

CS558 Programming Languages

Winter 2008

Lecture 1

GOALS OF THE COURSE

- Learn fundamental structure of programming languages.
- Understand key issues in language design and implementation.
- Increase awareness of the range of available languages and their uses.
- Learn how to learn a new language.
- Get a small taste of programming language theory.

METHOD OF THE COURSE

- Fairly conventional survey textbook, with broad coverage of languages.
- Homework exercises involve programming problems in real languages.
- Most homework problems will involve modifying **implementations** of “toy” languages that illustrate key features and issues.
- Exercises will use two modern languages: **Java** and **Standard ML**.
- Between them, these languages illustrate many of the important concepts in current language designs.

NON-GOALS

- Teaching how to program.
- Teaching how to write programs in any particular languages(s).
- Surveying/cataloging the features of lots of different languages.
- Comprehensive coverage of programming paradigms (e.g., will skip logic and concurrent programming material).
- Will mostly be concerned with interpreting **abstract syntax** for the toy languages, and will spend very little time on parsing and code generation. (Not a compiler course!)

SOME LANGUAGES

What languages do you know?

FORTRAN, COBOL, (Visual) BASIC, ALGOL-60, ALGOL-68, PL/I, C, C++, RPG, Pascal, Modula, Oberon, Lisp, Scheme, ML, Haskell, Ada, Prolog, Goedel, Curry, Snobol, ICON, . . .

Don't forget things like:

scripting languages: perl, tcl, Python, . . .

SQL, other database query languages.

spreadsheet expression languages

text processing languages, tex, awk, etc.

application-specific languages.

“HIGHER-LEVEL” PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

Consider a simple (dumb) algorithm for testing primality.

In Java:

```
public static boolean isprime (int n) {  
    // return true if n has no divisor in interval [2,n-1]  
    for (int d = 2; d < n; d++)  
        if (n % d == 0)  
            return false;  
    return true;  
}
```

“HIGHER-LEVEL” PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES (2)

In Standard ML (using a recursive function):

```
fun isprime (n:int) : bool =
  (* return true if n has no divisor in interval [2,n-1] *)
  let
    fun no_divisor (d:int) : bool =
      (* return true if n has no divisor in interval [d,n-1] *)
      (d >= n) orelse
      ((n mod d <> 0) andalso (no_divisor (d+1)))
  in
    no_divisor 2
  end
```

In Intel X86 Assembler:

```
.globl isprime
isprime:
    pushl %ebp           ; set up procedure entry
    movl %esp,%ebp
    pushl %esi
    pushl %ebx
    movl 8(%ebp),%ebx    ; fetch arg n from stack
    movl $2,%esi        ; set divisor d := 2
    cmpl %ebx,%esi      ; compare n,d
    jge true            ; jump if d >= n
loop:  movl %ebx,%eax    ; set n into ....
    cltd                ; ... dividend register
    idivl %esi          ; divide by d
    testl %edx,%edx     ; remainder 0?
    jne next            ; jump if remainder non-0
    xorl %eax,%eax     ; set ret value := false(0)
    jmp done
next:  incl %esi        ; increment d
    cmpl %ebx,%esi     ; compare n,d
    jl loop             ; jump if d < n
true:  movl $1,%eax    ; set ret value := true(1)
done:  leal -8(%ebp),%esp ; clean up and exit
    popl %ebx
    popl %esi
    leave
    ret
```

HIGH-LEVEL LANGUAGES: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Complex Expressions (Arithmetic, Logical, ...)
- Structured Control Operators (Loops, Conditionals, Cases)
- Composite Types (Arrays, Records, etc.)
- Type Declarations and Type Checking
- Multiple storage classes (global/local/heap)
- Procedures/Functions, with private scope, maybe first-class
- Maybe high-level control mechanisms (Exceptions, Back-tracking, etc.)
- Maybe abstract data types, modules, objects, etc.

MACHINE CODE CHARACTERISTICS

- Low-level machine instructions to implement operations.
- Control flow based on labels and conditional branches.
- Explicit locations (e.g. registers) for values and intermediate results.
- Explicit memory management (e.g., stack management for procedures).

STACK MACHINES

A **stack machine** is a simple architecture based on a **stack** of operand values.

- All machine instructions pop their operands from the stack, and push their results back onto the stack
- This makes instructions very simple, because there's no need to specify operand locations.
- This architecture is often used in **abstract** machines, such as the Java Virtual Machine. (Most **real** machines use register-based architectures instead.)
- We will use stack machine programs as (slightly artificial) example of **compiled machine code**.

STACK MACHINE EXAMPLE

Here's the instruction set for a very simple stack machine:

Instruction	Stack Before	Stack After
CONST i	$s1 \dots sn$	$i \ s1 \dots sn$
LOAD x	$s1 \dots sn$	$Vars[x] \ s1 \dots sn$
STORE x	$s1 \dots sn$	$s2 \dots sn$
PLUS	$s1 \ s2 \ s3 \dots sn$	$(s1+s2) \ s3 \dots sn$
MINUS	$s1 \ s2 \ s3 \dots sn$	$(s2-s1) \ s3 \dots sn$

Note that STORE x also sets $Vars[x] = s1$.

STACK MACHINE EXAMPLE (2)

And here's a stack machine program corresponding to the simple statement $c = 3 - a + (b - 7)$:

```
CONST 3
LOAD a
MINUS
LOAD b
CONST 7
MINUS
PLUS
STORE c
```

Is this code sequence unique?

This illustrates the expressiveness of high-level **expressions** compared to machine code.

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE CLASSIFICATIONS

Programming paradigms

- Imperative (including object-oriented)
- Functional
- Logic
- Concurrent/Parallel

Programming Contexts

Programming “in the Small”

- Expressions
- Structured Control Flow
- Structured Data
- Types

Programming “in the Large”

- Modules and Separate Compilation
- Code Re-use; Polymorphism
- Object-oriented Programming
- Types



- Procedural imperative language.
- Widely used for systems programming, especially for Unix, Linux.
- First language to be implemented on almost any new machine.
- Influential expression-oriented syntax.
- Supports “bit-twiddling” low-level manipulation.
- Generates efficient, predictable machine code.
- Weak type system; run-time crashes common.
- Weak structuring mechanisms.
- C++ greatly extends C, but is almost completely backwards-compatible.

JAVA

- Object-oriented imperative language.
- Originally hyped for “web programming.”
- Designed as a “better C++.”
- Core language largely derived from C,C++.
- Strong static type-checking.
- Classes serve as primary structuring mechanism.
- Automatic heap allocation and garbage collection.
- Extensive libraries.
- Portable interpretive environment (JVM) based on stack abstract machine.
- C# is another, very similar language.

STANDARD ML

- Mostly functional language.
- Designed for symbolic manipulation; inherits from LISP, Scheme.
- Strong, static type inference.
- Simple, uniform, powerful recursive datatype mechanism.
- Recursion is primary control structure.
- Powerful parameterized module mechanism.
- Automatic heap allocation and garbage collection.
- Top-level “read-eval-print” loop for development.

LANGUAGE DESCRIPTION AND DOCUMENTATION

For programmers, compiler-writers, and students . . .

Syntax (Easy)

- Grammars; BNF and Syntax Charts

Semantics (Hard)

- Informal
- Formal: Operational, Denotational, Axiomatic

Learning about a Language

- Reference Manuals
- User Guides
- Texts and tutorials