a mapping from a persistent class to a table. Both options are supported by MOTIF. It can query and verify both the source and target model at the same time, since they reside at the same knowledge base (see Section 2).

In the case of verification based the source and target model, one must execute the transformation to be able to query the target model, which can be costly in terms of time and effort. On the other hand, verification based on the transformation rules can detect verification errors before the actual execution of the transformation. It can benefit by saving time and effort of transformation execution. Additionally, it can verify and prevent potential errors during the design of transformation. In the next section we provide implementation for both verification options.

4 Implementation of verification rules in Flora-2

This section starts with a brief introduction to rule definition in Flora-2 and then it will proceed with implementation and discussion of verification properties of the provided and other example cases to demonstrate verification features of the framework.

In the context of Flora-2 verification is performed by defining verification rules and executing them on the knowledge base. The verification rules in Flora-2 consists of head:-body. statements, which means when the body is true, the head is true as well. The head can take an arbitrary number of arguments. The body can have conditions to verify a property. Both source and target models can be queried to verify a model transformation property. If variable ?X, an argument of a rule is bound by the query, then all possible bindings are retrieved as a result set. That means it can fetch all instances of a specific (meta-)model element or of a particular violation. For the sake of metrics of a transformation rule, It is useful to detect all violation cases and their number.

4.1 Verification for the CD2RDBMS case

We will demonstrate both verification options in the context of the three rules, which were provided in the CD2RDBMS case. First, we illustrate verification rules that use source and target models to verify the properties. Afterwards, we will give an example for verification based on transformation rules. All rules return violations of the properties.
Rule 1. Non-persistent classes and non-top classes must not be transformed into a corresponding table.

The rule is illustrated in Listing 1.4. The rules accept four parameters for class and table instances and source and target modules respectively. A particular model element can be provided as an argument to verify against the property. Additionally, if the rule is executed without providing values to the arguments (?C, ?T), all existing violations for any class and table will be retrieved. This feature makes Flora-2 practical to use a single rule to verify all model elements in knowledge base.

1 n o n _ p e r i s t e n t _ n o n _ t o p _ c l a s s e s (?C, ?T, ?SrcM, ?TargetM):-
2  ?C[is_persistent->false] : class@ ?SrcM,
3  ?C : ?Y@?SrcM ,
4  ?C[name->?CNAME]@?SrcM ,
5  ?T[name->?TNAME] : table@ ?TargetM ,
6  ?CNAME = ?TNAME.

Listing 1.4: Non-persistent classes and non-top classes must not be transformed into a corresponding table.

First, the rule retrieves non-persistent (line 2) and non-top (line 3) instances of class. Line 3 indicates whether ?C is a subclass of any (?Y model element, which means non-top element. As a next step, the rule compares name (?CNAME in line 4) of the matched instance (?C) with name of a table instance (line 5). The names must be equal (line 6), to find the violation of the verification property.

Rule 2. All persistent top classes must be transformed into a corresponding table

Similar to rule 1, rule 2 uses the same body with few differences in Listing 1.5.

1 p e r s i s t e n t _ t o p _ c l a s s e s (?C, ?T, ?SrcM, ?TargetM) :-
2  ?C[is_persistent->true] : class@ ?SrcM,
3  /(?C : ?Y@?SrcM ,
4  ?C[name->?CNAME]@?SrcM ,
5  ?T[name->?TNAME] : table@ ?TargetM ,
6  ?CNAME \= ?TNAME.

Listing 1.5: All persistent top classes must be transformed into a corresponding table.

Identically the rule named as persistent_top_classes with four arguments. This time it fetches persistent classes (line 2 in Listing 1.5), which are top elements (line 3). Top elements are queried as elements which has no super classes (\+ indicates negation). When the names of matched (class) elements are not equal to the names of table instances(line 6), it indicates a violation. The violated instances will be printed out.

Rule 3. Column duplicates are forbidden in the output models, i.e., there should not be two columns with the same name in one table.

This verification rule checks for column duplicates, which is demonstrated in Listing 1.7. Its has a simpler condition than the previous rules.

1 n o _ c o l u mn _ d u p l i c a t e s (?T, ?TargetModule) :-
2  ?T : table[cols->?COL1, cols->?COL2]@?TargetModule,
Similarly, it starts with its name and two arguments for table instance and target module (line 1). It only queries target RDBMS model, since we don’t need any information from source model to verify this property. It fetches any two columns from instances of table (line 2) and compares their names (lines 3-5). The violation occurs when these names are equal, which means column duplicates will be found.

Verification rules in Flora-2 for the case illustrates that scope of rules can cover both source and target models. Listing [1.7] demonstrates a query (not a rule like in previous three listings), which enables the possibility of verification based on transformation rules.

Listing 1.6: Column duplicates are forbidden in the output models, i.e., there should not be two columns with the same name in one table.

4.2 Verification of other example correctness properties

Uniqueness of table names can be verified as demonstrated in Listing [1.8]

Listing 1.7: Querying the Class2Table transformation rule

The rule base of Flora-2 can be queried by means clause(head, body) statement as illustrated in Listing [1.7] The head and body uses variables and patterns to match the verification rule (line 1). We query the transformation rule which was demonstrated in the previous section(see Listing [1.3]). The transformation rule (from Class to Table) is queried to find out whether the persistent classes (lines 3-4) are transformed to relevant tables (line 5). The name variable ?h5913 (lines 4-5) is used for both class instance(line 4) and table instance(line 5), which indicates a (persistent) class instance will be transformed to a table instance with the same name. By means of such queries, it verifies the validity of the transformation rule before its execution.

Listing 1.8: A verification rule to check unique table name

The verification rule finds violations of the unique name from the knowledge base. First, it finds an instance of table with a name property (line 2), which is equal to (line 4) the name of another table (line 3, Listing [1.8]). Similarly, other artifacts (e.g. class) can be verified for unique names.
The `table` element in Listing 1.8 is substituted by a second argument `?A` in Listing 1.9. It represents any model element. It means the verification rule (1.9) checks all model elements in knowledge base. This demonstrates how easy it is to generalize verification rules in Flora-2. A set of similar general rules can bring verification mechanisms that benefit users to apply the same correctness rule to any underlying domain model.

## 5 Related work

Different criteria have been explored for categorizing model transformation properties and verification techniques. They are classified based on technical approaches (theorem proving, model checking, testing), language and transformation related properties, level of formality, tooling, transformation languages and others [18,8].

In our case, verification of model transformations has been analyzed from four perspectives (see Table 1): properties, model transformation language, verification approach/language and support for single language framework, where at least transformation and verification are performed in the same language.

Several approaches have addressed verification of correctness properties, in particular satisfiability (of certain axioms) [7] and conformance [19]. Similarly, MOTIF also supports verification of conformance, satisfiability and meta-model completeness properties.

As shown in Table 1, some approaches use transformations to transform a model to a formalism where solvers and constraint checkers can be used to verify correctness properties. UMLtoCSP [7], UML/OCL to SAT encoding [20] and Xtend [19] are examples for such transformations. They use constraint programming, SAT solver and ASP programming for verification of properties respectively. While they transform the verification problem (extracted from the original (meta-)models), MOTIF transforms the original model and verify properties on it. The language independent framework [16] uses an interesting approach to define a common transformation meta-model, which can be used to verify different model transformation properties. The transformation languages can be mapped to the meta-model, particularly ATL mapping is provided [16]. Another approach [11] uses transformation models [2] for transformations and to check properties by applying USE model validator. MOTIF does not need to transform to other formalism, since it uses the same Flora-2 language for modeling, transformation and verification. In other words, MOTIF is a single language framework, where models and transformations can be built, transformed and verified, as illustrated in the last column of Table 1. The verification rules can be directly applied on both models and transformations.

### Listing 1.9: A verification rule to check unique name of any model element

1 `unique_table_name(?T, ?A) :-
6 Conclusion and Future work

In this paper we introduced an alternative approach, namely MOTIF, to verify model transformation properties in the context of CD2RDBMS case in Flora-2 language. Two verification options were considered: (1) based on source and target and (2) based on model transformation rules. Both options have been implemented in Flora-2. The added value behind this proposal is two-fold. Firstly, it uses a single language framework for modeling, transformation, querying and verification, which addresses the gap between models and verification formalism. Secondly, it allows to query transformation rules to verify the properties, which enables (design-time) verification of transformation before their actual execution.

As future work, we consider to apply verification rules on larger industry models, such as the ISO 15926 standard from the engineering domain. Furthermore, we plan to elaborate towards the direction of transformation rule based verification.

References


