Acknowledgements: I am indebted to Sven Helmer for providing me the slides.
Outline

1 Introduction

2 Basics of Programming Languages
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2 Basics of Programming Languages
Introduction

Programming Languages and HCI

- A **programming language** is an artificial language designed to communicate instructions to a machine, e.g., computer.
- The earliest programming languages preceded the invention of the computer.
  - e.g., used to direct the behavior of machines such as Jacquard looms and player pianos.
- “**Programming languages are the least usable, but most powerful human-computer interfaces ever invented**”
  - Any Ko, http://bit.ly/1iVxF3A
- The difference between a programming language and a GUI comes down to just a few key differences.
There are thousands of programming languages
- The encyclopaedia britannica mentions over 2,000 computer languages
- As of May 2006 Diarmuid Pigott’s Encyclopedia of Computer Languages hosted at Murdoch University, Australia lists over 8,000 computer languages
- Still many new ones are created every year
- (there are approximately 7,000 current human languages)

Few languages ever become sufficiently popular that they are used by more than a few people

But professional programmers may use dozens of languages in a career
How Many Programming Languages Exist?
How Many Programming Languages Exist?
Programming Languages and Abstraction

- Programming languages provide an abstraction from a computer’s instruction set architecture.
- Low-level programming languages provide little or no abstraction, e.g., machine code and assembly language.
  - Difficult to use
  - Allows to program efficiently and with a low memory footprint
- High-level programming languages isolate the execution semantics of a computer architecture from the specification of the program.
  - Simplifies program development

Machine code

```
8B542408 83FA0077 06B80000 0000C383
C9010000 008D0419 83FA0376 078BD98B
B84AEBF1 5BC3
```

Assembly language

```
mov edx, [esp+8]
cmp edx, 0
ja @f
mov eax, 0
ret
```

High-level language

```
unsigned int fib(unsigned int n) {
    if (n <= 0)
        return 0;
    else if (n <= 2)
        return 1;
    else
        ...
}
Programming Paradigms/1

- Programming languages can be categorized into programming paradigms

- Meaning of the word 'paradigm'
  - "An example that serves as pattern or model"
    - The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language
  - "Paradigms emerge as the result of social processes in which people develop ideas and create principles and practices that embody those ideas"
    - Thomas Kuhn, “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”

- Programming paradigms are the result of people’s ideas about how computer programs should be constructed
  - Patterns that serves as a “school of thoughts” for programming of computers
## Programming Paradigms/2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Intended use</th>
<th>Paradigm(s)</th>
<th>Standardized?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ActionScript 3.0</td>
<td>Application, client-side, Web</td>
<td>event-driven, imperative, object-oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>Application, embedded, real-time, system</td>
<td>concurrent, distributed, generic, imperative, object-oriented, procedural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldor</td>
<td>Highly domain-specific, symbolic computing</td>
<td>imperative, functional, object-oriented</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGOL 58</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGOL 60</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>imperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGOL 68</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>concurrent, imperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ateji PX</td>
<td>Parallel application</td>
<td>object-oriented, pi calculus</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APL</td>
<td>Application, data processing</td>
<td>array-oriented, tacit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly language</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>any, imperative</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AutoHotkey</td>
<td>GUI automation (macros), highly domain-specific</td>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AutoIt</td>
<td>GUI automation (macros), highly domain-specific</td>
<td>event-driven, imperative, procedural</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASIC</td>
<td>Application, education</td>
<td>imperative, procedural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBj</td>
<td>Application, business, Web</td>
<td>object-oriented, procedural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BeanShell</td>
<td>Application, scripting</td>
<td>functional, imperative, object-oriented, reflective</td>
<td>In progress, JCP[10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLISS</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>procedural</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BlitzMax</td>
<td>Application, game</td>
<td>imperative, object-oriented, procedural</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boo</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>System</td>
<td>imperative, procedural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C++</td>
<td>Application, system</td>
<td>generic, imperative, object-oriented, procedural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C#</td>
<td>Application, business, client-side, general, server-side, Web</td>
<td>functional, generic, imperative, object-oriented, reflective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarion</td>
<td>General, business, Web</td>
<td>functional, imperative, object-oriented</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>functional, generic</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once you have understood the general concepts of programming paradigms, it becomes easier to learn new programming languages.

However, this does not mean that by just picking the right paradigm all problems vanish into thin air.

Or put more elegantly:

“There does not now, nor will there ever exist, a programming language in which it is the least bit hard to write bad programs.”

L. Flon
Principal Programming Paradigms

- Imperative / Procedural
- Functional
- Object-Oriented
- Concurrent
- Logic
- Scripting

In reality, very few languages are “pure”
  - Most combine features of different paradigms
Brief Overview of the Course Content

- Brief recapitulation
  - Elements of programming languages
  - Imperative/procedural paradigm
- Paradigms and languages
  - Object-oriented: Ruby
  - Logic programming: Prolog
  - Functional: Haskell
  - Concurrent: Erlang

- We will highlight strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm
- This will be done in a practical way using concrete languages:
  
  “Learning to program is like learning to swim. No amount of theory is a substitute for diving into the pool.”

  Joe Armstrong
Books/Literature

- The main book used for this lecture is
  - Bruce A. Tate: Seven Languages in Seven Weeks, Pragmatic Bookshelf, 2010

- Additional material taken from
  - Maurizio Gabrielli, Simone Martini: Programming Languages: Principles and Paradigms, Springer, 2010 (also available in Italian)
Outline

1 Introduction

2 Basics of Programming Languages
Elements of Programming Languages

- Programming languages have many similarities with natural languages
  - e.g., they conform to rules for syntax and semantics, there are many dialects, etc.
- We are going to have a quick look at the following concepts
  - Compiled/Interpreted
  - Syntax
  - Semantics
  - Typing
Compiled vs. Interpreted Languages

- **Compiled languages** are translated into machine code that can be run directly on a computer’s processor
  - Usually the whole program is translated before it is run
- **Interpreted languages** are processed by a higher-level virtual machine
  - Usually a program is translated on the fly, i.e., a statement is translated and then immediately executed
Compiled Languages

Source code
↓
Lexical/Syntactical Analysis
↓
Type Checker
↓
Code generation/optimization
↓
Computer
→ Output

Input →
Interpreted Languages

Source code
\[ \downarrow \]
Lexical/Syntactical Analysis
\[ \downarrow \]
Type Checker
\[ \downarrow \]
Input \[ \rightarrow \] Interpreter \[ \rightarrow \] Output
\[ \downarrow \uparrow \]
Computer
The **syntax** of a language describes how well-formed expressions should look like

- This includes putting together symbols to form valid **tokens**
- As well as stringing together tokens to form valid **expressions**

For example, the following (English) sentence is not correct:

> "Furiously slqxp ideas grn colorless."

In contrast, the sentence

> "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously."

is syntactically correct (but it does not make any sense).
The syntax of a programming language is usually described by a formalism called grammar. The following very simple grammar recognizes arithmetic expressions:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{<exp>} & \ ::= \ <\text{exp}>\ +\ <\text{exp}> \\
\text{<exp>} & \ ::= \ <\text{exp}>\ *\ <\text{exp}> \\
\text{<exp>} & \ ::= \ (\ <\text{exp}>\ ) \\
\text{<exp>} & \ ::= \ \text{"a"} \\
\text{<exp>} & \ ::= \ \text{"b"} \\
\text{<exp>} & \ ::= \ \text{"c"}
\end{align*}
\]

A program in this language is the product or the sum of ’a’, ’b’ and ’c’

- e.g., a * (b + c)

More details on this in the Compiler module.
Semantics

Semantics is concerned with the meaning of (programming) languages

- Usually much more difficult to define than syntax

A programmer should be able to anticipate what will happen before actually running a program

An accurate description of the meaning of language constructs is needed

There are different ways of describing semantics of programming languages

Main approaches are:
- Operational semantics
- Axiomatic semantics
- Denotational semantics
Operational Semantics

- In operational semantics the behavior is formally defined by an interpreter
  - This can be an abstract machine, a formal automaton, a transition system, etc.
  - In the extreme case, a specific implementation on a certain machine (1950s: first version of Fortran on an IBM 709)
Axiomatic Semantics

- Axiomatic semantics uses logical inference to define a language
- An example is Hoare logic (named after the British computer scientist and logician C. A. R. Hoare)
  - Hoare triple: \( \{P\} C \{Q\} \);
    - Describes how the execution of a piece of code changes the state of the computation
    - If precondition \( P \) is true, then the execution of command \( C \) will lead to postcondition \( Q \)
- Hoare logic provides axioms and inference rules for all constructs of a simple imperative programming language
- Some examples of rules:
  - An axiomatic rule: \( \{P\} \text{skip} \{P\} \)
  - Composition rule: \( \{P\} S \{Q\}, \{Q\} T \{R\} \)
    - \( \{P\} S; T \{R\} \)
Denotational Semantics

- **Denotational semantics** defines the meaning of each phrase by translating it into a phrase in another language
  - Clearly, assumes that we know the semantics of this target language
- Target language is often a mathematical formalism
Typing

- A programming language needs to organize data in some way
- The constructs and mechanisms to do this are called type system
- Types help in
  - designing programs
  - checking correctness
  - determining storage requirements
The type system of a language usually includes:

- a set of predefined data types, e.g., integer, string
- a mechanism to create new types, e.g., typedef
- mechanisms for controlling types:
  - equivalence rules: when are two types the same?
  - compatibility rules: when can one type be substituted for another?
  - inference rules: how is a type assigned to a complex expression?
- rules for checking types, e.g., static vs. dynamic
A language is **typed** if it specifies for every operation to which data it can be applied

Languages such as assembly or machine languages can be **untyped**

- Assembly language: all data is represented by bitstrings (to which all operations can be applied)

Languages such as markup or scripting languages can have very few types

- XML with DTDs: elements can contain other elements or parsed character data (#PCDATA)
Strong and Weak Typing

- There is a distinction between **weak typing** and **strong typing**
- In **strongly typed languages**, applying the wrong operation to typed data will raise an error
  - Languages supporting strong typing are also called **type-safe**
- **Weakly typed languages** perform implicit type conversion if data do not perfectly match, i.e., one type can be interpreted as another
  - e.g., the string “3.4028E+12” representing a number might be treated as a number
  - May produce unpredictable results
Type Casting

- In some languages it is possible to bypass implicit type conversion done by the compiler

- **Type casting** is an explicit type conversion defined within a program

- Example of type casting
  
  ```
  double da = 3.3;
  double db = 3.3;
  double dc = 3.4;
  int result1 = (int)da + (int)db + (int)dc; //result == 9
  ```

- Implicit type conversion gives a different result (conversion is after addition)
  
  ```
  int result2 = da + db + dc; //result == 10
  ```
We also distinguish between languages depending on when they check typing constraints.

In static typing we check the types and their constraints before executing the program.

Can be done during the compilation of a program.

When using dynamic typing, we check the typing during program execution.
Although some people feel quite strongly about this, each approach has pros and cons

- **Static typing:**
  - less error-prone
  - sometimes too restrictive

- **Dynamic typing:**
  - more flexible
  - harder to debug (if things go wrong)
Programming languages are **artificial languages** designed to communicate with computers

- Provide **most powerful** human-computer interface

There are **thousands** of different languages, which are more or less appropriate for different problems

Can be classified according to **programming paradigms** and **abstraction level**

There are many similarities to natural languages, e.g., syntax, semantics

- **Syntax** determines whether a program is well-formed
- **Semantic** determines the meaning of language concepts/programs, and can be defined in different ways (operational, axiomatic, denotational semantics)

**Type system** in a programming language is needed to **organize data** and helps to **check the correctness** of programs

Different forms of **type checking**, all having pros and cons

- Weak typing vs. strong typing
- Static vs. dynamic type checking
- Type casting