

SAFETY VALIDATION OF AUTOMATION SYSTEMS: APPLICATION FOR TEACHING OF DISCRETE EVENT SYSTEM CONTROL

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Abstract: We propose in this paper, to introduce a method to validate logic controller programs adapted to the teaching of Discrete Event Systems. The use of real systems for teaching raises two problems. The first one concerns the security of human beings (students and teachers) and materials. The second problem is the necessity to be able to detect possible errors done by students and to bring an explanation. We propose a method to define a level of system abstraction, to validate the student's control by the mean of a validation filter placed between the plant and the controller. The specifications contained in the filter make it possible to detect errors and to generate an explanation automatically. We applied this method to an original project where it was proposed to 7 year-old children, to discover automation, by programming a tablets packaging system.

1 INTRODUCTION

The implementation of a control in a PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) raises necessarily validation problems: "Is the running (plant: PO and control part PC) safe?"; "Is the specification respected?", and if it is not the case, "Which control errors have been done?"... Our research aims at ensuring that the control is valid with respect to the safety and running technical system requirements. For that, we propose to set up a module which validates on line the logic controller program. At each evolution of the system (PO and PC), the validation module authorizes or not the outputs sent from the PC to PO. This work finds an interest in the field of remote maintenance as well as education. The paper focuses on the last point. We are interested in the problem of the control validation carried out by students in automatic-control during work practise in the field of the Discrete Event System (DES) and the PLC.

The teaching of automatic control in broad sense requires the transfer of knowing and know-how to learners. Know-how concerns for instance the use and the programming of PLC by means of software respecting standards like IEC 1131.3. The acquisition of this technical know-how requires practical work in specialized and expensive rooms

including PLC and simplified manufacturing systems which are a replica on a reduced scale of real systems found in the industry. The use of PLC raises two problems: safety and explanations. Indeed, if a programming error occurs, safety has to be guarantee for materials as well as human operators being around and explanation has to be given about the error and its effects on the system. The suggested solution in this paper is articulated around a validation filter defined by means of safety and liveness constraints. The first guarantee the system safety by prohibiting any evolution being able to deteriorate it. The second make sure that the suggested control is coherent with the running specification (defined in our case by the teacher). It is important to note that the constraints definition is related to the possibility of learner's authorized actions (i.e. errors done by learners depend on the possibilities that he has to act on PO). It is very interesting in the pedagogy field, to propose various actions levels related to various abstraction levels. To achieve this goal, the constraints are defined in reference to a PO functional identification which makes it possible to fix the abstraction or granularity degree chosen by the teacher. The use of constraints makes possible to supply explanatory capacities to the validation tool. That makes it possible to guarantee an efficient Human Machine dialogue.

In a first part, the suggested approach of validation is presented in a general way. This one is thus based on a functional identification of the system. The functional model obtained is used to define the selected abstraction degree. The writing of the constraints is based on an original classification which distinguishes the constraints not only according to their type (safety and liveness) but also according to their intrinsic characteristic (combinative or sequential). This classification is the object of second part. In a third part of the paper, the approach is applied to a concrete example where we propose to “young novice” engineers to control a packaging system.

2 VALIDATION APPROACH

Work in the field of the automatic control validation aims to insure that mathematical properties are respected by model (Canet, 2001), (Lampérière and al, 2000). The work undertaken within the framework of tool UPPAAL (Behramm and al, 2004) defines three types of properties: attainability, safety and liveness. We chose to use the safety constraints: what the system should not do, and liveness constraints: what the system should do according to the running specification. The validation can be considered off line or on line. In the first case, the control is completely validated before being sent to the PO (Machado, 2006). Within this framework, we proposed an off line approach (Tajer and al., 2006) based on the Ramadge Wonham supervisory control theory (Wonham and Ramadge, 1987) and the synthesis algorithm by Kumar (Kumar, 1991). The suggested approach makes it possible to guarantee that the control behaviour is safe, deterministic and without deadlocks. However, it presents several disadvantages: the combinatorial explosion, the difficulty to give a comprehensible explanation to learner. So, we directed our work towards an on line approach of control validation.

The idea is to inhibit the evolutions which can lead the system to a situation of deterioration, of setting in danger of the operators or which does not respect running specification. Cruette’s work (Cruette, 1991) for the monitoring of automation systems proposes to intercalate a filter between the PO and control. The filter ensures on the one hand coherence between the output and the expected one, and on the other hand coherence between the evolution of the expected PO and that produced. This idea of an approach on line by filter is taken up partially and

adapted to ensure the control validation i.e. with each new control evolution, the filter receives in inputs: the evolution of the outputs (controllable events Ec : actuators) coming from the control designed by the student as well as the evolutions of the inputs (uncontrollable events Euc : sensors) of PO. In the same time that the command execution, the validation filter authorize or not the new evolution. For that, the filter contains the safety and liveness constraints and according to the sensor and actuators information, it tests the constraints. If all constraints are true, the evolution is authorized and the control continues. If not, the evolution is prohibited and the system is stopped.

2.1 Functional Identification

The suggested approach is based on a hierarchical functional identification of the system. The first idea consists in using the functional decomposition to determine the authorized student’s actions. Indeed, it seems us that for a beginner for example his possible actions on PO must be reduced. The second idea deals with a constraints definition on two levels: One on the low level (sensor actuator level) to ensure the safety and the other based on the functional decomposition to detect programming errors and to generate an explanation (high level). That means that the constraints will be defined starting from the functions that learner is allowed to implement.

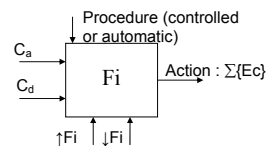


Figure 1: Definition of « Function » notion.

To identify the system functions, of the methods as SADT (I.G.L technology, 1989), MERISE (Tardieu and al., 2000) make it possible to cut out the system in functions and under functions according to a downward hierarchical approach. Within the framework of the suggested approach, it is necessary for each function identified to know the activation conditions Ca (initial conditions), the deactivation conditions Cd (function goal) and its execution mode (controlled or automatic) (figure 1). The procedure will make possible to define an additional degree of freedom in the control, for a level of functional decomposition fixed. In the case of the controlled mode, the learner must manage the activation and the deactivation of a function, when the conditions become true. On the other hand, in the

case of the automatic mode, student must only activate the function which is deactivated when the deactivation conditions are true.

The model of figure 1 shows that each function can be activated (\hat{F}_i) or be deactivated (\check{F}_i). The action of activation is always controllable. On the other hand, the action of deactivation is controllable when the execution is in controlled mode and uncontrollable when the procedure is automatic. According to the selected granularity (the degree of decomposition), the term “function” represents the control (activation, deactivation) of a whole station as well as a simple actuator. The decomposition or abstraction degree will allow a teaching at various levels and adapted to the learner knowledge.

2.2 Use in the Teaching

In the framework of the DES teaching, the level of granularity will allow to propose more or less difficult and evolutionary exercises adapted to the training level. The granularity is at the responsibility of the teacher who must adapt this one to the level of learning. Indeed, if teaching is addressed to:

- a novice, description can stop at the functional level (high level) of the plant. It is the teacher who gives the control of each function and learner has to provide the chronology.
- a beginner, with regard to the difficulty of each function, he can control several of them (high level) and program completely the others (low level). It is the teacher who has to decide which functions are automated.
- an advanced student is able to control the system as a whole and thus he acts on the plant at the low level.

Once the teacher has defined the granularity of the system, he can choose according to two procedures already presented.

The validation approach must make possible to ensure the safety and the respect of the running specification. For that we propose to set up safety and liveness constraints which are defined starting from the functional identification of the procedure. The suggested method requires to make some assumptions and to specify certain terms. The functional identification gives a finished set of functions and the functions are independent to each other. Moreover, it is supposed that it is not possible to have multiple activation of the same function (i.e. an only instance at a time).

On the low level, the description of a control model can be made by means of the input/outputs vector. The vector value at time t corresponds to the

current state of the system. By analogy, on a fixed level of functional decomposition, it is possible to define a vector of state corresponding to the input-outputs of the function. The inputs are then the activation and deactivation conditions of the function and the outputs the actions related to the function represent.

3 VALIDATION FILTER

To ensure the safety and the correct running of the system, the validation filter uses some specifications to detect and to bring an automatic explanation. The definition of the specifications is not easy. Thus, we propose to carry out a distinction on their role (safety or liveness) and on their intrinsic characteristics (combinational, sequential, dynamic or static).

3.1 Safety Validation of System

The safety constraints characterize what the system should not do. It seems us important to place the safety constraints at the sensors - actuators level. Three types of safety constraint are defined.

3.1.1 Static Safety Constraint

The static safety constraints express physical and technical impossibilities of the system elements. The static safety constraints depend only on the controllable events. The Syntax is: $C = Ec_i \wedge Ec_j$. For example, if the event Ec_1 cannot be carried out at the same time as the event Ec_2 , then: $Ec_1 \wedge Ec_2 = 0$.

3.1.2 Dynamic Safety Constraint

The dynamic safety constraints relate to the occurrence of an event which is not compatible with an other event. The event corresponds either at the activation of controllable event (\hat{Ec}), or with the validation of the deactivation condition (\hat{Euc}):

- In the first case, the constraint is written in the following way: $Euc_i \wedge \hat{Ec}_j = 0$. Indeed, if the deactivation conditions are present, the sending of the associated controllable event is prohibited.

- In the second case, the constraint is written: $Ec_j \wedge \hat{Euc}_i = 0$. Indeed, as soon as the deactivation conditions are present, the actuator must be deactivated.

The safety constraints make it possible to protect the system against deteriorations. For these constraints, the validation filter can be placed in the

control part (PLC). The validation filter prohibits the sending of a command if this one of the safety constraints does not respect constraints.

The definition of the safety constraints is re-used at the functional level, in a redundant way to bring an automatic explanation to the learner's errors:

- If functions cannot be activated at the same time: $F_i \wedge F_j = 0$

- If the deactivation condition of a function is present, the sending of the function is prohibited: $Cd_F_i \wedge \uparrow F_i = 0$.

- If the activation condition is not true, the function cannot always be activated: $\downarrow Ca_F_i \wedge \uparrow F_i = 0$.

- As soon as the deactivation condition is true, the function must be deactivated: $F_i \wedge \uparrow Cd_F_i = 0$

It is necessary now to determine if functioning is correct compared to the running specification. For that it is proposed to set up liveness constraints.

3.2 Liveness Validation

The control validation compared to functioning, goes through by the definition of liveness constraints (what the system must do compared to the running specification). Contrary to the safety constraints, the liveness constraints are placed only at the functional level. Two types of constraints are defined: combinational and sequential liveness constraints.

3.2.1 Combinational Liveness Constraints

The combinational liveness constraints allow activation or deactivation when the conditions are present. The combinational liveness constraints are defined in a similar way to the dynamic safety constraints. For example the function F_i can occur only under the condition Ca_i : $\uparrow F_i \wedge Ca_i = 1$ or the function F_i must be deactivated when the condition Cd_i is true: $\downarrow F_i \wedge Cd_i = 1$.

3.2.2 Sequential Liveness Constraints

By the sequential liveness constraints, the function sequencing is described. The idea is thus to represent the sequence described by the running specification without to describe one unique behaviour. The logical equations do not make it possible to manage this sequential aspect simply.

The possibility to carry out a function compared to the expected behaviour depends on the system situation, i.e.: the functions which have been carried out. We point out that the possibility to carry out a function compared to the system state is expressed by the combinational liveness constraints. To take into account the functions sequencing, for each

function, we define the deactivation conditions and the functions which had to be fulfilled. In the same way, the function execution will influence the future behaviours and thus the functions which will not be realizable any more. To express the functioning sequencing, it is proposed to draw up a table with information: the deactivation conditions, the functions which had to precede, the functions which will not be realizable any more. For each function, we define Grafcet with the states {not carried out, in execution, carried out}. Grafcet evolves at the same time as the command. Grafcet makes it possible to know the functions authorized or not compared to a functioning awaited.

According to the functional identification, if the functions are carried out the ones after the others or in parallel, all the constraints will not be defined. Indeed, if the execution is in automatic mode, the function is deactivated automatically when the deactivation conditions are present. In this case, it is not necessary to define the dynamic safety constraints on the uncontrollable events.

3.3 Use in the DES Teaching

Within the framework of teaching, we can propose a tool that ensures in priority the system and operators safety, thanks to the definition of the safety constraints on the sensor actuator level. The definition at the functional level, of the safety constraints makes it possible to generate simply and automatically explanations related to an error. The detection and the management of the errors will be done in a simple way by the constraint validation or not. During the validation stage, three different cases are possible:

- All the specifications are validated, the validation filter allows the sending of the controllable event to the plant

- One or more safety specifications or constraints are not respected. In this case, the validation filter does not authorize the controllable event and informs the student on the specifications which are not respected.

- One or more liveness constraints are not respected. That means that the running specifications are not all respected. In this case, if all safety constraints are OK, controllable events can be accepted because there is no risk for the system. The explanation generation associated with an error, is also done in a simple way. Indeed, the distinction that we could establish in the two previous parts for the safety and liveness constraints enables us to find an automatic explanation to the non respect. The safety constraints must be validated permanently

independently to each other. If there is one or more safety constraint violation that means:

- For the static safety constraints, the control wants to send an order whereas the system is making the contrary order.
- For the dynamic safety constraints on an uncontrollable event, the non deactivation of an order whereas a sensor indicates that it should be deactivated.
- For the dynamic safety constraints on a controllable event, either the associated sensor with this action is already in the wished state, or the evolution of this order is impossible compared to the system conditions.

For the combinational liveness constraints, we use the same approach as previously, if the constraint equation is not respected, that means that the control wants to send an order whereas it is not the waited behaviour. The automatic generation of explanation for the sequential liveness constraints is more difficult, because they are not defined by logical equations. We can go up the evolution which has just occurred by the mean of the active states in the different Grafsets. With this information, the teacher should find by himself an explanation.

4 APPLICATION

The idea was to collaborate (Riera et al., 2005) with a teacher of “primary” school. We wanted to allow the child to discover and to control really the system by programming his/her own sequence.

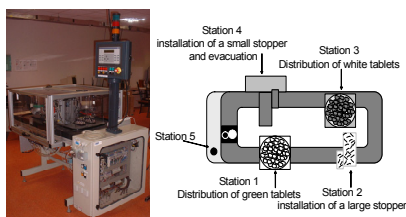


Figure 2: Productis Machine.

The system used for this project is the “Productis” machine. This system allows the packaging of tablets (figure 2). The system is composed of 5 stations and a conveyor: Station 1: distribution of green tablets by counting, Station 2: installation of a large stopper on the large tube, Station 3: distribution of white tablets by counting, Station 4: installation of a small stopper on the small tube and/or evacuation of the tube in a box, and Station 5: Feeding of the system. In order to make the activity of control design funny for the child, we

propose the following original scenario. The instructions to use the machine have been lost. So, it is impossible for us to manufacture drug to heal sick fairies. Children have to find the running of the machine in order to manufacture specific drug. We have to adapt the vocabulary used to describe the system, at the age of the children. The activity is proposed with children, they know to rebuild a history according to a chronology. The children must create a sequence of functions to manufacture a tablets bottle. The functions execution is done in automatic mode. The child sends the order to activate a function which is automatically deactivated when the deactivation conditions are true. The functions are entirely carried out the one after the others. For this activity, we decided that the simultaneous sending of functions was impossible. Only one pallet circulates in the system in order to simplify the system comprehension. After functional identification of the system, we selected 20 functions could be programmed by children. For that, we analysed the system by stations. The pallet is manually loaded (station 5). The child presses on a button to release the pallet. We choose to describe only the station 4: positioning of a small stopper and evacuation. This station is composed of a prehensor, i.e. two cylinders (one for the vertical movement and one for the horizontal movement), and a vacuum system. To install a stopper, it is necessary to position the cylinder to the top, go down, take the cap, go up, advance the cylinder, go down and release the aspiration. In order to avoid synchronization in the control program designed by children, functions “put the stopper” have been divided into respectively two functions: “Take the stopper” and “Loosen the stopper”. With regard to the functional analysis, children also have to program the control of the ejection by the mean of the gripper. In this part, only the constraints at the functional level of station 4 will be developed and explained:

- Static safety constraints: it is not necessary because the learner cannot send several actions simultaneously.
- Dynamic safety constraints on a controllable event:

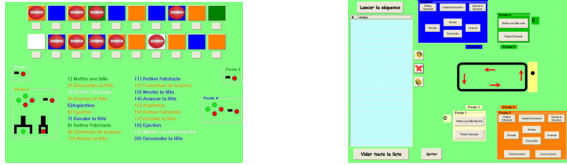
$$/up_4 \wedge (\uparrow Go_out \vee \uparrow Go_in) = 0; \uparrow Close_4 \wedge (down_4 \wedge in_4) = 0$$
- Dynamic safety constraints on uncontrollable events are not necessary because learner must not deactivate the function. The execution of the functions is in automatic mode
- Combinational liveness constraints:
 - the aspiration of the stopper is authorized only in the position : down and in (in the same way for the gripper)

$\uparrow Take_4 \wedge (down_4 \wedge in_4) = 1; \uparrow Close_gripper4 \wedge (down_4 \wedge in_4) = 1$

- the ejection of stopper can only be done in the position : down and out

$\uparrow Loosen_4 \wedge (down_4 \wedge out_4) = 1; \uparrow Open_gripper4 \wedge (down_4 \wedge out_4) = 1$

▪ Sequential liveness constraints have to ensure that: the bottle is closed before carrying out the function of bottle evacuation.



a) "Step by step" mode

b) Sequence mode

Figure 3: Interfaces.

The activity with the children proceeds in two parts. In the first, the child has at his disposal an interface (figure 3.a) with 20 buttons. The 20 buttons represent the 20 functions of the system. In this activity, the child has to understand the role of each button. For that, the child presses a button of the interface. Thus, the child causes the movement or the movements corresponding to the function on the machine and he has to associate a function to a button. According to the state of the system, all the buttons are not activated. For example, if the cylinder of station 4 is in position "in", the button "To Go_in cylinder" of station 4 cannot be pressed. After having understood the role of each button, the child can perform the second part of work (second interface). During the second activity (figure 3.b), the child programs his own sequence of functions to build a bottle of drugs. The sequence execution is validated on line. Hence, if the constraints are respected, the function having to be performed is performed, and the sequence can continue. If not, the validation system informs the child what are the constraints which are not respected.

5 CONCLUSIONS

We bring in this article some answers to the problems raised by the provision of automated material, for the teaching of automated systems control. For that, a validation approach on line by filter was proposed. This approach makes it possible to filter the evolutions which are dangerous for the system, or which do not answer the running specifications. The proposed approach can generate automatically an explanation. For that, the validation filter uses safety and liveness constraints of which definitions have been proposed. The modelling of

sequential liveness constraints is a point that has to be developed, particularly to be able to generate automatic explanations. The proposed modelling of sequential liveness constraints has been designed to manage only one product in the manufacturing system. This extension has to be thought of doing. In addition, we also must improve the error explanation stage for the teacher. It seems possible, for example, at the same time as the system evolution (real plant) to use a simulated plant where the errors effects are displayed. In the simulated plant, learner could observe the consequences of his error.

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