Programming Languages

Types

G22.2110

Summer 2010

What is a type?

- A type consists of a set of values
- The compiler/interpreter defines a mapping of these values onto the underlying hardware.

Static vs Dynamic Type Systems

Static vs dynamic

- Static
  - Variables have types
  - Compiler ensures that type rules are obeyed at **compile time**
- Dynamic
  - Variables do not have types, values do
  - Compiler ensures that type rules are obeyed at **run time**

A language may have a mixture;
Java has a mostly static type system with some runtime checks.

Pros and cons

- faster: static
  dynamic typing requires run-time checks
- more flexible: dynamic
- easier to refactor code: static

Strong vs weak typing

- A *strongly typed* language does not allow variables to be used in a way inconsistent with their types (no loopholes)
- A *weakly typed* language allows many ways to bypass the type system (e.g., pointer arithmetic)

C is a poster child for the latter. Its motto is: "Trust the programmer".

Scalar Types Overview

- discrete types
  must have clear successor, predecessor
- floating-point types
  typically 64 bit (double in C); sometimes 32 bit as well (float in C)
- rational types
  used to represent exact fractions (Scheme, Lisp)
- complex
  Fortran, Scheme, Lisp, C99, C++ (in STL)

Discrete Types

- integer types
  often several sizes (e.g., 16 bit, 32 bit, 64 bit)
  sometimes have signed and unsigned variants (e.g., C/C++, Ada, C#)
  SML/NJ has a 31-bit integer
- boolean
  Common type; C had no boolean until C99
- character
  See next slide
- enumeration types

Other intrinsic types

- character, string
  - some languages have no character data type (e.g., Javascript)
  - internationalization support
    - Java: UTF-16
    - C++: 8 or 16 bit characters; semantics implementation dependent
  - string mutability
    Most languages allow it, Java does not.
- `void`, `unit`
  Used as return type of procedures;
  `void`: (C, Java) represents the absence of a type
  `unit`: (ML, Haskell) a type with one value: `()`

Enumeration types: abstraction at its best

- trivial and compact implementation:
  literals are mapped to successive integers
- very common abstraction: list of names, properties
- expressive of real-world domain, hides machine representation

Examples:

```
type Suit is (Hearts, Diamonds, Spades, Clubs);
type Direction is (East, West, North, South);
```

Order of list means that `Spades > Hearts`, etc.

Contrast this with C#:

> "arithmetics on enum numbers may produce results in the underlying representation type that do not correspond to any declared enum member; this is not an error"

Enumeration types and strong typing

```
type Fruit is (Apple, Orange, Grape, Apricot);
type Vendor is (Apple, IBM, HP, Dell);

My_PC : Vendor;
Dessert : Fruit;
...
My_PC := Apple;
Dessert := Apple;
Dessert := My_PC;   -- error
```

`Apple` is *overloaded*. It can be of type `Fruit` or `Vendor`.

Subranges

Ada and Pascal allow types to be defined which are subranges of existing discrete types.

```
type Sub is new Positive range 2 .. 5;   -- Ada
V: Sub;

type sub = 2 .. 5;   (* Pascal *)
var v: sub;
```

Assignments to these variables are checked at runtime:

```
V := I + J;   -- runtime error if not in range
```

Composite Types

- arrays
- records
- variants, variant records, unions
- classes
- pointers, references
- function types
- lists
- sets
- maps

Arrays

- **index types**
  most languages restrict to an integral type
  Ada, Pascal, Haskell allow any scalar type
- **index bounds**
  many languages restrict lower bound:
  C, Java: 0, Fortran: 1, Ada, Pascal: no restriction
- **when is length determined**
  Fortran: compile time; most other languages: can choose
- **dimensions**
  some languages have multi-dimensional arrays (Fortran, C)
  many simulate multi-dimensional arrays as arrays of arrays (Java)
- **literals**
  C/C++ has initializers, but not full-fledged literals
  Ada: `(23, 76, 14)` Scheme: `#(23, 76, 14)`
- **first-classness**
  C, C++ does not allow arrays to be returned from functions

Composite Literals

Does the language support these?

- array aggregates

```
A := (1, 2, 3, 10);                -- positional
A := (1, others => 0);             -- for default
A := (1..3 => 1, 4 => -999);       -- named
```

- record aggregates

```
R := (name => "NYU", zipcode => 10012);
```

Initializers in C++

Similar notion for declarations:

```
int v2[] = { 1, 2, 3, 4 };   // size from initializer
char v3[2] = { 'a', 'z'};    // declared size
int v5[10] = { -1 };         // default: other components = 0
struct School r =
  { "NYU", 10012 };          // record initializer
char name[] = "Algol";       // string literals are aggregates
```

C has no array assignments, so initializer is not an expression (less orthogonal)

Pointers and references

Related (but distinct) notions:

- a value that denotes a memory location
- a dynamic name that can designate different objects
- a mechanism to separate stack and heap allocation

```
type Ptr is access Integer; -- Ada: named type

typedef int *ptr;  // C, C++
```

Extra pointer capabilities

Questions:

- Is it possible to get the address of a variable?
  - Convenient, but aliasing causes optimization difficulties.
    (the same way that pass by reference does)
  - Unsafe if we can get the address of a stack allocated variable.
- Is pointer arithmetic allowed?
  - Unsafe if unrestricted.
  - In C, no bounds checking:

```
// allocate space for 10 ints
int *p = malloc(10 * sizeof(int));
p += 42;
... *p ...  // out of bounds, but no check
```

Dynamic data structures

```
type Cell;                 -- an incomplete type
type Ptr is access Cell;   -- an access to it
type Cell is record        -- the full declaration
  Value: Integer;
  Next, Prev: Ptr;
end record;
List: Ptr := new Cell'(10, null, null);
...   -- A list is just a pointer to its first element
List.Next := new Cell'(15, null, null);
List.Next.Prev := List;
```

Incomplete declarations in C++

```
struct cell {
  int value;
  cell *prev; // legal to mention name
  cell *next; //  before end of declaration
};
struct list;  // incomplete declaration
struct link {
  link *succ;     // pointers to the
  list *memberOf; //  incomplete type
};
struct list { // full definition
  link *head; // mutually recursive references
};
```

Pointers and dereferencing

- Need notation to distinguish pointer from designated object
  - in Ada: `Ptr` vs `Ptr.all`
  - in C: `ptr` vs `*ptr`
  - in Java: no notion of pointer
- For pointers to composite values, dereference can be implicit:
  - in Ada: `C1.Value` equivalent to `C1.all.Value`
  - in C/C++: `c1.value` and `c1->value` are different

"Generic" pointers

A pointer used for low-level memory manipulation, i.e., a memory address.
In C, `void` is requisitioned to indicate this.
Any pointer type can be converted to a void *.

```
int a[10];
void *p = &a[5];
```

A cast is required to convert back:

```
int    *pi = (int *)p;     // no checks
double *pd = (double *)p;
```

Pointers and arrays in C/C++

In C/C++, the notions:

- an array
- a pointer to the first element of an array

are almost the same.

```
void f (int *p) { ... }
int a[10];
f(a);  // same as f(&a[0])

int *p = new int[4];
... p[0] ...  // first element
... *p ...    // ditto
... 0[p] ...  // ditto

... p[10] ... // past the end; undetected error
```

Pointers and safety

Pointers create aliases: accessing the value through one name affects retrieval through the other:

```
int *p1, *p2;
...
p1 = new int[10];   // allocate
p2 = p1;            // share
delete[] p1;        // discard storage
p2[5] = ...         // error:
                    //   p2 does not denote anything
```

Pointer troubles

Several possible problems with low-level pointer manipulation:

- dangling references
- garbage (forgetting to free memory)
- freeing dynamically allocated memory twice
- freeing memory that was not dynamically allocated
- reading/writing outside object pointed to

Dangling references

If we can point to local storage, we can create a reference to an undefined value:

```
int *f () {          // returns a pointer to an integer
  int local;         // variable on stack frame of f
  ...
  return &local;     // pointer to local entity
}

int *x = f ();
...
*x = 5; // stack may have been overwritten
```

Records

A record consists of a set of typed fields.
Choices:

- Name or structural equivalence? Most statically typed languages choose name equivalence.
  ML, Haskell are exceptions.
- Does order of fields matter?
  Typically, same answer as previous question.
- Any subtyping relationship with other record types?
  Most statically typed languages say no.
  Dynamically typed languages implicitly say yes.
  This is know as *duck typing*.

Variant Records

A variant record is a record that provides multiple alternative sets of fields, only one of which is valid at any given time.
Also known as a discriminated union.

Variant Records in Ada

Need to treat group of related representations as a single type:

```
type Figure_Kind is (Circle, Square, Line);
type Figure (Kind: Figure_Kind) is record
  Color: Color_Type;
  Visible: Boolean;
  case Kind is
    when Line   => Length: Integer;
                   Orientation: Float;
                   Start: Point;
    when Square => Lower_Left, Upper_Right: Point;
    when Circle => Radius: Integer;
                   Center: Point;
  end case;
end record;
```

Discriminant checking, part 1

```
C1: Figure(Circle); -- discriminant provides constraint
S1: Figure(Square);
...
C1.Radius := 15;
if S1.Lower_Left = C1.Center then ...

function Area (F: Figure) return Float is
  -- applies to any figure, i.e., subtype
begin
  case F.Kind is
    when Circle => return Pi * Radius ** 2;
  ...
end Area;
```

Discriminant checking, part 2

```
L : Figure(Line);
F : Figure;          -- illegal, don't know which kind
P1 := Point;
...
C := (Circle, Red, False, 10, P1);
   -- record aggregate
... C.Orientation ...
   -- illegal, circles have no orientation
C := L;
   -- illegal, different kinds
C.Kind := Square;
   -- illegal, discriminant is constant
```

Discriminant is a visible constant component of object.

Variants and classes

- discriminated types and classes have overlapping functionalities
- discriminated types can be allocated statically
- run-time code uses less indirection
- compiler can enforce consistent use of discriminants
- adding new variants is disruptive; must modify every case statement
- variant programming: one procedure at a time
- class programming: one class at a time

Free Unions

Free unions can be used to bypass the type model:

```
union value {
   char *s;
   int i;        // s and i allocated at same address
};
```

Keeping track of current type is programmer's responsibility.
Can use an explicit tag:

```
struct entry {
   int discr;
   union {       // anonymous component, either s or i.
      char *s;   // if discr = 0
      int i;     // if discr = 1, but system won't check
   };
};
```

Discriminated unions and dynamic typing

In dynamically-typed languages, only values have types, not names.

```
S = 13.45      # a floating-point number
...
S = [1,2,3,4] # now it's a list
```

Run-time values are described by discriminated unions.
Discriminant denotes type of value.

```
S = X + Y # arithmetic or concatenation
```

Lists, sets and maps

- list: ordered collection of elements
- set: collection of elements with fast searching
- map: collection of (key, value) pairs with fast key lookup

Low-level languages typically do not provide these. High-level and scripting languages do, some as part of a library.

- Perl, Python: built-in, lists and arrays merged.
- C, Fortran, Cobol: no
- C++: part of STL: `list<T>`, `set<T>`, `map<K,V>`
- Java: yes, in library
- Setl: built-in
- ML, Haskell: lists built-in, set, map part of library
- Scheme: lists built-in
- Pascal: built-in sets
  but only for discrete types with few elements, e.g., 32

Function types

- not needed unless the language allows functions to be passed as arguments or returned
- variable number of arguments:
  C/C++: allowed, type system loophole, Java: allowed, but no loophole
- optional arguments: normally not part of the type.
- missing arguments in call: in dynamically typed languages, typically OK.

Type equivalence

Name vs structural

- *name equivalence*
  Two types are the same only if they have the same name. (Each type definition introduces a new type.)
  Carried to extreme in Ada:
  "If a type is useful, it deserves to have a name."
- *structural equivalence*
  Two types are equivalent if they have the same structure.

Most languages have mixture, e.g., C: name equivalence for records (structs), structural equivalence for almost everything else.

Type equivalence examples

Name equivalence in Ada:

```
type t1 is array (1 .. 10) of boolean;
type t2 is array (1 .. 10) of boolean;
v1: t1;
v2: t2;   -- v1, v2 have different types

x1, x2: array (1 .. 10) of boolean;
-- x1 and x2 have different types too!
```

Structural equivalence in ML:

```
type t1 = { a: int, b: real };
type t2 = { b: real, a: int };
(* t1 and t2 are equivalent types *)
```

Accidental structural equivalence

```
type student = {
  name: string,
  address: string
}

type school = {
  name: string,
  address: string
}

type age = float;
type weight = float;
```

With structural equivalence, we can accidentally assign a `school` to a `student`, or an `age` to a `weight`.

Polymorphisms

- **Subclass polymorphism**:
  - The ability to treat a class as one of its superclasses.
  - The basis of OOP.
- **Subtype polymorphism**:
  - The ability to treat a value of a subtype as a value of a supertype.
  - Related to subclass polymorphism.
- **Parametric polymorphism**:
  - The ability to treat any type uniformly.
  - Found in ML, Haskell, and, in a very different form, in C++ templates and Java generics.
- **Ad hoc polymorphism**:
  - Multiple definitions of a function with the same name, each for a different set of argument types (*overloading*)

Parametric polymorphism example

```
fun length xs =
  if null xs
  then 0
  else 1 + length (tl xs)
```

`length` returns an int, and can take a list of any element type, because we don't care what the element type is. The type of this function is written `'a list -> int`.

Subtyping

- A relation between types; similar to but not the same as subclassing.
- Can be used in two different ways:
  - Subtype polymorphism
  - Coercion

Subtype examples:

- A record type containing fields `a`, `b` and `c` can be considered a subtype of one containing only `a` and `c`.
- A variant record type consisting of fields `a` or `c` can be considered a subtype of one containing `a` or `b` or `c`.
- The subrange `1..100` can be considered a subtype of the subrange `1..500`.

Subtype polymorphism and coercion

- subtype polymorphism: ability to *treat* a value of a subtype as a value of a supertype.
- coercion: ability to *convert* a value of a subtype to a value of a supertype.

Subtype polymorphism vs coercion

Let's say type `s` is a subtype of `r`.

```
var vs: s;
var vr: r;
```

Subtype polymorphism:

```
function [t ≤ r] f (x: t): t { return x; }

f(vr); // returns a value of type r
f(vs); // returns a value of type s
```

Coercion:

```
function f (x: r): r { return x; }

f(vr); // returns a value of type r
f(vs); // returns a value of type r
```

Overloading

Overloading: Multiple definitions for a name, distinguished by their types.
Overload resolution: Process of determining which definition is meant in a given use.

- Usually restricted to functions
- Usually only for static type systems
- Related to coercion. Coercion can be simulated by overloading (but at a high cost). If type `a` has subtypes `b` and `c`, we can define three overloaded functions, one for each type. Simulation not practical for many subtypes or number of arguments.

Overload resolution based on:

- number of arguments (Erlang)
- argument types (C++, Java)
- return type (Ada)

Constness

Ability to declare that a variable will not be changed:

- C/C++: `const`
- Java: `final`

May or may not affect type system: C++: yes, Java: no

Type checking and inference

- Type checking:
  - Variables are declared with their type.
  - Compiler determines if variables are used in accordance with their type declarations.
- Type inference: (ML, Haskell)
  - Variables are declared, but not their type.
  - Compiler determines type of a variable from its initialization/usage.

In both cases, type inconsistencies are reported at compile time.

```
fun f x =
  if x = 5     (* There are two type errors here *)
  then hd x
  else tl x
```