Modules in General

An ADT is one particular kind of module, containing:

- a single abstract type, with its representation;
- a collection of operators, with their implementations.

More generally, modules might contain:

- multiple type definitions;
- arbitrary collections of functions (not necessarily abstract operators on the type);
- variables;
- constants;
- exceptions; etc.

Primary purpose is to divide large programs into (somewhat) independent sections, offering separate namespaces an abstraction barrier, and perhaps separate compilation.

ML modules are called structures. By default, a structure exports all its components, and does not need a specified interface (since its component types can be inferred.)

```ml
structure Machine =
  struct
    open Stack (* avoid dot notation *)
    type prog = ...
    fun progToString instrs = ...
    fun exec instrs = ...
  end
```

ML module interfaces are called signatures. Signatures can be attached to structures, but can also be separately named and manipulated, without reference to any particular structure.

```ml
signature MACH =
sig
  type prog (* details hidden *)
  val exec : prog -> int
end
```

The same structure can be viewed through multiple signatures. For example, a structure can be defined without an explicit signature but later be thinned by a signature to form a more private structure.

```ml
structure LimitedMach : MACH = Mach
```

Even C provides a (primitive) form of (unnamed) modules, i.e., files.

- The top-level declarations in a file are its components.
- By default, all components are exported, but they can be hidden using the static specifier.
- The .h file serves as a rough kind of interface specification. Manual methods must be used to ensure that such files are accurate and complete, and that they are used where needed.

The major defect of C’s approach is that all the names exported from all the files linked into a program occupy one global name space, and hence must be unique. There is no “dot” notation.
Classes as Modules

In many OO languages, the class mechanism is used to get the effect of modules.

This can happen in two ways:

- A class might correspond to a single (abstract) type, with fields holding the type representation and methods implementing operations on the type.
- A class might correspond to a collection of types, defined by nested classes, and operations, defined by (typically static) methods.

This dual use of the class mechanism is confusing. A separate module-level mechanism would be better. (Java does have packages to help.)

Polymorphism Revisited

Goal: Avoid writing the same code twice (while maintaining type safety and efficiency).

- Simplest case is parametric polymorphism, where behavior of the code is essentially the same regardless of the types being manipulated. Example: polymorphic functions in ML.
- Harder case is ad-hoc polymorphism, where behavior of the code differs significantly depending on the types being manipulated.

Classic example: sorting. It makes sense to use the same sort algorithm on many different types of data (e.g., integers, reals, strings, etc.), provided they have a defined ordering.

Parameterization in C

One approach is to make the comparison function an argument to sort, as with the C library quicksort function:

**SYNOPSIS**

```c
qsort(base, nel, width, compar)
char *base;
int (*compar)();
```

**EXAMPLE**

```c
static int intcompare(i,j)
int *i, *j;
{
    return(*i - *j);
}

main()
{
    int a[10];
    ...qsort(a,10,sizeof(int),intcompare);...
}
```

Note: Not type safe!

Parameterization in ML

If our language supports first-class functions, a better approach is to write a function that takes the comparison test as an argument and returns a specialized sorting function:

```ml
fun ('a) mksort (lessthan : 'a * 'a -> bool) : ('a list -> 'a list)
  = ("a list -> 'a list)
  let fun sort nil = nil
      | sort (h::t) = insert h (sort t)
  and insert x nil = [x]
      | insert x (h::t) =
        if lessthan(h,x) then
          h::(insert x t)
        else x::h::t
  in sort
end
```

```ml
val sortint = mksort (Int.<)
val l = sortint [3,1,2]
```

This extends (awkwardly) to situations where we want to generate several functions based on the same functional parameter (e.g., operations on sets with a certain notion of equality).
Parameterized Modules

Really want a way to have parameterized modules over types and operators.

Those conventional typed languages that support polymorphism at all, do so only at the module/class level. Here we always need to parameterize polymorphic algorithms by type, and maybe operators too.

Examples: Ada generic packages, C++ templates, ML functors.

Functors Example

signature SortArg =

  sig
    type t
    val lessthan : t * t -> bool
  end

functor Sort(SA:SortArg) : sig

  type t
  val sort : t list -> t list

end =

struct
  type t = SA.t
  fun sort nil = nil
  | sort (h::t) = insert h (sort t)
  and insert x nil = [x]
  | insert x (h::t) =
    if SA.lessthan(h,x) then
      h::(insert x t)
    else x::h::t
end

structure SortInt =
  Sort(type t = int val lessthan = Int.<)
SortInt.sort [1,2,3];

Top-down Development with Functors

With functors, we can write and compile client code without having an implementation at all!

signature ENV =

  sig
    type env
    val empty : env
    val extend : env -> (string * int) -> env
    val lookup : env -> string -> int option
  end

functor EvalF(structure Env:ENV) =

  struct
    fun evalexp (env:Env.env) e =
      case e of
        Var v => Env.lookup env v
      | ...

    end

end

--------------------------------

structure MyEnv : ENV = struct ... end
structure Eval = EvalF(structure Env = MyEnv)
fun main () = ... Eval.evalexp (e) ...

Compilation models for Polymorphism

Generic behavior can’t come for free!

Example: How can a generic sort function deal with an array whose entries are of arbitrary size?

In C, programmer must pass the size explicitly!

• Inefficient; doesn’t generalize.

There are two general approaches to compiler-generated generics.

In Ada and C++, completely separate code is generated for each instance of a generic (no code is generated for the generic definition itself).

• Each separate instance “knows” the size and layout of all the type parameters, and the implementation of all the operators, and can be compiled just like ordinary code.

• Code runs as efficiently as ordinary code.

• But if generics are used heavily, there may be a “code explosion.”

With Ada generics, programmers must explicitly instantiate a generic at the specific instances of interest; with C++ templates, instantiation is supposed to be done automatically by the compiler.
Compilation Models (cont.)

The other approach, often used in ML, is to have just one copy of polymorphic or functorized code.

- Represent all data objects by a single word; if the object is larger than a word, it is stored in the heap and represented by a pointer.
- Identical machine code can work on any container object of a given shape.
- Approach extends to functors: one copy of the code can be generated for a functor definition; no code is generated when the functor is instantiated.
- Supports genuine separate compilation in the top-down-development example.
- Polymorphic and functorized code still runs as efficiently as ordinary code, and there’s no fear of code explosion.
- But ordinary code may run more slowly than in Ada or C++ because of more indirect pointers. So recent ML implementations have been moving towards a code specialization approach to improve performance.