

# Development of a Discrete Event Controller Supervisor using a Hybrid Matrix Formulation with Fuzzy Logic Conflict Resolution

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**Abstract**— Using a patented matrix formulation, a Discrete Event (DE) controller is designed for a manufacturing cell. The DE controller can directly be implemented from standard manufacturing tools such as the Bill of Materials or the assembly tree. The matrices also make it straightforward to actually implement the DE controller for sequencing the jobs and assigning the resources. We use virtual places to interact with our machine resources to control and supervise the DE system as a transient timed place Petri Net (PN) system. This modified PN together with marking transition equation provides a complete dynamical description of a Discrete Event System (DES). In this paper, we include to our DE supervisor several new structures that contain all decision making attributes for each part and resource jobs in the Manufacturing processes. The versatility of this DE controller permits implementing different methodologies for decision making and conflict resolution, including artificial intelligence techniques, as well as optimization of the resource assignment and part throughput. This paper shows an example of such versatility included in the supervisor by showing a hybrid decision making development.

**Index Terms**— Petri nets, Virtual Places, Timed Place Petri Net, Discrete Event Systems, Reentrant flow lines, Flexible manufacturing systems, Fuzzy Logic.

## I. INTRODUCTION

For analysis, modeling and control of manufacturing systems, resource sharing for proper job sequencing has always been a main problem. While some resources manipulate or machine single parts in a DES, others manipulate or machine multiple parts for several products in the manufacturing process. If jobs are not correctly sequenced in the latter case, serious problems in the performance of the DES can be obtained, including **blocking** and system **deadlock** [Banaszak et al. 90, Mireles et al. 03]. Therefore, it is very important that the workcell controller properly sequences jobs and assigns resources.

To properly sequence jobs and dispatch resources, one of the base tools that is extensively used is Petri nets (PN) [Peterson 81, Murata 89, Desrochers 90, Zhou et al. 92-93]. This paper uses a Discrete Event Controller (DEC) based on the decision making matrix formulation introduced in [Lewis 92, Lewis et al. 93], and

implemented at [Mireles et al. 01], which can control and sequence jobs like PNs. Important features of this matrix formulation are that it uses a logical algebra, not the Max/Plus algebra [Cofer et al. 92], and that it can be described directly from standard manufacturing tools that detail product requirements, job sequencing [Eppinger 90, Steward 81] and resource requirements [Kusiak et al. 92]. That is, this matrix-based DEC can be directly written down from the bill of materials or the partial assembly tree. Also, using the flexibility of this matrix formulation we modified its matrices and included Virtual Places to control job dispatching in a Timed Placed PN fashion [Mireles et al. 04], to provide a complete dynamical description of DE System (DES.) This description of the DES takes into account a vector Time which was used in a simulation scheme in [Mireles et al. 01ab]. It can be shown that this DEC is a formalized version of both the “Top-Down” and the “Bottom-Up” PN design approach [Desrochers 90; Zhou et al. 92-93].

Since the DE supervisor needs detailed information of the pending jobs, and the attributes of the in-process parts into its decision making algorithms, in this paper we integrate new structures that maintain all attributes for each part and resource jobs in the Manufacturing processes. These attributes on independent parts (or tokens in PN algebra/notation) are those needed for the FIFO, FBFS, LBFS, EDD, LS, and other Heuristic scheduling and artificial intelligence decision making algorithms [Kusiak 00, Xiong et al. 95]. Examples of few of these attributes are arrival time of part into cell, time waiting in current buffer, expected finish time, cost, product line, and others.

We describe in this work the matrix DEC formulation, present the relationship of this formulation with PNs, describe the modified DEC that handle and monitor all parts for improved conflict resolution decision making, and actually implement the DEC on an Intelligent Material Handling (IMH) robotic workcell at UTA’s Automation & Robotics Research Institute. A detailed exposition of the development of the DEC of the workcell is given, the inclusion of the new structures that contain the attributes of parts and resource jobs, and all steps needed to implement the controller. Technical information includes the development of the controller in LabWindows using a hybrid implementation using matrices and a fuzzy logic decision making engine.

II. MATRIX-BASED DISCRETE EVENT CONTROLLER (DEC)

A novel DEC for manufacturing workcells was described in [Lewis et al. 92-93, Pastravanu et al. 94, Tacconi et al. 97]. This DEC is based on matrices, and it was shown to have important advantages in design, flexibility and computer simulation. In this paper, we show that it also allows commensurate advantages in actual implementation on a practical robotic cell. Following the same notation used in [Lewis et al. 93], the definition of the variables of the Discrete Event System is as follows. Let  $v$  be the set of different tasks or resource jobs used in the system,  $r$  the set of resources that implement/perform the tasks,  $u$  the set of inputs or parts entering the DES and  $y$  the set of outputs or finished parts/products of the DES. The DEC Model State Equation is then described as

$$\bar{x} = F_v \otimes \bar{v} \oplus F_r \otimes \bar{r} \oplus F_u \otimes \bar{u} \oplus F_{uc} \otimes \bar{u}_c \quad (1)$$

Where

- $\bar{x}$  is the task or state logic vector
- $F_v$  is the job sequencing matrix
- $F_r$  is the resource requirements matrix
- $F_u$  is the input matrix
- $F_{uc}$  is the conflict resolution matrix, and
- $u_c$  is a conflict resolution vector.

This DEC equation is performed in the AND/OR algebra. That is, multiplication  $\otimes$  represents logical "AND," addition  $\oplus$  represents logical "OR," and the over-bar means logical negation. From the model state equation, the following four interpretations are obtained. The job sequencing matrix  $F_v$  reflects the states to be launched based on the current finished jobs. It is the matrix used by [Steward 81] and others [Whitney et al. 91]. The resource requirement matrix  $F_r$  represents the set of resources needed to fire possible job states. It is the matrix used by [Kusiak et al. 92]. The input matrix  $F_u$  determines initial states fired from the input parts. The conflict resolution matrix  $F_{uc}$  prioritizes states launched from the dispatching input  $u$ , which has to be derived via some decision making algorithm [Panwalker et al. 77, Kusiak 00, Elsayed et al. 94]. The relationship of these matrices with Petri-Nets is shown in the next section. Discrete Event matrices are combined to give activity completion (2) and activity start matrices (3) which are the key components of the incidence matrix of an ON structure.

$$F = [F_u \ F_v \ F_r \ F_y] \quad (2)$$

$$S = [S_u \ S_v \ S_r \ S_y]^T \quad (3)$$

III. MATRIX FORMULATION AND PETRI NETS

There is a very close relationship between the DEC just described and PNs. The Incidence Matrix [Peterson 81] of the PN is obtained after defining the activity

completion matrix and the activity start matrix. Then, the PN's Incidence Matrix is defined as

$$M = S^T - F = [S_u^T - F_u, S_v^T - F_v, S_r^T - F_r, S_y^T - F_y] \quad (4)$$

If we define  $X$  containing the elements  $x$  (the state controller vector), and  $A$  as the set of activities containing the vectors  $v$  and  $r$ , i.e. ( $A=[v \ r]^T$ ), then it can be shown that ( $A, X, F^T, S$ ) is a Petri Net [Pastravanu et al. 94]. This allows one to directly draw the PN of a system given the matrices  $F$  and  $S$ .

The elements of matrices  $F$  and  $S$ , which are 'zero' or 'one', can be related directly with a PN representing the Reentrant Flow Line (RFL). Use figure 1 as a reference for the following explanation. In fact,  $F^T$  is the PN input incidence matrix and  $S$  is the PN output incidence matrix. The  $f_{ij}$  elements of  $F_v$ , which are set to 'one', state that to fire transition  $x_i$ , the job  $v_j$  needs to be finished. The  $f_{ij}$  elements of  $F_r$  set to 'one', indicate that to fire transition  $x_i$ , the resource  $r_j$  needs to be available. The  $f_{ij}$  elements of  $S_v$  set to 'one', indicate that to start job  $v_j$ , the transition  $x_i$  needs to be finished. The set of  $f_{ij}$  elements from  $S_r$  are set to 'one' to indicate that the resource  $r_i$  is released after the transition  $x_j$  is finished. If the marking vector  $m(t)$  from a PN is defined as

$$m(t) = [u(t)^T, v(t)^T, r(t)^T, u_D(t)^T, vp(t)^T]^T \quad (5)$$

for a specific time iteration  $t$ , then the PN marking transition equation [Peterson 81] is

$$m(t+1) = m(t) + M^T x = m(t) + [S^T - F]x(t) \quad (6)$$

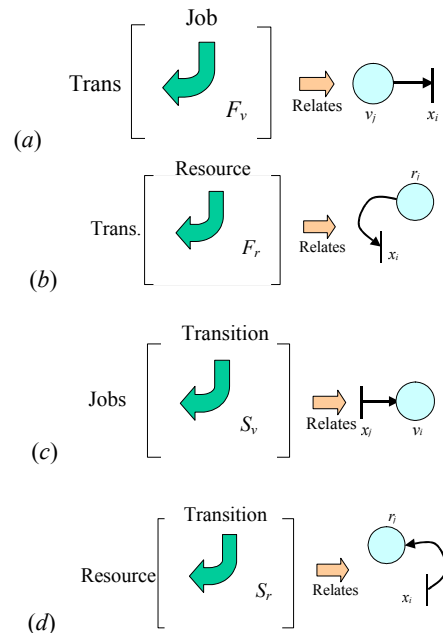


Figure 1. Relationship of the matrices with PN: (a) job-sequencing matrix  $F_v$ , (b) resource requirement matrix  $F_r$ , (c) job start matrix  $S_v$ , (d) resource release matrix  $S_r$ .

IV. MODELING AND INDUSTRIAL WORKCELL

The Intelligent Material Handling (IMH) cell at the University of Texas at Arlington's ARRI is composed of three robots, three conveyors, ten sensors and two machines (shown in figure 2.) The IMH cell is a multipart RFL problem because some resources are required more than once to manufacture products, which re-use these resources. See [Kumar 93] for notions on analysis and shared resource dispatching in RFL. The DEC matrices in (1) can be directly written down by considering the RFL, or the resource assignment and the bill of materials [Harris 98]. This cell is an excellent platform to experiment with different conflict problems, like the one discussed in this work. Different configuration of re-entrant flowline problems can be accomplished with this structure. The image and the part flowline of the IMH cell are depicted in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. For this specific layout the robot defined as R1 (a CRS robot) can perform four different tasks,  $|J(R1)|=4$ . Two tasks (R1u1 and R1u2) are related to picking up part-types A and B from the input-parts area, which are to be placed on the conveyor denoted B1. The other two tasks (R1u3 and R1u4) are associated with picking up final products A and B from conveyor B3 and placing them in the output-parts area. A PUMA robot, R2, performs three different tasks,  $|J(R2)|=3$ : pick up parts A from conveyor B1 to place them in machine M1 (R2u1), pick up parts B from conveyor B1 to place them on conveyor B2 (R2u2), and pick up parts A from M1 to be placed on conveyor B2 (R2u3). The Adept robot, R3, also performs three different tasks,  $|J(R3)|=3$ : pick up parts A from conveyor B2, to place them on conveyor B3 (R3u1), pick up parts B from conveyor B2 to place them in machine M2 (R3u2), and pick up parts B from M2 to be placed on conveyor B3 (R3u3).

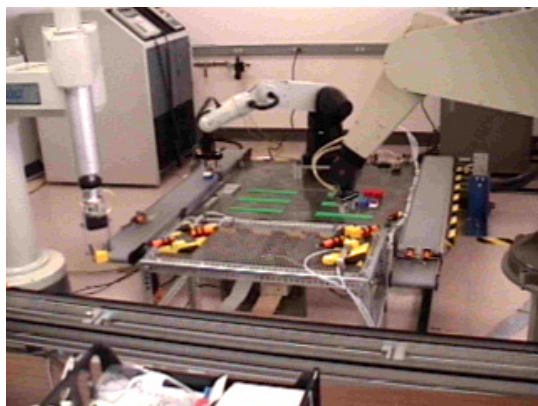


Figure 2. Intelligent Material Handling (IMH) cell.

Due to the existence of shared resources this configuration of the IMH cell presents a dispatching problem. Both phenomena, conflict and deadlock, may occur in the case of an inappropriate dispatching strategy. Deadlock prevention and avoidance will not be discussed in this paper, due that we concentrate our attention on the hybrid supervision of the combination of matrix formulation and the fuzzy conflict resolution strategy.

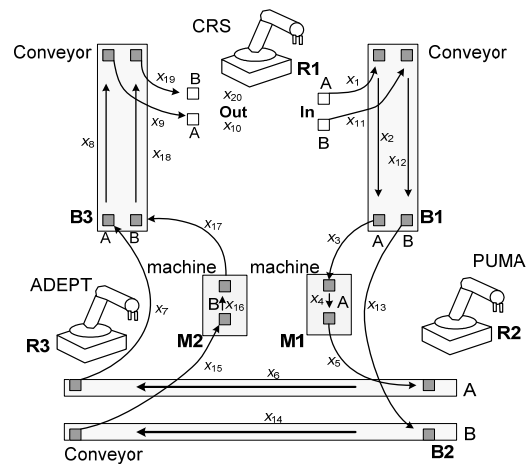


Figure 3. A layout with the parts paths of the IMH-cell used in a case study

The matrix model can be directly written down from Figure 3, which shows both job sequencing and resource assignment. From Figure 3 one can find that the system is described with 20 rules. The job sets that correspond with job sequences for two part paths and the set of resources are defined as follows:

part A path:  $J^1 = \{R1u1, B1AS, R2u1, M1P, R2u3, B2AS, R3u1, B3AS, R1u3\}$

part B path:  $J^2 = \{R1u2, B1BS, R2u2, B2BS, R3u2, M2P, R3u3, B3BS, R1u4\}$

set of resources:  $R = \{B1AA, B1BA, M1A, B2BA, B2AA, M2A, B3AA, B3BA, R1, R2, R3\}$  with a set of shared resources  $R_s = \{R1, R2, R3\}$ .

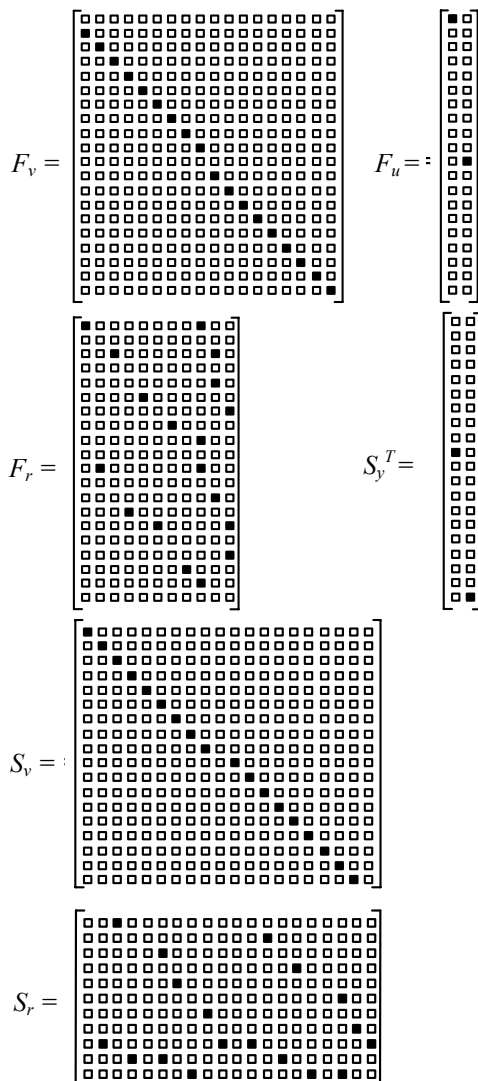
The description of jobs performed by nonshared resources is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of jobs in IMH cell

Notation	Description
B1AS	transporting part A on conveyor B1
M1P	processing part A in machine M1
B2AS	transporting part A on conveyor B2
B3AS	transporting part A on conveyor B3
B1BS	transporting part B on conveyor B1
B2BS	transporting part B on conveyor B1
M2P	processing part B in machine M2
B3BS	transporting part B on conveyor B1

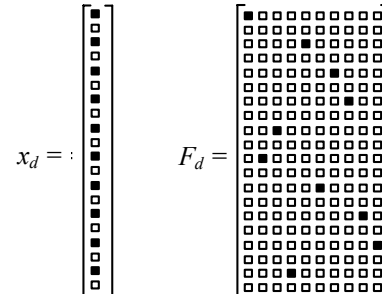
The nomenclature used in the IMH is as follows: “RXuY” means job “Y” is executed by robot “X”, “BxyS” means that product type “y” is transported by conveyor “x”, “MxP” stands for machine “x” is busy, “BxyA” means that conveyor “x” is available for product type “y”, “MxA” denotes machine “x” is available, “RxA” stands for robot “x” is idle. Note that instead of having three different resources for conveyors B1, B2 and B3, six different resources are used. This is because of the two different materials paths on each conveyor. For example, conveyor B1 has paths B1A and B1B, which are denoted as B1AA and B1BA when they are available, and denoted as B1AS and B1BS when they are carrying material.

Given the system layout and the system description, one can determine the system matrices, herein shown “graphically” with black and white rectangles, indicating “1” and “0”, respectively.



The last three columns of  $F_r$  correspond to the shared resources R1, R2 and R3. From the number of 1s in those columns we see that R1 is involved in four conflicting rules (possible conflict if any combination of states  $x_1, x_9, x_{11}$  and  $x_{19}$  fire at the same time), while each of the

remaining robots, R2 and R3, contribute in three, which finally gives ten state combinations requiring conflict rules. According to the definition,  $F_d$  is constructed by creating a new column for each “1” appearing in  $F_r$  for the shared resources, hence, the dispatching matrix will have 10 columns, shown as follows:



It should be noted that columns of  $F_d$  have been rearranged in order to group components of the dispatching vector that belong to the same shared resource, for instance, the last column for  $F_r$  has been converted to create three columns in  $F_d$ . Specifically, R1 is controlled with  $u_{d1}, u_{d2}, u_{d3}$  and  $u_{d4}$ , R2 with  $u_{d5}, u_{d6}$  and  $u_{d7}$ , and R3 with  $u_{d8}, u_{d9}$  and  $u_{d10}$ .

### V. SHARED-RESOURCES IN CONFLICT

One of the strengths of the matrix-based DEC is that different shared-resources conflict resolution strategies can be implemented by suitably computing  $u_c$ , the conflict resolution input. This DEC is capable to apply different conflict resolution strategies for the shared-resources by monitoring via matrix  $F_{uc}$  and controlling the input vector  $u_c$  [Pastravanu 94].

Shared-resource dispatching in multi-path reentrant flow lines is not an easy topic. Depending on the way one selects the conflict resolution strategy to generate  $u_c$ , different dispatching rules can be selected. These rules fall mainly into three categories: Part/Machine, Buffer, and Hybrid (part-buffer) [Panwalker et al. 77, Kumar 93, Lewis et al. 93]. Examples for the Buffer category are First-In-First-Out (FIFO), First-Buffer-First-Serve (FBFS), Last Buffer-First Serve (LBLS), Shortest Non-Full Queue, Shortest Remaining Capacity, and Shortest Queue Next. Examples for the Part/Machine category are Earliest-Due-Date (EDD), Least-Slack (LS), Shortest Imminent Operation Time, Largest Imminent Operation Time, Shortest Remaining Processing Time (SRPT), Largest Remaining Processing Time, Machine with Least Work and Least Slack Time.

In this paper we use a Fuzzy Logic conflict resolution approach combining Hybridly the matrix formulation of states to look for an optimal production throughput. Also, this approach uses also a dispatching rule that avoids first order deadlocks, discussed in previous work [Mireles et al. 01-03ab]. However, in this work, we do focus in the development of the augmented DEC which makes it easy to implement any dispatching rule desired, including this intelligent dispatching hybrid rule for conflicted parts, buffers, and machines.



$$\begin{bmatrix} Resol(FIFO, Conflict(r_2(t))) \\ Resol(LS, Conflict(r_2(t))) \\ Resol(EDD, Conflict(r_2(t))) \\ Resol(SRPT, Conflict(r_2(t))) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} Resol(FIFO, v_1(t)) & Resol(FIFO, v_3(t)) \\ Resol(LS, v_1(t)) & Resol(LS, v_3(t)) \\ Resol(EDD, v_1(t)) & Resol(EDD, v_3(t)) \\ Resol(SRPT, v_1(t)) & Resol(SRPT, v_3(t)) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \{v_1(t, 1), 0.35\} & \{v_3(t, 1), 0.58\} \\ \{v_1(t, 3), 0.45\} & \{v_3(t, 2), 0.60\} \\ \{v_1(t, 2), 0.48\} & \{v_3(t, 2), 0.80\} \\ \{v_1(t, 1), 0.39\} & \{v_3(t, 1), 0.67\} \end{bmatrix}$$

Figure 6 represents the classes written in C++ for each place and each token contained in such a place. Also, internal functions of these classes are shown.

**Note.**- we assumed some attributes shown above on each part on jobs/buffers  $v_1$  and  $v_2$ , and calculate for each of the resolution functions the following outcomes: the outcome for conflict resolution type FIFO in job  $v_1$  was  $v_1(t,1)$  (the first part in buffer  $v_1$ ), with a weighted wining gain of 0.35; the outcome for conflict resolution type LS in job  $v_1$  was  $v_1(t,3)$  with a weighted wining gain of 0.45; etc.

Notice that this matrix can help us decide not only among job types  $v_1(t)$  and  $v_3(t)$ , but among parts from these job type/buffers. This matrix resolution scheme is the input for our intelligent hybrid resolution engine, which in this case we are using a Fuzzy logic algorithm, that decides for the best  $v_j(t,k)$  part to dispatch.

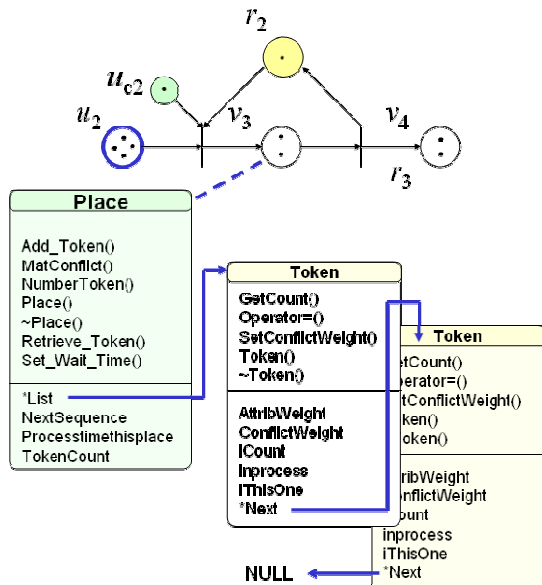


Figure 6. Interpretation of classes for each place in the Petri Net. and each token in places.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEC ON THE IMH

The DEC was implemented using eqs. (1)-(8) in LabWindows text based programming environment working on C platform. To run several process at one time we included the concept of multithreading which

allowed us to communicate between different resources at the same time. This allow us to monitor multithreaded processes, which control the jobs from each robot, machining jobs and the transfer of parts through conveyors, without the need to perform procedural programming to monitor each resource. The Petri Net structure of this case problem developed in the IMH cell is shown in figure 5.

We modified this PN structure and included the Virtual Places as discussed in [Mireles et al. 04]. We have five threads for the three robots and two machines and a main thread which does the matrix formulation for the DEC. The main supervisor considers the conditions for the virtual places and always keeps a track of the jobs being performed by the robots and the machines. This PC-based IMH controller has three serial ports that interact with the three robots of the IMH cell, as well as a DAQ card. The DAQ card receives discrete signals from capacitive proximity sensors, which sense parts within the IMH cell, and also sends discrete signals to the machines to initialize jobs.

VIII. FUZZY LOGIC RESOLUTION ENGINE

The resulting matrix, as the example shown in section 4.2, is the input to this Fuzzy engine, in the form of degree of validity of input rules. The engine consists on creating and comparing defuzzificated membership functions among all parts in conflict. Each membership function (MF) associated to a part is an expert comparison of the level of importance of the scheduling resolution techniques used (in our case, among resolution techniques FIFO, LS, EDD, and SRPT.) An example of one of the defuzzificated MFs associated to part  $v_3(t, 2)$  is shown in figure 7. Here we are showing different levels of importance among std. resolution techniques (having EDD higher, and SRPT lower level of importance.)

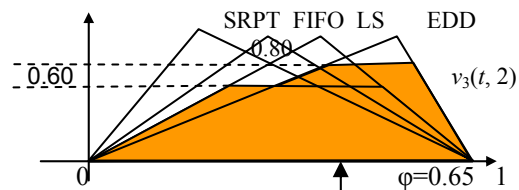


Figure 7. Membership function for  $v_3(t, 2)$ .

Then, for each part from  $v_j(t,k)$  found in the matrix  $Resol[type, Conflict(r_j(t))]^T$ , we calculate the center-of-area (or centroide), shown as  $\phi(v_j(t,k))$  in figure 7 for part  $v_3(t,2)$ . Then, by obtaining the higher  $\phi(v_j(t,k))$  among the parts disputing resource  $r_j(t)$ , we can have an outcome for a mixed resolution technique. However, we decided to include one more Fuzzy decision level in this work. As you might notice, earlier MF function gives priority to EDD resolution technique. But, what if one  $v_j(t,k)$  part has two or more appearances in the matrix resolution used with out showing any in cells  $Resol(EDD, v_j(t,k))$ ? This is, a part should compete if it has won over two or more conflict resolution among SRPT, FIFO, and LS, vs. competing with a part having only won in EDD.

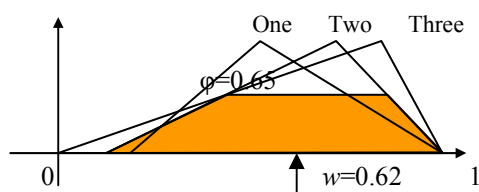


Figure 8. Final MF for  $v_3(t, 2)$ .

Therefore, in order to give importance to parts that have won more than once conflict resolution technique among the ones having won only one type, we used a second MF like the one shown in figure 8. This is, the final conflict is defined by the locating the highest weight  $w$ , which is the centroide obtained from this 2<sup>nd</sup> MF. For the example shown in PN from figure 4, the best outcome is to release part  $v_3(t, 2)$  from job  $v_3$ .

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The decision making matrix formulation controller supervisor proposed in [Lewis et al. 93, Mireles et al. 01], which provides the capability to analyze and control Discrete Event (DE) systems, was augmented through the addition of new hybrid supervisory structures to facilitate implementation of more sophisticated and intelligent conflict resolution techniques for manufacturing cells. Through this addition, we developed a matrix combination of standard manufacturing scheduling rules. Such a matrix formulation makes it possible to find a more optimal throughput and better performance of workcells. In this paper, using this matrix form, we show an implementation of a hybrid formulation combining matrices and Fuzzy Logic for decision rules and for better performance of workcells. The development of this DE supervisor was written in C code using the LabWindows© platform to manipulate and sequence a laboratory workcell composed of three robots, three conveyors, and two machining stations. Further work on more complex systems having shared resources, routing jobs, and deadlock resolution rules will be performed.

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