Analyzing Temporal Constraints for Web Services Composition

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Abstract — Web service composition has become the optimum technique for Service Oriented Architecture applications because it provides a way to obtain value-added services by combining several Web services. One key issue is that service composition must meet user’s deadline requirements. In this paper we focus our attention on modeling and analyzing time-related properties in service composition. A model called extended time Petri net (ETPN) is introduced, in which the temporal constraints are across transitions. The formal definitions of atomic Web service and service composition are proposed based on ETPN. Timestamp state class method is used to analyze the temporal constraints. Some definitions of service composition are presented such as effective path, compatibility, etc. An algorithm is developed to analyze the weak compatibility of two Web services. Furthermore, the approach of service compatibility checking is provided. Finally, a real-life case is given to evaluate our proposal and to demonstrate the applicability of our approach.

Index Terms — Web service; service composition; compatibility analysis; temporal constraint; state class

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Web service has become the prominent paradigm for Service Oriented Architecture (SOA for short). More and more companies pack their business functions as Web services and deploy these services on the internet or intranet for the purpose of reuse and value-added service.

Atomic Web Service is too fine-grained to meet user’s requirements. Typically many Web services are combined and collaborate with each other to match specific business process. It’s a key issue to arrange and assemble Web services correctly and efficiently. Web service composition specifications, such as Web Service-Business Process Execution Language (WS-BPEL)[1] and Web Service Choreography Description Language (WS-CDL)[2], focused on the process and rules in service composition. Rachid Hamadi and Boualem Benatallah proposed Petri net-based algebra to model control flows [3]. They declared that the defined algebra catered for the creation of dynamic and transient relationships among services. Composition forms, such as sequence, choice, parallel and refinement were all discussed. Axel Martens regarded Web services as components of distributed business processes. He modeled Web services and service composition based on workflow Petri nets [4]. Usability, compatibility and environments were discussed in that paper. Petri net was also used in paper [5-6] to model Web service and service composition. The authors of [5-6] kept a careful watch on composition of partially compatible services, and their method was to supply a mediator.

However, the temporal constraints, as a critical non-functional property in service composition, are neglected in all above works. In fact, each component service in the composition has its own time constraints. The time which is spent on service composition must be treated seriously for the cost and safety concern because Web services are deployed in network environment. In some scenarios, we often expect that service composition satisfies some global temporal constraints. These constraints can be satisfied only if all the services participating in the composition are committed to respect their own local time constraints. The more time is consumed on service composition, the more cost and danger will follow. If the time consumed on service composition is too much to satisfy the global temporal constraints, the service composition action must be aborted. Therefore it is significant to study the temporal constraints for service composition.

Fig.1 Service Composition Model by WSTTS

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Nawal Guermouche and his team focused their interest on the compatibility analysis of Web services especially regarding the temporal requirements [7]. Web services timed transitions system (WSTTS) was intended for this use. Local consistency of transitions and external constraints inference were discussed in detail. It’s a good job, but their research can’t solve some issues just as Fig.1 shows. The reason is that their approach isn’t suitable for the scenario where different zero-based clocks reside in Web service composition.

In our work, a preferable method is proposed for Web service compatibility analysis. Compared with the existing works, we make the following contributions:

1) We present an extended time Petri net (EPTN for short) model which can describe the time-related properties of service accurately. Clock-set is used to denote the cross-transition temporal constraints in service composition.

2) A refined enumerative approach, which is named timestamp state class method, is presented to analyze the temporal constraints.

3) We discuss and formally define the entire-path, valid-path and compatible degree for service composition.

4) We use a state-space based method to analyze the service compatibility. Temporal constraints are regarded as a critical factor.

5) We validate our approach through a real-life case.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 depicts the formal definition of extended time Petri net, and the transition firing rules are also discussed in detail. Timestamp State Class method for temporal constraints analysis is introduced in section 3. Section 4 formally defines the concepts of atomic Web service and service composition. Furthermore, entire-path, valid-path and compatible degree are discussed in this section. The approach of composition analysis is also presented. In section 5 a real-life case is provided to illustrate the feasibility of our approach. Conclusions and future work are presented in section 6.

II. EXTENDED TIME PETRI NET

Time Petri net (TPN), which is thoroughly discussed by Merlin [8] has become one of the most powerful formal method to modeling system where time is a critical factor. But a flaw in TPN is that each transition is enabled to the moment when \( t \) is initialized to 0 at the moment in which \( p \) owns a token. The operation of system is accompanied by marking change. When \( M(p) > 0 \), \( E(x, p) \leq M \) must hold. The operating rules of TPN are different from those of TPN because of the clock constraints. The transition firing rules of TPN should be redefined.

**Definition 3.** For a reachable marking \( M \) in TPN, transition \( t \) is enabled if and only if \( \forall p \in \tau, M(p) > 0 \). The set of enabled transitions in marking \( M \) can be marked with \( En(M) \).

**Definition 4.** In TPN, if a transition \( t \) can be fired in marking \( M \), we say it is firable, and the followings must hold:

1) \( t \) is enabled in \( M \);  
2) Let \( \theta \) be the time span from the moment at which \( t \) is enabled to the moment when \( t \) is fired, then \( EFT(t) \leq \theta \leq min(LFT(t)) \) should be met, where \( k \) ranges over the set of transitions enabled by marking \( M \).  
3) \( \forall p \in \tau \), if there is a clock constraint \( E(x) \) on the place, let \( v(x) \) be the current figure of clock \( x \), then \( v(x) + \theta \leq E(x, p) \) must be satisfied.  

\[ Fir(M) \] is the set of transitions which are firable in marking \( M \).
In Fig.2, when \( t_i \) is fired, new marking is \( M(p_i) = 1 \), then \( E(M) = [t_i, t_k] \) and \( v(x, p_j) = 0 \). From now on, let’s increase the value of \( \theta \). When \( 4 \leq \theta \leq 7 \), \( t_i \) can fire because \( v(x, p_j) + \theta = [4, 7] < E(x, p_j) \). So \( t_i \) is also firable. Firing \( t_i \) in the interval \( 4 \leq \theta \leq 7 \) leads to a new marking \( M(p_i) = 1 \land v(x, p_j) = [4, 7] \land E(M) = [t_i] \). For \( t_i \), if \( 5 \leq \theta \leq 13 \), \( 9 \leq v(x, p_j) + \theta \leq 20 \), so \( E(x, p_j) \leq 16 \) can’t hold. This shows that transition sequence \( \sigma = t_1 \cdot t_2 \cdot t_3 \) can’t ensure the clock functions be totally satisfied, and \( \sigma = t_1 \cdot t_i \) is a better choice for this reason.

III. STATE CLASS AND STATE SPACE FOR ETPN

It’s learned from definitions 3-4 that clock constraints \( X \) of places must be taken into account besides the firing interval \([\alpha_i, \beta_i]\). Because \( E(x) \) can cover several transitions and can be superimposed (there will be one or more clock constraints on one place, for example \( E(x, p_j) < 16 \land E(y, p_j) > 3 \)), the method of calculating the transition firable interval is no longer applicable for operating analysis of EPTN.

Berthomieu presented state class method in \[10\], but his approach only considers the local temporal constraints for firable transitions, and can’t satisfy the demand of analyzing the clock constraints which range over several transitions.

We can learn from definition 2 that, in ETPN, the clock constraints are the time span between a state-pair in the same trace during the course of system operating. So, if one can denote each state with a timestamp which is based on the same ORIGINAL CLOCK, it’s easy to calculate whether each clock function is fulfilled. In our work, timestamp state class is introduced for this purpose and we can verify the satisfaction of clock constraints through the following steps:

1) Generate the state space of ETPN with timestamp state class;
2) For each trace of state space, verify the clock constraints satisfaction by value the difference of timestamp.

A Timestamp State Class

**Definition 5.** Timestamp state class (TSC for short) is a tuple \( C = (M, Q, TS) \), where

1) \( M \) is the marking of EPTN;
2) \( Q \) is a time domain. It is identical to the \( Q \) of Berthomieu’s strong state class. For any transition enabled in marking \( M \), an vector \( Q(t) \) is presented. \( Q(t) \) stands for the time elapsed since that transition was last enabled. Let \( \theta \) represent the time elapsed since current marking is entered, then we have \( \forall t \in E(M), EFT \leq Q(t) + \theta \leq LFT \).
3) \( TS \) is the temporal interval based on the global original clock, and is used to represent the timestamp of state class. That is: \( TS \) is the time span from the initial state class to current state class. The \( TS \) of initial state class is 0.

The state space of EPTN is a state transition system, \( C_0 \) denotes the TSC of initial state.

In this paper, the action that transition \( t \) is firable in state \( C \) at time \( \theta \) and its firing leads to state \( C' \) will be denoted as:

\[ C \xrightarrow{\theta} C' \]

The method of computing TSC can be depicted as follows:

1) Start from the initial state class \( C_0 = (M_0, Q_0, TS_0) \):  
   a) \( M_0 \) is the initial marking of net; 
   b) For any transition \( t \) which is enabled in marking \( M_0 \), \( Q_0(t) = 0 \); 
   c) \( TS_0 = [0, 0] \) is the initial timestamp state class. It is the origin of global clock;
2) If a transition \( t_i \) is firable in marking \( M \), the following should hold: 
   a) \( t_i \in E(M) \);
   b) Let \( \theta \) represent the time elapsed in marking \( M \) and \( \gamma = Q(t_i) \) (\( \gamma \) denotes the accumulated time elapsed since the transition \( t_i \) was last enabled), then the followings hold:
      \[
      0 \leq \theta + \gamma \leq EFT(t_i) \\ 
      \theta + \gamma \geq \min(LFT(t_i)), \forall t \in E(M)
      \]
3) If the firing of \( t_i \) results in \( C \rightarrow C' \), the state class \( C = (M, Q', TS') \) can be calculated by 
   a) Calculate marking \( M' \) with formula \( M' = M - W(p_i, t_i) + W(t_i, p_i) \), where \( W \) is the function of token consumption. For simplicity, let us suppose \( W = 1 \) in this paper.
   b) Clock domain \( Q' \) can be calculated as follows:
      - Calculate \( \theta \) according formula (1);
      - For each transition \( t \) that is enabled at \( M \) and still enabled at \( M' = M - W(p_i, t_i) \), let \( \gamma_i = \gamma + \theta \) and \( \gamma_i \leq \min(LFT(t_i)) \) if \( j \neq i \) where \( t_i \) covers the transitions that can be fired in \( M' \);
      - For the transition which is newly enabled at \( M' \), \( \gamma' = 0 \);
      - Eliminate transitions disabled in \( M' \).
4) For the new TSC, the timestamp \( TS' = TS + \theta \). This means that the global timestamp of \( M \) is \( TS \). After that, temporal interval \( \theta \) is elapsed, the firing of transition \( t_i \) leads to a new marking \( M' \). \( TS' \) is the global timestamp of \( M' \).
5) Repeat the above steps and get the whole timestamp state class space.
B Verifying the Clock Constraints

**Definition 6:** Let $TS_i = [a_i, b_i]$ and $TS_j = [a_x, b_x]$ be two clock domains, if $a_i \leq a_x$ and $b_j \leq b_x$ hold, $TS_i + TS_j = [a_i + a_x, b_i + b_x]$ and $TS_i - TS_j = [a_i - a_x, b_i - b_x]$ are also clock domains.

**Theorem 1:** If timestamp state class $C = C(M, Q, T, S)$ can be reached from timestamp state class $C = C(M, Q, T, S)$ through a certain transition sequence, the time span between them is $[TS_i - TS_j, TS_j + TS_i, TS_j - TS_i, TS_i + TS_j]$. Where $\downarrow$ and $\uparrow$ are the lower and upper bounds of $TS_j$ respectively.

**Proof:** It is learned from the algorithm of TSC that $a_i \leq a_x$ and $b_x \leq b_j$. For the sake of $TS_i = TS_j + \theta = [TS_j + \theta, TS_j + \theta + \uparrow]$, we can get $\theta = TS_j - TS_i = [TS_j - TS_i, TS_j + TS_i - \downarrow]$ . The temporal interval from $TS_i$ to $TS_j$ is $\theta_2 = TS_j - TS_i = [TS_j - TS_i, TS_j + TS_i - \downarrow]$. The rest may be deduced by analogy. At last $\Theta = TS_j - TS_i = [TS_j - TS_i, TS_j + TS_i - \downarrow]$ . The total time elapse $\Theta = \theta_2 + \theta_2 + \Theta_0 = [TS_j - TS_i, TS_j + TS_i - \downarrow]$. $\downarrow$ $TS_j - TS_i$, $\uparrow$ $TS_j + TS_i + \uparrow$ $TS_j - TS_i$, $\uparrow$ $TS_j + TS_i - \downarrow$ $TS_j - TS_i$ is $\uparrow$ $TS_j - TS_i$. The theorem is established.

**Lemma 1:** The time span between timestamp state classes in same trace can be used to verify whether the clock constraints of ETPN are satisfied.

**Proof:** It’s learned from definition 2 that the clock functions are used to record the time cost from one state to another. By TSC, one can get the value of original clock for any state in the same trace. Furthermore, one can calculate the time span between any TSC-pair in the same trace via theorem 1. So the difference of timestamp of two state classes can be used to verify the satisfaction of clock constraints.

Considering the transition sequence $\sigma = t_1 \cdot t_2 \cdot t_3$ in Fig.3, $TS_i = [3,5]$ for $M_1 = (0,1,0,0,0)$ and $TS_j = [12,25]$ for $M_2 = (0,0,0,1,0)$. In light of theorem 1 and definition of ETPN, the clock function $E(x, p_1) \leq 16$ does not hold. But this clock constraint is guaranteed by transition sequence $\sigma = t_1 \cdot t_2 \cdot t_3$. This result stands for the previous conclusion in section 2.

IV MODELING WEB SERVICE AND SERVICE COMPOSITION

In real life, Web service is usually deployed in net environment. For the concern of safety and finance, Web service must be composed and finished within a certain time span. Because enterprises keep a careful watch on operating states and the time consumption between the states change, one can model Web service and service composition with ETPN.

A Modeling Web Service

**Definition 7:** Web service can be depicted by ETPN with a tuple $W = (PI, PM, T, F, \alpha, \beta, \Psi, X, E, M_0)$, where

1) $PI$ is the set of internal places, figured with solid line. It indicates the internal state of business. In $PI$, there is only one place $p_1$, which holds $p_1^* = \phi \wedge p_1 \neq \phi \wedge p_1$ . The execution of business is normally finished if and only if $M(p_1) > 0$ .

2) $PM$ is the message places set, figured with dotted line. It indicates the message exchange when services interact with each other. $\forall \in PM \wedge \Psi(p_1) = \phi \wedge |p_1| = 1$ holds.

3) $\Psi$ is the message polarity, where $\Psi(p) = \phi \wedge |p| = 1$ . When a place holds $\forall \in PM \wedge \Psi(p) = \phi \wedge |p| = 1$ , it is called output-message-place. Contrarily some places are called input-message-places if and only if $\forall \in PM \wedge \Psi(p) = \phi \wedge |p| = 1$.

4) Others are the same to definition 2.

B Modeling Web Service Composition

**Definition 8** (Service Composition). Given a pair of Web services $W_1 = (P_1, P_2, T, F, \alpha, \beta, \Psi, X, E, M_0)$ and $W_2 = (P_1, P_2, T, F, \alpha, \beta, \Psi, X, E, M_0)$ is the fusion of $W_1$ and $W_2$ via message places, if and only if the following conditions are satisfied.

1) $\forall \in P_1 \exists \in P_2 : \Psi(p_1) \wedge \Psi(p_2) = 1$ . For any message place in $W_1$, $W_2$ must have a coupling message place. The coupling messages have converse polarity and same message type. That is, any output message of $W_1$ must be the input message of $W_2$, and vice versa.

2) For the composite Web service $CW$ , the clock constraint function $E(x, p_1) \leq (E(x, 0) \cup E(x, 1))$ still holds.

3) $W_1$ and $W_2$ will normally finish their business process via a transition sequence after all message are exchanged. i.e. $M(p_1) > 0 \wedge M(p_2) > 0$ hold.

If so, $W_1$ and $W_2$ are called compatible.

4) For $CW$, $P_1 \cap P_2 = \phi$, $P_1 = P_1 \cup P_2 \cup (P_1 \cap P_2)$ hold. That means:

- There is no message place in composite Web service,
The internal place set of $CW$ is the union of internal place set and message set of $W_1$ and $W_2$.

**Definition 9:** If two Web services $W_1$ and $W_2$ can fuse into a composite Web service while their clock constraint functions are all neglected, they are called weak compatible, and the composite Web service is called weak-composition service.

Comparing the complete composition mentioned in definition 9 with definition 8, we can learn that weak composition only doesn’t take into account the clock functions.

**Definition 10:** For a weak-composition Web service which is composed of $W_1$ and $W_2$, the transition sequence $\sigma = t_1 \cdots t_n$ can be named as complete path if and only if $M_0 \rightarrow^{t_1} M_1 \rightarrow^{t_2} \cdots \rightarrow^{t_n} M_n$ is satisfied, where $M_0(p_{a1}) > 0 \land M_n(p_{a2}) > 0$.

Let $\sigma_1, \sigma_2$ be the projection of $\sigma$ in $W_1$ and $W_2$, then $(\sigma \cap \sigma_1 = \emptyset) \land (\sigma \cup \sigma_1 = \sigma)(\forall t \in \sigma, t \in T, i = 1, 2)$. Moreover, $\sigma_1, \sigma_2$ are the complete path of $W_1$ and $W_2$ respectively.

**Definition 11:** For a complete path, if the $E(X_1) = E(X_2) \cup E(X_3)$ of weak-composition Web service can be satisfied, it is called effective path, otherwise is called noneffective path.

**Definition 12:** For a weak-composition Web service composed of two atomic Web services $W_1$ and $W_2$, if each complete path is effective, $W_1$ and $W_2$ are called complete compatible, or else, if there is at least one complete path is effective, this Web service couple is called partial compatible. They are called incompatible when there is no effective path.

**Definition 13:** For a weak-composition service $CW$ composed of two atomic Web services $W_1$ and $W_2$, let $m, n$ denote the complete path and effective path of $CW$ respectively, then the composite degree $\zeta$ of $W_1$ and $W_2$ can be defined by:

$$\zeta = \frac{m}{n} \quad \text{if} \quad m > 0$$

$$\zeta = 0 \quad \text{if} \quad m = 0 \quad (2)$$

### C Analyzing the Compatibility of Web Services

It can be learned from definition 12 and definition 13 that the compatibility of Web services depends on the relation between complete path and effective path. If two Web services are compatible, the composite Web service fused by them must satisfy definition 8. We can analyze the compatibility of Web services with following steps:

1) Neglect the clock constraints $(E(X_1), E(X_2))$ of atomic Web services $W_1$ and $W_2$, and then build the weak-composition Web service which satisfies definition 9;

2) If definition 9 does not hold, $W_1$ and $W_2$ must be incompatible, otherwise:

3) Compute the state space of weak-composition Web service using TSC, and compute the complete path;

4) Verify whether the clock functions $E(X_1), E(X_2)$ are all satisfied according to theorem 1 and lemma 1, and the effective path can be identified;

5) Compute the compatible degree with definition 13.

How to compute the TSC and get the state space of EPTN are depicted in section 3, so we merely present the approach about how to get the weak-composition Web service from two atomic Web services here.

Let $W_1 = (P_{a1}, P_{a2}, T_1, F_1, \alpha_1, \beta_1, \Psi_1, X_1, E_1, M_{a1})$ and $W_2 = (P_{a3}, P_{a4}, T_2, F_2, \alpha_2, \beta_2, \Psi_2, X_2, E_2, M_{a2})$ be two atomic Web services. $P_{a1}, P_{a2}$ are their message place sets, $\Psi(M)$ denotes the firable transition set in marking $M$, then one can discern if $W_1$ and $W_2$ are weak compatible by following method:

**Input:** $W_i = (P_{a}, P_{a2}, T_i, F_i, \alpha_i, \beta_i, \Psi_i, X_i, E_i, M_{a})$; $i = 1, 2$

**Output:** bool;

**Algorithm:**

1. $S_{a} = P_{a}$;
2. $M_{i} = M_{a} ; i = 1, 2$
3. bool $v_{\_Continue}=true$
4. while($v_{\_Continue}$)
5.     $v_{\_Continue}=false$
6.     while($v_{\_Continue}$)
7.         $v_{\_Continue}=true$
8.     $M_{i} = M_{i} ;$
9.     $M_{i} = M_{i} ;$
10.    $v_{\_Continue}=true$
11. if (($\emptyset \cap \emptyset \cup \emptyset \cap \emptyset)$ & & ($\Psi_{(t_1)} \Gamma \Psi_{(t_2)} = \emptyset$))
12.     if ($S_{a} \neq \emptyset$)\
13.         return true ://be weak compatible
14. else
15.         return false;

### V. Example

It is a real-life scene in Fig.4, (a) and (b) are two atomic Web services:

1) Customer service (Fig.4 (a)) depicts an E-Business process: customer orders some products and pay for the merchant via third-party checkout (TPC);
2) TPC service (Fig.4 (b)) is the process of third-party checkout. When receiving the request message, TPC asks some questions and then return the acknowledgement.

The semantics of all places and transitions in Fig.4 are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.
With the method listed in subtitle C of section 4, we can get the weak-composition Web service just as Fig. 5. Furthermore we can get its TSC spaces just as Table 3 shows.

Table 3 shows that the corresponding TSC of marking $M(p_c) = 0$ is $C_0$, and $C_7$ is for marking $M(p_c) > 0$. According to theorem 1 and lemma 1, the time span between $C_0$ and $C_7$ is $TS_{C_0} - TS_{C_7} = [13, 27]$, but the clock function of place $p_c$ is $E(x, p_c) \leq 17$. The TSC of $C_7$ shows: it is probable that the execution time of composition service would go beyond 17 although the lower bound of TSC is less than the clock constraint. So this composition is unreliable. For the weak-composition Web service in Fig. 5, the following results could be derived by definition 10-13:

1) Complete path is 1;
2) Effective path is 0;
3) Compatible degree is 0

So, atomic Web services in Fig. 4 are incompatible.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Service composition software based on SOA is the accepted trend. When two Web services provide complementary functionality and could be linked together in principle, the temporal constraints across these Web services should be treated as a critical non-functional property. Few researches focus on temporal constraint for Web service composition. Once the temporal constraints can’t be satisfied, the composition of Web services will

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**TABLE I. SEMANTICS OF PLACES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p1</td>
<td>Initial state of customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p2</td>
<td>Send order list message to TPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p3</td>
<td>Order list is submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p4</td>
<td>TPC returns transaction code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p5</td>
<td>Wait for processing result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p6</td>
<td>Send bill type to TPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p7</td>
<td>TPC returns the processing result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p8</td>
<td>Customer service is finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p9</td>
<td>TPC is initialized to ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p10</td>
<td>TPC receives the order list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p11</td>
<td>Send transaction code to customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p12</td>
<td>Payment notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p13</td>
<td>TPC gets payment notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p14</td>
<td>Process successfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p15</td>
<td>Result is returned to customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p16</td>
<td>TPC service is finished</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SEMANTICS OF TRANSITIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>([a, b])\psi(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t1</td>
<td>Call TPC service to pay</td>
<td>[1, 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t2</td>
<td>Choice bill type</td>
<td>[2, 4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t3</td>
<td>Handle successfully, log out</td>
<td>[1, 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t4</td>
<td>Calculate cost and supply transaction code</td>
<td>[4, 9]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t5</td>
<td>Receive payment notice and deal information</td>
<td>[1, 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t6</td>
<td>Process the transaction</td>
<td>[3, 6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t7</td>
<td>Return result to customer</td>
<td>[1, 2]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that the corresponding TSC of marking $M(p_c) = 0$ is $C_0$, and $C_7$ is for marking $M(p_c) > 0$. According to theorem 1 and lemma 1, the time span between $C_0$ and $C_7$ is $TS_{C_0} - TS_{C_7} = [13, 27]$, but the clock function of place $p_c$ is $E(x, p_c) \leq 17$. The TSC of $C_7$ shows: it is probable that the execution time of composition service would go beyond 17 although the lower bound of TSC is less than the clock constraint. So this composition is unreliable. For the weak-composition Web service in Fig. 5, the following results could be derived by definition 10-13:

1) Complete path is 1;
2) Effective path is 0;
3) Compatible degree is 0

So, atomic Web services in Fig. 4 are incompatible.
be regarded as failure. Existing research can’t meet the scenario where different zero-based clocks reside in Web services composing. In this paper, we address this challenge based on Petri net and present a motivating scenario of E-Business to illustrate our approach.

We extend time Petri net with ETPN. Clock functions are used to denote the time span between different states. A new timestamp state class approach is presented to analyze the clock functions in ETPN. Subsequently we model atomic Web service and service composition by ETPN. Furthermore we discuss several Web service compatibility questions such as weak-compatible, complete path, effective path and compatible degree. A method is presented to analyze whether two Web services can be fused into a weak-composition service. For the weak-composition Web service, one can analyze whether the clock constraints are satisfied with the TSC method which is thoroughly depicted in this paper. Finally the feasibility of our approach is illustrated by an example and the result supports our research.

Future work includes applying our research to more real-life cases. On the one hand the reachability-based methods are computationally expensive. On the other hand we just hypothesize that the output message of an atomic service would exactly be the input message of another Web service. In fact, there are too many partial-message-compatible scenarios. Additionally, according to “Six Degrees of Separation” theory, whatever complicated business process could be composed by less than six Web services. In the future, we will devote our efforts to constructing a proxy which would address partial-message-compatible issue and automatically choose less than six Web services for composition to meet business requirements. An automatic tool is also wanted for this use.

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