Nested Atomic Sections with Thread Escape: A Formal Definition

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Journées GDR LTP
1. Presentation

2. Semantics domain
   - Definitions
   - Particular traces

3. Serialisability

4. Conclusion
**Concurrent programming**

- Multi-core trend
- Gap between programming languages and hardware
- No suitable abstraction to deal with shared data
Locks: the most common pattern

- Map operations to protect to a lock
- Responsibility to the **user** to prevent interference
- Error prone: deadlocks, need to understand the whole program
- Dilemma of the granularity: coarse/inefficient or fine/complex

Example

```plaintext
count := 0; Lock l;
procedure inc_count(){
  lock(l)
  {
    count := count+1;
  }
  unlock(l)
}

procedure main()
{
  a := fork/inc.count();
  b := fork/inc.count();
  print(count);
}
```
Atomic sections: an alternative?

- Responsibility to the **run-time system** or the **compiler** to prevent interference
- The user only delimits the region to protect

Example

```plaintext
count := 0;
procedure inc_count()
{
    atomic
    {
        count := count + 1;
    }
}

procedure main()
{
    a := fork(inc_count);
    b := fork(inc_count);
    print(count);
}
```
Atomic sections: implementations

- **Transaction**
  - Inspired from a database managements systems
  - Optimistic approach: assume no interference
  - Cancelled, roll-back and re-execute if interference happens

- **Locks inference**
  - Pessimistic approach: prevent interference
  - Set of locks inferred by the compiler
We do not focus first on implementation, but on the semantics of atomic sections.

Our goal
Certified compilation of atomic sections toward locks
Nested atomic sections and inner parallelism

- nested for modularity
- distinctive instructions of spawn
- threads live either completely inside or outside a section
- simple, but poor expressivity

Example

```plaintext
procedure m1(x)
{
    atomic
    {
        a := [x]
    }
}

procedure main()
{
    x := 1;
    atomic
    {
        y := fork (m1,x);
    }
}
```
No such constraints, nested and escaping thread. Need to define a new notion of **atomicity**.
Language

- Simple imperative language
- fork/join and atomic primitives
- Nested atomic sections
- Thread can escape surrounding section
Definitions

Traces

- Abstraction from program semantics.
- Sequence of events.
- \[ \text{events ::= (thread,action)} \]
- Assume disjoint countable set of memory locations, thread identifiers and section names.

Actions

\[
a \ ::= \tau \mid \text{alloc } \ell \ n \mid \text{free } \ell \\
\mid \text{read } \ell \ n \ v \mid \text{write } \ell \ n \ v \\
\mid \text{fork } t \mid \text{join } t \\
\mid \text{open } p \mid \text{close } p
\]
Well-formed traces

- Set of properties on traces.
- Abstraction of the operational semantics.

Conditions

- Each section name, thread identifier is unique.
- A fork of a thread is done before the action this thread.
- A join on a thread $t$ is done after the action this thread and after its fork.
- The opening and the closing of a section is done by the same thread, and the close matches the last open.

Others conditions, need to have some additional definitions.
For a trace $s$ and a section name, gives the thread identifiers which are allowed to interfere with each other while the section is opened.

Defined as the least set containing:
- the thread owner of the section
- the threads forked as a side effect of the execution of the section (tribe children)

**Figure**: $\text{tribe}_s(p_0) = \{t_0, t_1, t_2\}$
subsection

\[ p' \subseteq_s p \]

- sections opened by the thread owner of \( p \) while \( p \) is opened
- sections opened by tribe children of \( p \)

concurrent section

\[ p \sim_s p' \triangleq p \nsubseteq_s p' \land p' \nsubseteq_s p \]

**Figure**: \( p_1, p_2 \subseteq_s p_0, p_0 \sim_s p_3 \)
- pending section: a section is pending if there is no closing
- projection: $\pi_s(i)$ $i^{th}$ element of the trace $s$
- projection: $\pi_s^{act}(i)$ $i^{th}$ action of the trace $s$

**Figure**: pending section
Definitions

Well-formed trace(2)

Conditions

- A terminated thread don’t have any pending section.
- A thread to join another thread \( t \), must have received explicitly its identifier.
- Two concurrent sections are in mutual exclusion, i.e. the closing of one must precede the opening of the other.
Well-synchronized

We restrain to well-synchronized trace.

Well-synchronisation

A trace is well-synchronized if all of its conflicting accesses are synchronized.

conflicting accesses: two actions conflict if they are both memory accesses over the same location and at least one is a write.

\[(\text{read } \ell n v) \nlessgtr (\text{write } \ell n v')\]
\[(\text{write } \ell n v) \nlessgtr (\text{read } \ell n v')\]
\[(\text{write } \ell n v) \nlessgtr (\text{write } \ell n v')\]
Synchronisation
Synchronisation

synchronisation of two actions of the same thread
Synchronisation

synchronisation of a fork of a thread and the action done by it
Synchronisation

synchronisation of a fork of a thread and the action done by it
Synchronisation

synchronisation of the action done by a thread and the join
Synchronisation

synchronisation of the action done by a thread and the join
Synchronisation

synchronisation of the closing, opening of two concurrent sections
Synchronisation

transitive closure
Atomicity

- **Weak atomicity**:
  - Atomic section isolated from concurrent atomic sections
  - Ensure by our condition of well-formedness ($\text{wf}$)

- **Strong atomicity**:
  - Atomic sections isolated from outside.
  - We want to prove that well-synchronised traces ensure this property of serialisability
Theorem

Every well-formed and well-synchronised trace is serialisable.
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Every well-formed and well-synchronised trace is serialisable.
Serialisable

A trace $s$ is serialisable if there exists a serial trace $s'$ such that $s$ is equivalent to $s'$. 
Serialisability

A trace $s$ is serialisable if there exists a **serial** trace $s'$ such that $s$ is equivalent to $s'$.

Serial trace

A trace $s$ is **serial** if for all section $p$ only threads members of $tribe_s p$ run when the section is opened.
Serialisable
A trace $s$ is serialisable if there exists a serial trace $s'$ such that $s$ is equivalent to $s'$.

Serial trace
A trace $s$ is serial if for all section $p$ only threads members of tribe $p$ run when the section is opened.

Equivalence
Two traces $s$ and $s'$ are (schedule-)equivalent, noted $s \equiv_{a} s'$, if there exists a bijection $\gamma$ between positions of $s$ and $s'$ such that

(1) $\pi_{s}(i) = \pi_{s'}(\gamma(j))$ for all $i < |s|$
(2) $sw_{s} i j \iff sw_{s'} \gamma(i) \gamma(j)$ for all $i, j < |s|$

\[ a. \text{ This equivalence relation implies the more classical (conflict-)equivalence relation} \]
Sketch of the proof

Theorem

Every well-formed and well-synchronised trace is serialisable.

Sketch of the proof

- induction on trace \( s \).
  - base case: trivial.
  - \( s \cdot (t, a) \) with \( s \equiv s' \) where \( s' \) is serial
    - \( s \cdot (t, a) \equiv s' \cdot (t, a) \)
    - \( s' \cdot (t, a) \) serialisable.
Coq

- Formalisation in the proof assistant Coq
- 15 000 lines:
  - 30% definitions
  - 70% proofs
Ongoing work

Properties on traces can be viewed as a specification.

Atomic Fork Join
- Imperative language with atomic sections
- Operational semantics
- Proof that it verifies the specification
- Source language for compilation

Lock Unlock Fork Join
- No atomic sections
- Lock-based implementation
- One lock by level
- Target language for compilation
Results

- Language supporting nesting and escaping thread
- Definition of well-synchronised and serialisability

Perspectives

- Verification of implementation
- Efficient implementation