Reverse Engineering Encapsulated Components from Object-Oriented Legacy Code

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Abstract

Current component-based reverse engineering approaches usually extract ADL-based components from legacy systems. ADL-based components need to be configured at code level for reuse, they cannot provide redeposition of composed components for future reuse and they cannot provide flexible re-usability as one has to bind all the ports in order to compose them. This paper proposes a solution to these issues by extracting X-MAN components from legacy systems. In this paper, we explain our component model and mapping from object-oriented code to X-MAN clusters using basic scenarios of our rule base.

Key Words — Reverse Engineering, Static Analysis, Component Based Development

1. Introduction

The term legacy systems usually refers to such software systems that are outdated, lack proper documentation and cannot support a new feature without breaking another logic yet they are vital to an organisation [9]. Unfortunately, most legacy code was designed with non-modular approach that cannot exploit the luxury of re-usability. For many companies, maintenance or comprehension of legacy code is crucial because some of their functions are too valuable to be discarded and too expensive to reproduce from scratch. Studies show that 50-60 percent of software engineering effort is spent trying to understand source code [8].

Component based development is a domain that revolves around the construction of systems from pre-built software units i.e., re-usability. Instead of extracting semantics, like general reverse engineering for analysing a system, components extraction can reconstruct a legacy system as modular executable architectural units that can be reused across many systems. Component based reverse engineering consists of following steps: 1) Capture the source code in appropriate notation (can be graph nodes or source code metrics). 2) Define a rule base to map the extracted notation to abstraction model. 3) Formation of clusters from abstraction model, based on algorithms 4) Map the clusters to output notation (semantics of the selected component model). Output of component based reverse engineering is dependent on the definition of component each approach uses. Most approaches use loose definition of component. For them, a component is consisted of methods that belong together as they offer a specific functionality of the system. Such components can be giant classes, clusters or re-formation of the source code to get better cohesion and loose coupling. These approaches neither defines the extraction of explicit interfaces nor the composition mechanism of the extracted components (e.g., [13]). Such components are not feasible for reuse as lack of comprehension of legacy systems and non-explicit architecture cannot help in achieving a good re-usability.

Few like us, follow the szyperski's definition of components. This definition defines component as “A unit of composition with contractually specified interfaces and explicit context dependencies only” [20]. These approaches like us, extract explicit architecture (components with well-defined composition and interfaces).

Almost all the current reverse engineering approaches
that extract explicit components are based on ADLs\(^1\) (e.g., [3]). ADLs define required and provided services as ports (composition mechanism of ADLs). Ports use (indirect) method calls at code level [6, 7] to compose components together. ADL-based components have three major shortcomings from re-usability point of view: 1) In ADL-based components, one cannot select/de-select/alter ports without changing the code manually at all required places to re-compose the components after retrieval. Each different integration of components demands different configuration to reuse the components. Especially, in case of legacy systems, where adequate comprehension of implementation is not expected, re-configuration at code level is much more complex and time-consuming. 2) ADL-based components can only be retrieved to use as is. One has to bind all the ports in order to use an ADL component. Therefore, ADL-based components provide non-flexible re-usability. 3) It is impossible to re-deposit\(^2\) a configured integration of components for reuse (e.g., composite component). Components have to be retrieved and configured as many times as the same integration is required for every reuse in different systems.

To the best of our knowledge, no such component based reverse engineering approach exists that can:

1) Re-compose the reverse engineered components without changing the code at all required places.
2) Allow to reuse the components without binding all required and provided services.
3) Support the re-deposition of re-composed components for future reuse of the same integrated configuration.

This paper presents a reverse engineering approach that can resolve the above stated issues. The mapping from extracted clusters to meta-model of our component model X-MAN [14] and working of our tool has already been explained in [4][5] (white boxes in Figure 1). In this paper, we explain how we: 1) Capture the object oriented source code. 2) Map the captured notation to X-MAN clusters based on our rule base, by stating basic scenarios (red boxes in Figure 1). Section II of this paper compares our approach with other approaches that extract explicit architecture. Section III explains X-MAN component model. Section IV presents our approach using an example. Section V include conclusion and future work.

2. Related Work

There are quite a few approaches that follow szyperski’s definition of components for reverse engineering. JAVACcompExt [3] is a heuristic based approach that extracts Abstract Data Type (ADT) components. The purpose of this research is to avoid the system corrosion by making architecture explicit in the source code. The approach by Antoun et al. [1] re-engineers Java code into ArchJava components [2]. Chouambe et al. [10] produces composite components from Java source code. Pattern-based Reverse Engineering of Design Components [16] extracts design components based on the structural descriptions of design patterns. A Reverse Engineering Approach to Sub-system Structure Identification [19] is another approach that re-structures the system into a hierarchy of subsystems along with their high-level abstract representation as components. Washizaki [21] detects reusable part of object-oriented classes and transforms classes into JavaBeans components automatically. Archimetrix [11] is an approach that can reconstruct architecture in form of components from the source code after removing design deficiencies. Quality centric approach [15] focuses on quality of explicit interfaces by following a semantic-correctness model. Components extraction in memory-constrained environments [21] is an approach that identifies reusable part of an object oriented code and refactor the relative or surrounded code to reuse the identified part. This approach follows the JavaBeans component model [12]. L2CBD [17] stands for legacy systems to component based development and this approach is different from others because it is a methodology rather than a concrete approach itself. Any proposed approach can use L2CBD methodology to transform legacy code into components. This methodology consists of planning phase, re-engineering phase, componentization phase and component testing.

Few major shortcomings with these approaches are lack of automation, inability to retrieve from repository and inability to achieve re-composition or code independent re-usability of the extracted components after retrieval. These approaches however, extract components with defined required and provided services based on the semantics of a component model.

All the above approaches have same predefined order of steps. Every approach starts with capturing the code base in some notation. Based on a set of rules, formation of clusters is the second step (by using graph dependencies, directed graphs, code metrics etc.). The last step is the mapping from extracted structure to semantics of a component model. In Table 1, attribute Repository Deposit means whether an ap-

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\(^1\)Components based on architecture description languages

\(^2\)The term re-deposit-ability means ability to re-deposit the composed components after retrieval for future reuse.
### 3. X-MAN Component Model

Unlike ADL-based components, X-MAN component model is based on encapsulation i.e., an X-MAN component only has provided methods and no required ones. An atomic component consists of a computation unit that has the implementation of methods, exposed functionality of specific methods (services that are used to send/receive data elements) and an invocation connector. Methods are exposed as services by invocation connector (lollipop in Figure 2). Computation only takes place in a computation unit, as shown in Figure 2. One computation unit cannot interact with other directly but only via composition connectors. Control of the components exists outside of computation units and that is why one does not need code-level configurations to reuse the components (control mechanism does not exist at code level). Any component can be reused by integrating it with others using appropriate composition connectors [18].

In ADL-based component models, control cannot be separated from computation and therefore, one needs code-level configurations to recompose required and provided services (control mechanism i.e., ports exist at code level). X-MAN component model also supports re-deposition of components after composition and composed integrations.

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**Table 1: Approaches based on Explicit Architecture (Components)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Re-Composition</th>
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<th>Componentization</th>
<th>Indepenendency</th>
<th>Automated</th>
<th>Component Model</th>
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</tr>
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<td>X-MAN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 2: X-MAN: Components and composition connectors.**

```java
public class A{
    public int provideSpeed( int speed)
    {speed=100; this .returnSpeed(speed);} public int returnSpeed( int topSpeed){this .saveInLog(topSpeed); return topSpeed;} private void saveInLog(int value) { System.out.println("Value is saved");}
}
```

**Figure 3: Scenario 1: Single Non-Interactive Class connectors and co-ordinate with one another using composition connectors.** Composition connectors in X-MAN are control structures that direct the route of execution. Sequencer (SEQ) composition connector provides sequencing of execution between two or more than two components and Selector (SEL) provides branching based on specific conditions. Basic semantics of X-MAN component model are shown in Figure 2. One computation unit cannot interact with other directly but only via composition connectors. Control of the components exists outside of computation units and that is why one does not need code-level configurations to reuse the components (control mechanism does not exist at code level). Any component can be reused by integrating it with others using appropriate composition connectors [18].

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3With SEQ (sequencing), SEL (branching) and LOOP (looping), X-MAN is Turing complete.

4Encapsulation in X-MAN does not mean code hiding, it means no computation goes outside of computation unit.
import java.util.*;
public interface A {
    public int provideSpeed (int speed);
    public int returnSpeed (int topSpeed);
}

package com.A.scenario;
import java.util.*;
public class AImpl implements A {
    public AImpl() {}
    public int provideSpeed (int speed) {
        speed = 100; return speed;
    }
    public int returnSpeed (int topSpeed) {
        this.saveInLog(topSpeed);
        return topSpeed;
    }
    private void saveInLog(int value) {
        System.out.println("Value is saved");
    }
}

Figure 4: Mapped Code from Scenario 1

Figure 5: Atomic Component in X-MAN Tool

Figure 6: X-MAN component mapped from Scenario 1

Figure 7: Scenario 2: Two classes with public-public interactions
We are capturing the code base of two Java classes. Class A has method `evaluateSpeed` which calls method `provideSpeed` of Class B. If method A invokes method B, and method B calls some other private method of B, then the scenario becomes more powerful than the previous two. In this case, such public method will be placed along with its caller in the same computation unit. In this case:

1. If caller is private, the public method of B will be placed in both components (computation unit and method node of B as its dealing with private entities of both classes).
2. If caller is public, public method of B will be placed along with its caller in the same computation unit.

The purpose of explaining the above scenarios is to provide comprehension of the basic mapping mechanism. Clustering of methods based on their invocations and modifiers provide much better cohesion as only those methods would belong to same component that are associated and have loose coupling with rest of the components. Of course, in case of legacy code basis, the scenarios would become more complex. The purpose of explaining the above scenarios is to provide comprehension of the basic mapping mechanism. Clustering of methods based on their invocations and modifiers provide much better cohesion as only those methods would belong to same component that are associated and have loose coupling with rest of the components. Of course, in case of legacy code basis, the scenarios would become more complex. The purpose of explaining the above scenarios is to provide comprehension of the basic mapping mechanism. Clustering of methods based on their invocations and modifiers provide much better cohesion as only those methods would belong to same component that are associated and have loose coupling with rest of the components. Of course, in case of legacy code basis, the scenarios would become more complex.
directly connected by method B. AST parser extracts one big tree of nodes from a code base in which all the nodes are connected hierarchically e.g., starting node would be compilation unit (class level or package level) connected with its sub nodes i.e., class declarations, class variables etc. Each class declaration node is further connected to its method nodes and each method node is connected with its sub nodes i.e., method parameters nodes, method return node, method body node etc. This hierarchy of nodes goes till the last level which is simple name nodes i.e., name of local variables etc.

It is impossible to trace and cluster the chain of all possible method interactions and invocations from this one big complex tree. Therefore, RX-MAN parser indexes each method of the code base and connect all associated nodes with every method. Figure 11 is showing the extraction of nodes using RX-MAN parser. Each method node index has information about its parent class, parent package and class variable this method uses. Along with this information, each method node index is connected with all the method it invokes directly or indirectly. This mapping makes sure that no indirect invocation goes undetected. This kind of mapping can cause duplication of methods in a cluster as many methods may invoke same set of methods indirectly, but such redundancy can be removed before submitting the mapped components into repository.
each method in a code base, each method node index is connected with whole chain of invocations it causes in a code base (Figure 11). Therefore, each cluster of RX-MAN is consisted of restructured associated nodes based on rules of method’s interactions and invocations.

4.3. Example: Brake Control System

Fig 12 shows a simple example of brake control system that is reverse engineered using our approach. In the given example, there are two classes. Class SpeedMonitoring has methods collisionTimeCalculator (for calculating time till collision by using speed of the vehicle and distance from the next vehicle) and speedMonitoringValue (for automatic brake mode if time till collision is less than 15 seconds). Method speedMonitoringValue invokes collisionParametersActivation from Class BrakeControl that belongs to a different class. Depending on the value of time, method collisionParametersActivation either invokes BrakeSystemActivation or TimeTriggerValue.

According to our approach, method speedMonitoringValue has one method node against its invocation node i.e., collisionParametersActivation and method collisionParametersActivation has two method nodes against its invocation node i.e., BrakeSystemActivation and TimeTriggerValue (hence two indirect invocation nodes against speedMonitoringValue via collisionParametersActivation). As the method BrakeSystemActivation is private (scenario 3) therefore, the approach will map the whole code to two clusters.

RX-MAN tool maps these clusters to X-MAN meta-model and extracts two components 6. First cluster has methods speedMonitoringValue and collisionTimeCalculator (both will be mapped as services of an X-MAN component as these methods are public and do not access any private variable/method directly). Second cluster has methods collisionParametersActivation, BrakeSystemActivation and TimeTriggerValue (from this cluster method BrakeSystemActivation cannot be mapped as a service as it is private).

Fig 13 is showing a possible case of re-composition of RX-MAN. Both the extracted components are composed using a composition connector (Sequencer). SpeedMonitoring component (extracted from first cluster) will be triggered first as this route has 0 (lower number means higher priority) and component BrakeControlActivation (extracted from second cluster) will be triggered after that. It is one valid case of re-composition as the component BrakeControlActivation will perform its execution after getting collisionValue from component SpeedMonitoring. Fig 13 is also showing that this composite component has been deposited in the BrakeControlSystem (X-MAN repository at left) and can be instantiated in future to be reused or re-composed further. We do not need any manual code changes due to composition connectors of X-MAN and we can also generate code of this composite component using RX-MAN tool.

*The steps of mapping of clusters to X-MAN meta-model and details about the tool have been presented in [5]*
5. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper presents two important steps of our approach of reverse engineering: code capturing and mapping from object-oriented code to X-MAN clusters. We also demonstrated an example of Brake Control System and show a valid case of re-composition in our tool. We have already applied our approach to six large legacy code basis and all the details of evaluation have been presented in [5].

The biggest threat to validity of RX-MAN is the lack of consideration to important relations in an object-oriented language e.g., aggregation, composition and inheritance etc. These relations, if mapped can provide much better cohesion in the extracted components and hence better reusability. Future work includes expanding this approach beyond methods'interactions to map control statements in the code (if, switch, loops etc.) to composition connectors of X-MAN. To the best of our knowledge, ours is the only component based reverse engineering approach that can reuse and re-compose the extracted components without any code-level configurations and supports the repository and re-deposition of components.

References


