





SMartyTesting: A Model-Based Testing Approach for Deriving Software Product Line Test Sequences

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Keywords: Activity Diagrams, Model-Based Testing, Sequence Diagrams, SMarty, Software Product Line, UML, Variability.

Abstract: Code reuse and testing approaches to ensure and to increase productivity and quality in software development has grown considerably among process models in recent decades. Software Product Line (SPL) is a technique in which non-opportunistic reuse is the core of its development process. Given the inherent variability in products derived from an SPL, an effective way to ensure the quality of such products is to use testing techniques, which take into account SPL variability in all stages. There are several approaches for SPL variability management, especially those based on the Unified Modeling Language (UML). The SMarty approach provides users identification and representation of variability in UML models using stereotypes and tagged-values. SMarty currently offers a verification technique for its models, such as sequence diagrams, in the form of checklist-based inspections. However, SMarty does not provide a way to validate models using, for example, Model-Based Testing (MBT). Thus, this paper presents SMartyTesting, an approach to assist the generation of test sequences from SMarty sequence diagrams. To evaluate the feasibility of such an approach, we performed an empirical comparative study with an existing SPL MBT approach (SPLiT-MBt) using activity diagrams, taking into account two criteria: sequence differentiation, and number of sequences generated. Results indicate that SMartyTesting is feasible for generating test sequences from SMarty sequence diagrams. Preliminary evidence relies on generating more test sequences using sequence diagrams than activity diagrams, thus potentially increasing SPL coverage.

1 INTRODUCTION


Code reuse and step reduction in the software development process are techniques that have been adopted by academia and industry over the years (Almeida, 2019). Furthermore, several approaches have been developed with the purpose of increasing software reusability and, consequently, return on investment (ROI), for example, Software Product Line (SPL). SPL provides a software reuse-based development process to achieve greater productivity, cost, time and risk reduction, and to provide higher product quality


(Pohl et al., 2005).


An SPL provides artifacts that can be reused based on the inherited variability, thus traditional software development processes are not suitable for the context of SPL as they do not support variability management, especially those based on Unified Modeling Language (UML) (Raatikainen et al., 2019).


Several variability management approaches have been proposed (Raatikainen et al., 2019), for example, Stereotype-based Management of Variability (SMarty) (Oliveira Jr et al., 2010). These approaches use UML stereotypes to represent variability in UML elements of an SPL.


Even though successful SPL approaches have been proposed in the past, one of the biggest SPL challenges remains, *i.e.*, products testing, especially testing of model-based SPLs due to the inherit variability and the amount of potential products to be

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tested (Petry et al., 2020; Machado et al., 2014; Lamanha et al., 2013).

As testing all products is unfeasible, in this paper we consider generating test sequences to be reused during SPL generated products testing. To address some of the above mentioned issues, we specified a Model-Based Testing (MBT) approach, named SMartyTesting, which uses UML sequence diagrams to generate SPL test sequences. Such kind of diagram contains variability modeled according to the SMarty approach. We chose sequence diagrams due to its large amount of details and the possibility to represent more variability than any other UML diagrams.

Therefore, we want to answer the following research question: *“Is SMartyTesting feasible to derive test sequences from sequence diagrams?”*

2 BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK

2.1 Software Product Lines and Variability Management

A Software Product Line (SPL) is a set of systems that share common and manageable characteristics (Pohl et al., 2005). Pohl et al. (2005) developed a framework for SPL engineering, which aims to incorporate the core concepts of traditional product line engineering, providing artifact reuse and mass customization through variability. Such framework is divided into two main phases: **Domain Engineering**, in which similarities and variability of SPLs are identified and represented; and **Application Engineering**, in which SPL-specific products are built by reusing domain artifacts, exploring the variability of an SPL.

Variability is the term used to differentiate products from an SPL. It is usually described by: i) variation point, which is a specific location in a generic artifact; ii) variant, which represents the possible elements to be chosen to resolve a variation point and; and, iii) constraints between variants, which establish relationships between one or more variants to resolve their respective variation points or variability at a given resolution time (Pohl et al., 2005). There are several approaches to manage variability, especially those based on UML (Raatikainen et al., 2019). These include the Stereotype-based Management of Variability (SMarty) (Oliveira Jr et al., 2010).

The motivation for choosing SMarty among other variability management approaches based on UML notation, is that it can be easily extended, it has a low learning curve, it supports many models, it is able

to represent variability information in UML elements by using tagged values and stereotypes and, different from other approaches, it defines a stereotype to represent inclusive variants.

SMartyProfile provides the following stereotypes: <<variability>> to represent the concept of variability; <<variationPoint>> to represent a variation point; <<mandatory>> to represent variants present in every product; <<optional>> to represent variants that might be present in a product; <<alternative_OR>> to represent variants of an inclusive group; <<alternative_XOR>> to represent variants of an exclusive group; <<mutex>> to denote the concept of mutual exclusion between two variants; <<requires>> to represent variants that need another one to be part of a product.

2.2 Model-Based Testing of SPLs

Model-Based Testing (MBT) aims to automate the generation of test artifacts, e.g. test cases and test sequences, based on system models describing the software requirements. The basic idea is to identify and to build an abstract model that represents the behavior of the System Under Test (SUT). Based on this model it is possible to generate a large number of test cases even in product modeling (Devroey, 2014).

Such test cases, which are derived from models, are known as the abstract test suite, and their level of abstraction is closely related to the level of model abstraction (Isa et al., 2017). The advantages of the MBT approach is that test generation starts early in the development cycle and test cases can be created automatically from a template. Test cases can be represented using Unified Modeling Language (UML) (Isa et al., 2017) decision trees, statecharts, domain ontologies, or use case diagrams and or states.

MBT can be applied to an SPL context. For example, Machado et al. (2014) point out SPL tests should be considered in Domain and Application Engineering. Within the interest of testing, two items should be considered: the product requirements set and the quality of the variability model under test.

Based on this scenario, one of the biggest challenges in SPL testing is related to the particularities of each model. To this end, MBT seeks to create Domain Engineering models to generate test cases that can be reused in the Application Engineering phase. Machado et al. (2014), for example, focus on building the early generation of SPL domain modeling tests.

2.3 The SPLiT-MBt Method

Software Product Line Testing Method Based on System Models (SPLiT-MBt) (Costa, 2016) is a method to support automatic generation of functional test cases **from SMarty activity diagrams** modeled according to SMarty. The idea is to generate test artifacts during Domain Engineering and reuse them during Application Engineering. Figure 1 presents the steps of the SPLiT-MBt method.

The method is applied in two steps. The first one occurs during Domain Engineering, when test and variability information are extracted from UML models. For SPLiT-MBt it is assumed that these models were previously designed by the SPL analyst using SMarty. Therefore, a test analyst uses SPLiT-MBt to add test information on two UML diagrams, i.e. Use Case and Activity Diagrams. Then, once the Use Case and Activity Diagrams are annotated with test information, the test analyst uses SPLiT-MBt to generate Finite State Machines (FSMs) from these UML diagrams. These FSMs are extended in an SPL context and are used as input to generate test sequences with variability information. These test sequences are generated through extending conventional test sequence generation methods in an SPL context, e.g., the Harmonized State Identifiers (HSI). The test sequences generated through applying these modified methods are stored in a test repository and the variability present in these sequences is resolved during Application Engineering.

The second step of SPLiT-MBt takes place during Application Engineering, when the variability present in those test sequences is resolved to meet the specific requirements of each system. The generated test sequences are stored in a repository, which can be used in Application Engineering.

2.4 Related Work

Based on the MBT concepts, Petry et al. (2020) analyzed 44 primary studies, from which a small subset of them takes into account sequence diagrams to generate SPL test sequences, as we do with SMartyTesting (Section 3). Such studies are discussed as follows, as we did with SPLiT-MBt in Section 2.3.

Lamancha et al. (2009) describe an MBT approach, which takes into account the OMG Testing Profile for deployment of industrial software tools. Process inputs are templates described in UML 2.0, while outputs consist of artifacts according to such profile. The transformation process for generating test sequences is based on OMG Query-View-Transformation (QVT) 1.2 scripts. It takes use case

diagrams and sequence diagrams as input artifacts. They work directly with the UML metamodel, performing a sequence diagram conversion into test sequences and cases. However, it is not explicit whether they consider variability for testing products.

Lamancha et al. (2013) present an MBT approach for model-driven projects and SPLs. The approach uses OMG standards and defines transformations from design models to test models. Furthermore, it was implemented as a framework using modeling tools and QVT transformations. The contributions related to it and applied in a conversion implementation provide improvements in the use of the QVT model, as well as the specificity of generating test cases from a previously converted sequence diagram. Lamancha et al. (2010) also present improvements on the use of sequence diagrams for a micro vision artifact testing process for a macro view, without losing the properties and details of the sequence diagram. We do not use QVT transformations in our work.

3 THE SMartyTesting APPROACH

This section presents the characterization and design of the SMartyTesting approach for generating test sequences in the SPL Domain Engineering **from SMarty sequence diagrams**.

SMartyTesting starts at an early stage of SPL development taking into consideration use cases and their basic and alternative flows and sequence diagrams (Stage 1). After that, it manually converts a sequence diagram into an activity diagram (Stage 2). Finally, SMartyTesting, in its Stage 3, uses the SPLiT-MBt method infrastructure based on the Domain Test Sequence Generation (c) from Figure 1 to automate the test sequence generation

3.1 Modeling Sequence Diagrams from Use Cases

This is a knowledge-based process in which an UML-based SPL Expert takes into account the existing Use Cases and their basic and alternative flows description for a certain SPL to model a Sequence Diagram containing variabilities.

Such modeling may be performed using general purpose UML tools, such as Astah¹ or our tool named SMartyModeling.

¹<http://astah.net>

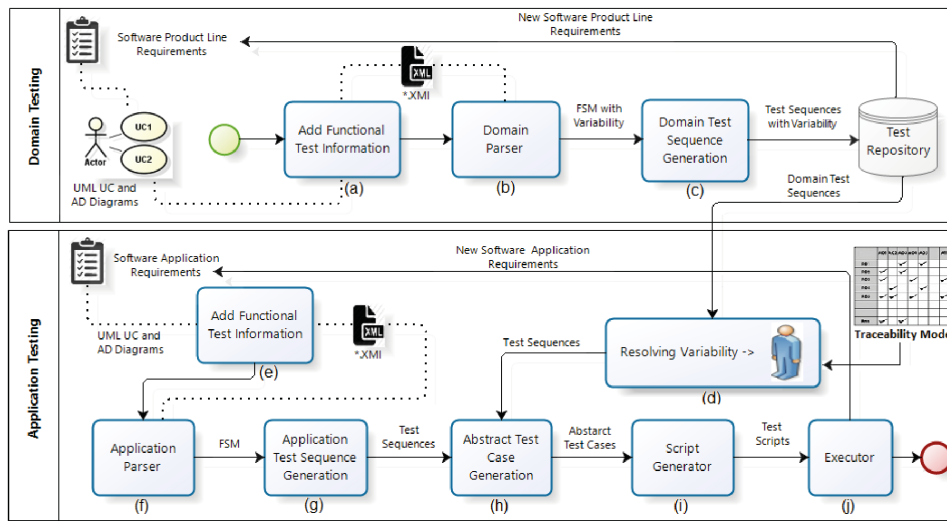


Figure 1: The SPLiT-MBt method (Costa, 2016).

3.2 Converting Sequence Diagrams to Activity Diagrams

As we are taking advantage of the existing SPLiT-MBt HSI-based engine to generate test sequences, we need to convert sequence diagrams to activity diagrams. Activity diagram demonstrates the flow of control from one activity to another, as well as activities concurrency. Therefore, while a sequence diagram is closer to methods and source code, an activity diagram is closer to use cases in terms of abstraction.

Based on Garousi et al. (2005), through converting sequence diagram to activity diagram there is no risk of distortion of properties, maintaining the original characteristics and the variability contained in the sequence diagram. Validation of this conversion was performed by Swain et al. (2010). Furthermore, Garousi et al. (2005) proposal consists of a control flow analysis methodology based on UML 2.0 Sequence Diagrams (SD). This technique can be used throughout the development cycle and other testing approaches that make model understanding and execution. This technique can be used in SD-based systems among several applications.

Based on well-defined activity diagrams, the proposed Control Flow Analysis of UML 2.0 Sequence Diagrams (Garousi et al., 2005) brings an extended activity diagram metamodel (Figure 2) to support control flow analysis of sequence diagrams. Thus, one can define an Object Constraint Language (OCL)² mapping for describing the rules that apply to UML models.

OCL application is formally performed and veri-

²<https://www.omg.org/spec/OCL>

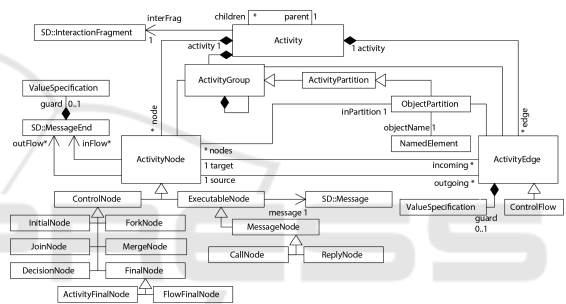


Figure 2: CCFG metamodel (Extended Activity Diagrams) (Garousi et al., 2005).

fiable with consistency rules between an SD and an extended activity diagram using Constraint Control Flow Graph (CCFG). CCFG has all necessary classes and associations, as well as support for concurrent control (concurrency) flow paths, which are a generalization of the conventional (Garousi et al., 2005) control flow path concept.

The mapping consists of the use of an SD metamodel (Figure 3) and a set of rules to be used in such conversion, in which the CCFG metamodel (Figure 2) is considered as validator.

To perform the activity mapping using CCFG, a set of rules created from the Garousi et al. (2005) metamodels is used. The rules are presented in Table 1.

3.3 Automating Test Sequence Generation

SPLiT-MBt makes use of the HSI generation method. According to Costa (2016), the reason for choosing

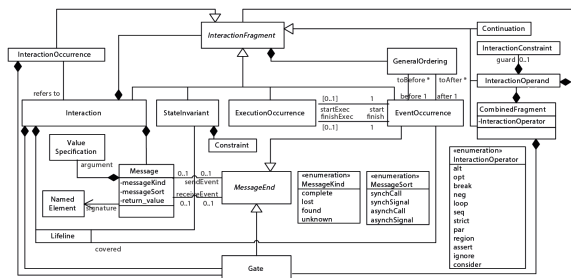


Figure 3: UML sequence diagram metamodel (Garousi et al., 2005).

Table 1: Rules used for sequence diagram to activity diagram conversion (Garousi et al., 2005).

Ord.	Sequence Diagram Element	CCFG Activity Diagram
1	Interaction	Activity
2	First message end	Flow between InitialNode and first control node
3	SynchCall/SynchSignal	CallNode
4	AsynchCall or AsynchSignal	(CallNode+ForkNode) or ReplyNode
5	Message SendEvent and ReceiveEvent	ControlFlow
6	Lifeline	ObjectPartition
7	par CombinedFragment	ForkNode
8	loop CombinedFragment	DecisionNode
9	all/opt CombinedFragment	DecisionNode
10	break CombinedFragment	ActivityEdge
11	Last message ends	Flow between end control nodes and FinalNode
12	InteractionOccurrence	Control Flow across CCFGs
13	Polymorphic message	DecisionNode
14	Nested InteractionFragmen	Nested CCFGs

this method is because it is one of the least restrictive methods with respect to the properties that Finite State Machines (FSM) should have. For example, HSI is capable of interpreting full and partial FSMs (Costa, 2016). Furthermore, the HSI method allows full coverage of existing faults and generates shorter test sequences than other methods, which contributes to an optimized test process. These factors are very relevant in the context of SPL, because the more features in an SPL, the more test cases it takes to test SPL products (Engström and Runeson, 2011).

SPLiT-MBt accepts an input file in the XML format, reads the file, and validates all artifact input requirements. If it is correct, the structure is assembled and it converts the activity diagram into an FSM at runtime and performs the process of generating test sequences containing variabilities from the respective activity diagram. Therefore, such sequences are ready to be used for testing SPL products by resolving their variabilities. The test scripts generated by SPLiT-MBt have a tabular format. These scripts are imported by a testing tool, e.g. MTM, for the test execution.

An example of how SMartyTesting is used is presented along with its evaluation in Section 4.

4 FEASIBILITY STUDY OF SMartyTesting

This study aims to: **characterize** the SMartyTesting approach, **with the purpose of** identifying its feasibility **with respect to** test sequence generating capacity from sequence diagrams **in the perspective of** SPL researchers, **in the context of** lecturers and graduate students of Software Engineering.

Based on the above mentioned goal, we defined the following research questions: **RQ.1** - Can SMartyTesting generate more test sequences from sequence diagrams than SPLiT-MBt using activity diagrams?; and **RQ.2** - Is there any difference among generated test sequences from sequence diagrams compared to activity diagrams?.

To achieve the objective of this study, the following criteria were defined: **CT.1: Number of generated test sequences.** It is the total number of generated test sequences by each approach (SMartyTesting and SPLiT-MBt); and **CT.2: Differentiation between generated sequences.** Input artifacts of each approach differ from each other because of the particularities of the initial model. Thus, one can obtain different sequence paths, demonstrating that different paths have been taken, differing from each other.

For the generation of the test sequences, we selected two diagrams. Table 2 contains characteristics and variability of each diagram.

Table 2: Diagrams used in the process of generating test sequences.

Models	Feature	Variability
Play Selected Game Fig:4 (AD) Fig:7 (SD)	Play Selected Game is the representation of the game menu. Through it is made the selection of which game will be played.	-variation point -variability -alternative_OR
Save Game Fig:5 (AD) Fig:6 (SD)	Save Game is the action of saving the game.	-mandatory

For test sequence generation with SPLiT-MBt, Table 3 lists the generated test sequences of an activity diagram for the AGM SPL Play Selected Game (Costa, 2016) (Figure 4).

Table 3: SPLiT-MBt test sequences generated from Figure 4.

Test Sequence	Step	Action/Description	Expected result
Test Case 1	1	Initialization - Select Play from menu;	Creates the default instances of the required classes.
Test Case 1	2	Initialize the game - Left-click Button to begin play;	Start the game action and the animation begins.
Test Case 1	3	VP.Initialize the game - { - b {alternative_OR}; - c {alternative_OR}; - a {alternative_OR};	{ The paddles and disc begin to move. The ball begins to move. Move racket horizontally to follow mouse track }.
Test Case 1	4	Responds to Won/Lost/Tied Dialog - { - Responds to Won/Lost/Tied dialog; - Responds to Won/Lost/Tied dialog; - Responds to Won/Lost/Tied dialog };	{ Return to the initial state of the tray. Return to the initial state of the tray. Playback dialog (is displayed again)}.
Test Case 1	5	Initialization - Respond "yes" in the dialog to play again;	Returns the game board to its initialized state, ready to play.

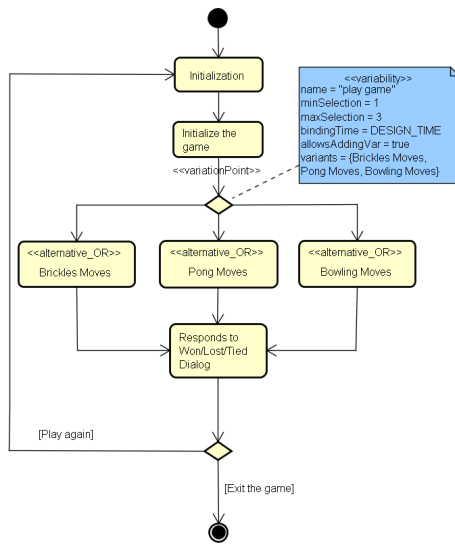


Figure 4: Activity diagram of Play Selected Game (Costa, 2016).

Table 4 lists the generated test sequences of Figure 5, which is an activity diagram for the AGM SPL Save Game.

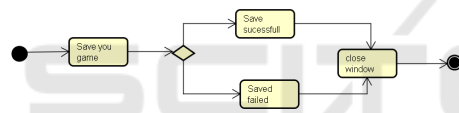


Figure 5: Activity diagram of Save Game (Costa, 2016).

Table 4: SPLiT-MBt test sequences generated from Figure 5.

Test Sequence	Step	Action / Description	Expected result
Test Case 1	1	Save your game - save GAME window is shown;	Finish the game.
Test Case 1	2	Saved failed - click SAVE GAME button;	message SAVE failed game is shown.
Test Case 1	3	close window - Click close SAVE THE GAME;	The SAVE GAME window is closed.
Test Case 2	1	Save your game - save GAME window is showed;	Finish the game.
Test Case 2	2	Save successful - click SAVE GAME button;	SAVE GAME message is shown.
Test Case 2	3	close window - click close SAVE GAME button;	The SAVE GAME window is closed.

For test sequence generation with SMartyTesting, we used the sequence diagrams created by Marcolino et al. (2017), which are equivalent to those created by Costa (2016).

This equivalence is due to the used level of abstraction. An example is in Figure 5, which represents Save Game, in which two conditions are observed: save successful or save failed. In this paper, we also represent the save success condition in Figure 6.

Figure 7 depicts a sequence diagram and Figure 8 the converted activity diagram of the AGM Play Selected Game (Marcolino et al., 2017). Thus, Table 5 displays generated test sequences for the AD of Figure 8.

Figure 6 depicts the sequence diagram for the

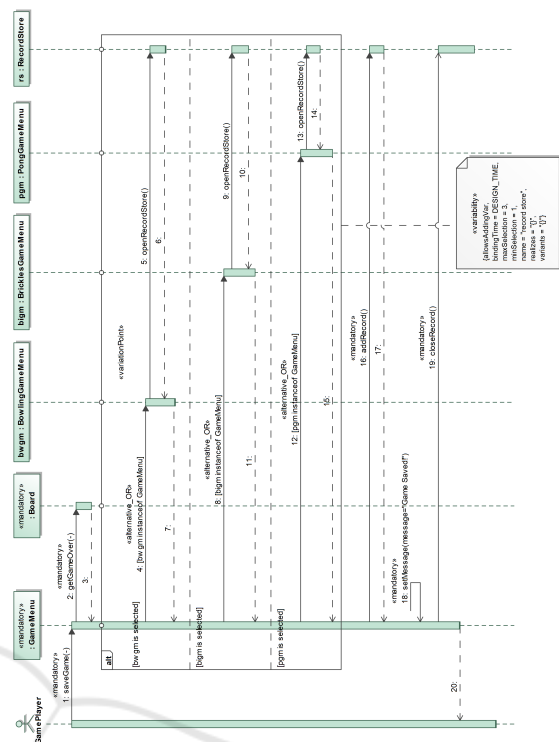


Figure 6: Sequence diagram for Save Game (Marcolino et al., 2017).

Table 5: SMartyTesting test sequences generated from Figure 8.

Test Sequence	Step	Action / Description	Expected result
Test Case 1	1	1:loadGame(-) - Game Player start loadGame method{Mandatory};	loadGame is loaded.
Test Case 1	2	2:getNumRecords() - Game menu after loading makes use method getNumRecords{Mandatory};	access data from recordStore.
Test Case 1	3	3:return - recordStore send return messages;	Score data is returned by getNumRecords to GameMenu.
Test Case 1	4	VP.3:return - {; - Bw option is selected{alternative_OR}; - Bgim option is selected{alternative_OR}; - Pgm option is selected{alternative_OR}};	{; - Instance feature of option bowling. - instance feature of option bigm bricks. - instance feature of option pong};
Test Case 1	5	5 - 7 - 9:return - {; - Return of option bw; - Return of option bigm; - Return of option pgm};	- Returns after bw instanceof GameMenu is executed. Returns after bigm instanceof GameMenu is executed. Returns after pgm instanceof GameMenu is executed).
Test Case 1	6	10:return - Returning Information to the Game Player;	Player gets return from chosen action.

AGM SPL Save Game (Marcolino et al., 2017) and Figure 9 its converted activity diagram.

Table 6 displays the generated test sequences from Figure 9.

The number of test sequences generated (CT.1) for each activity diagram using original SPLiT-MBt compared to SMartyTesting is: **Play Selected Game**, six sequences for SMartyTesting and five for SPLiT-MBt; and **Save Game**, 12 for SMartyTesting and six for SPLiT-MBt.

Based on data, we can observe that when using sequence diagrams (SMartyTesting) the number of test

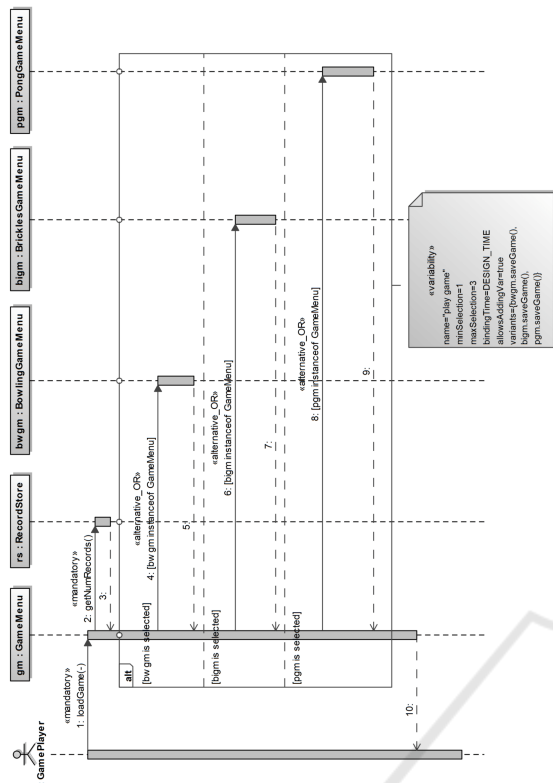


Figure 7: Sequence diagram for Play Selected Game (Marcolino et al., 2017).

Table 6: SMartyTesting test sequences generated from Figure 9.

Test Sequence	Step	Action / Description	Expected result
Test Case 1	1	1:saveGame(-) - GamePlayer start method saveGame {mandatory};	GameMenu is loaded.
Test Case 1	2	2:getGameOver(-) - GameMenu start method getGameOver {mandatory};	Board check action.
Test Case 1	3	3:return - Board returns request;	Value returns to selected game.
Test Case 1	4	VP:3:return - { bw is selected [alternative_OR]; - bigm is selected [alternative_OR]; - pgm is selected [alternative_OR];	{ start method instanceofGameMenu. start method instanceofGameMenu. start method instanceofGameMenu.
Test Case 1	5	5-9-13:openRecordStore() - { bw send data to method openRecordStore; - bigm send data to method openRecordStore; - pgm send data to method openRecordStore};	{ data are used by openRecordStore. data are used by openRecordStore. data are used by openRecordStore.
Test Case 1	6	6-10-14:return - openRecordStore returns to bw - bigm - pgm;	confirms that you have data available.
Test Case 1	7	7-11-15:return - Return data to GameMenu;	Available data is returned to be added.
Test Case 1	8	16:addRecord() - triggered method addRecord {mandatory};	Data is saved.
Test Case 1	9	17:return - returns action of addRecord;	Confirms data persistence.
Test Case 1	10	18:setMessage(message="Game Saved!") - triggers confirmation message {mandatory};	Confirmation message displayed.
Test Case 1	11	19:closeRecord() - start method closeRecord {mandatory};	Method terminates operation.
Test Case 1	12	20:return - return operation confirmation;	Successfully completed return Confirmation to user

sequences tends to be considerably higher than using directly activity diagrams (SPLiT-MBt). We understand, therefore, that this can be determined by the level of abstraction of the diagram: the more abstract, the fewer test sequences.

If we consider the level of abstraction of each diagram, we believe that SMartyTesting has the potential to generate more test sequences than SPLiT-MBt.

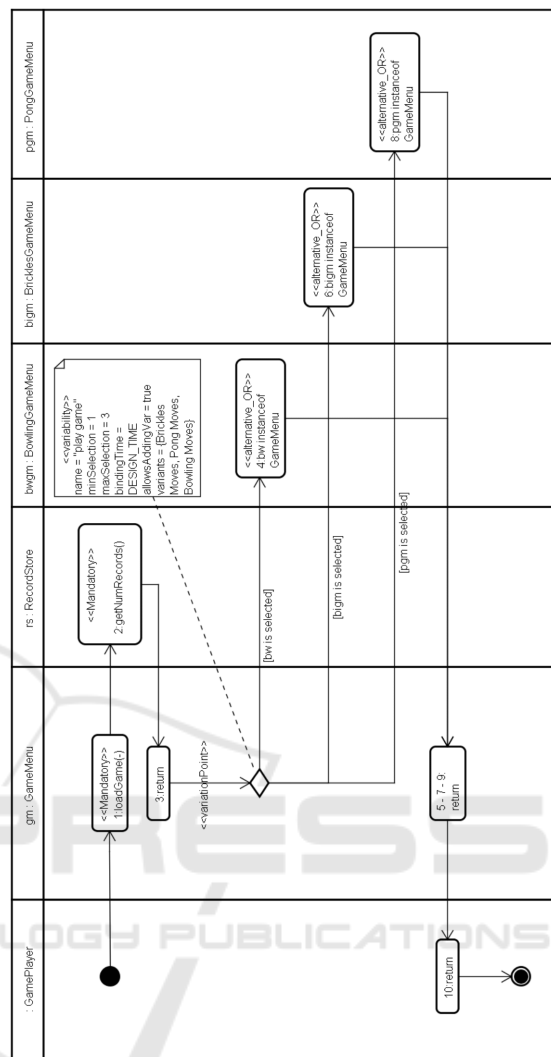


Figure 8: Activity diagram for Play Selected Game. from Figure 7.

Therefore, there is preliminary evidence that SMartyTesting is able to generate a larger number of test sequences using sequence diagrams than SPLiT-MBt using activity diagrams directly.

For difference between generated sequences (CT.2), we look at the input diagrams of both approaches, in which their similarities are made by equivalence, we identified that there is a significant difference among generated test sequences, answering RQ.2. We also believe this is due to the abstraction level of each diagram as we expected. Besides, there is a different applicability to each type of diagram, and because sequence diagrams are more detailed, it is expected that they generate different test sequences compared to a higher-level diagram. However, in certain cases the test sequences are almost equivalent. Therefore, we believe that this depends on

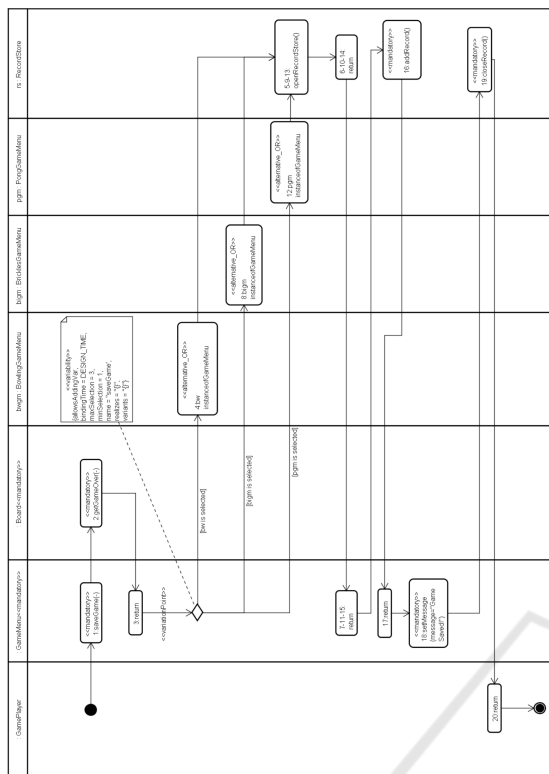


Figure 9: Activity diagram for Save Game from Figure 6.

the level of detail an SPL engineer models sequence diagrams.

5 CONCLUSION

We compared the SMartyTesting feasibility to SPLiT-MBt according to two criteria: number of generated test sequences and difference of sequences using both approaches.

Results point out SMartyTesting is capable of generating more test sequences based on the two used diagrams. We understand the more the number of test sequences, the more the test coverage due to a lower abstraction level of sequence diagrams compared to activity diagrams. Test sequences generated by both approaches are overall similar. We believe this depends on the level of details expressed by the SPL engineer at modeling sequence diagrams.

We plan as future work the full automation of SMartyTesting by implementing a module to convert sequence diagrams to finite state machines with no need of the activity diagram as an intermediate artifact.

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