

Formal Systems and their Applications

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Course Overview

- Introduction
- Formal models of programming languages
 - Abstract syntax trees
 - Structural operational semantics
 - The lambda calculus
- Simple type systems
- Subtyping
- Conclusion

Formal Models of Programming Languages

Introduction

- To study programming languages formally, we need:
 - Formal account of their syntax
 - Formal definition of their semantics
- We introduce the techniques used for defining syntax and semantics by looking at a toy language

Syntax

Presentation of the syntax

- BNF-like notation

<code>t ::=</code>	<i>terms</i>
<code> true</code>	<i>constant true</i>
<code> false</code>	<i>constant false</i>
<code> if t then t else t</code>	<i>conditional</i>
<code> 0</code>	<i>constant zero</i>
<code> succ t</code>	<i>successor</i>
<code> pred t</code>	<i>predecessor</i>
<code> iszero t</code>	<i>zero test</i>

- Note the use of meta-variables (t)
- What does such a definition mean exactly?

Inductive definition of syntax

- The BNF notation is considered a shorthand for:

The set \mathcal{T} of *terms* is the smallest set such that

1. $\{\text{true}, \text{false}, 0\} \subseteq \mathcal{T}$;
2. if $t_1 \in \mathcal{T}$, then $\{\text{succ } t_1, \text{pred } t_1, \text{iszero } t_1\} \subseteq \mathcal{T}$;
3. if $t_1 \in \mathcal{T}$, $t_2 \in \mathcal{T}$, and $t_3 \in \mathcal{T}$, then
if t_1 then t_2 else $t_3 \in \mathcal{T}$.

Inductive definition of syntax

- Often alternatively presented as:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{true} \in \mathcal{T} \\ \frac{t_1 \in \mathcal{T}}{\text{succ } t_1 \in \mathcal{T}} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{false} \in \mathcal{T} \\ \frac{t_1 \in \mathcal{T}}{\text{pred } t_1 \in \mathcal{T}} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c} 0 \in \mathcal{T} \\ \frac{t_1 \in \mathcal{T}}{\text{iszero } t_1 \in \mathcal{T}} \end{array}$$
$$\frac{t_1 \in \mathcal{T} \quad t_2 \in \mathcal{T} \quad t_3 \in \mathcal{T}}{\text{if } t_1 \text{ then } t_2 \text{ else } t_3 \in \mathcal{T}}$$

- Note:
 - Strings versus Abstract Syntax Trees (AST's)
 - Terminology: axiom, inference rule, rule schema

Concrete definition of syntax

- A more constructive characterization:

Define an infinite sequence of sets, $\mathcal{S}_0, \mathcal{S}_1, \mathcal{S}_2, \dots$, as follows:

$$\mathcal{S}_0 = \emptyset$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{S}_{i+1} = & \{ \text{true, false, 0} \} \\ & \cup \{ \text{succ } t_1, \text{pred } t_1, \text{iszero } t_1 \mid t_1 \in \mathcal{S}_i \} \\ & \cup \{ \text{if } t_1 \text{ then } t_2 \text{ else } t_3 \mid t_1, t_2, t_3 \in \mathcal{S}_i \} \end{aligned}$$

Now let

$$\mathcal{S} = \bigcup_i \mathcal{S}_i$$

- Theorem: the sets S and T are equal

Induction on terms

- The constructive characterization gives us an important tool for proving things about terms, the *principle of induction on terms*

If, for each term s ,
given $P(r)$ for all immediate subterms r of s
we can show $P(s)$,
then $P(t)$ holds for all t .

- Variants include: induction on depth and size

Inductive definitions of functions

- It also justifies “recursive” definitions such as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Consts}(\text{true}) &= \{\text{true}\} \\ \text{Consts}(\text{false}) &= \{\text{false}\} \\ \text{Consts}(0) &= \{0\} \\ \text{Consts}(\text{succ } t_1) &= \text{Consts}(t_1) \\ \text{Consts}(\text{pred } t_1) &= \text{Consts}(t_1) \\ \text{Consts}(\text{iszero } t_1) &= \text{Consts}(t_1) \\ \text{Consts}(\text{if } t_1 \text{ then } t_2 \text{ else } t_3) &= \text{Consts}(t_1) \cup \text{Consts}(t_2) \\ &\quad \cup \text{Consts}(t_3) \end{aligned}$$

- Intuition: the definition is OK because “the recursive computation always terminates”

Example

```
size(true)           = 1
size(false)          = 1
size(0)              = 1
size(succ t1)       = size(t1) + 1
size(pred t1)       = size(t1) + 1
size(iszero t1)     = size(t1) + 1
size(if t1 then t2 else t3) = size(t1) + size(t2) + size(t3) + 1
```

Theorem: The number of distinct constants in a term is at most the size of the term. I.e., $|Consts(t)| \leq size(t)$.

Semantics

Various semantic “styles”

- Operational semantics:
 - Define an abstract machine for the language
- Denotational semantics:
 - Define the meaning of a program to be a (intricate) mathematical structure
- Axiomatic semantics:
 - Define what you can know about the program state at each execution point of the program

We will only use operational semantics.
In particular, we will use the so-called
“small-step structural operational semantics”

Small-Step Structural Operational Semantics

- We define an abstract machine, consisting of:
 - A set of states
 - A transition relation that defines how the state changes over time
- In the simple case we are considering now, the state is just the program
 - Computation is rewriting (“simplification”) of the program

Semantics of Boolean Expressions

- Define “end-states” or values:

<code>t ::=</code>	<i>terms</i>
<code> true</code>	<i>constant true</i>
<code> false</code>	<i>constant false</i>
<code> if t then t else t</code>	<i>conditional</i>
<code>v ::=</code>	<i>values</i>
<code> true</code>	<i>true value</i>
<code> false</code>	<i>false value</i>

Semantics of Boolean Expressions

- Define the evaluation relation:

if true then t_2 else $t_3 \longrightarrow t_2$ (E-IFTRUE)

if false then t_2 else $t_3 \longrightarrow t_3$ (E-IFFALSE)

$$\frac{t_1 \longrightarrow t'_1}{\text{if } t_1 \text{ then } t_2 \text{ else } t_3 \longrightarrow \text{if } t'_1 \text{ then } t_2 \text{ else } t_3} \text{ (E-IF)}$$

- Terminology:
 - E-IfTrue and E-IfFalse are *computation rules*
 - E-If is a *congruence rule*

Derivations

- A pair (t, t') is only in the evaluation relation iff it is justified by the rules
- This justification can be made explicit as a “derivation tree”
- A powerful technique for proving properties of the evaluation relation is:
 - Induction on derivations
- Example: prove the determinacy of the evaluation relation

Normal forms

- Def: A term is in **normal form** if it can not be evaluated further
- Thm: All values are normal forms
- Thm: All normal forms are values
 - By structural induction on terms
- Def: The *multi-step evaluation* relation, \longrightarrow^* , is the reflexive, transitive closure of single-step evaluation.
- Thm: Normal forms are unique
- Thm: Evaluation always terminates

Booleans + Natural Numbers

New syntactic forms

```
t ::= ...  
    0  
    succ t  
    pred t  
    iszero t
```

```
v ::= ...  
    nv
```

```
nv ::=  
    0  
    succ nv
```

terms

constant zero
successor
predecessor
zero test

values

numeric value

numeric values

zero value
successor value

New evaluation rules

$t \longrightarrow t'$

$$\frac{t_1 \longrightarrow t'_1}{\text{succ } t_1 \longrightarrow \text{succ } t'_1} \quad (\text{E-SUCC})$$

$$\text{pred } 0 \longrightarrow 0 \quad (\text{E-PREDZERO})$$

$$\text{pred } (\text{succ } nv_1) \longrightarrow nv_1 \quad (\text{E-PREDSUCC})$$

$$\frac{t_1 \longrightarrow t'_1}{\text{pred } t_1 \longrightarrow \text{pred } t'_1} \quad (\text{E-PRED})$$

$$\text{iszero } 0 \longrightarrow \text{true} \quad (\text{E-ISZEROZERO})$$

$$\text{iszero } (\text{succ } nv_1) \longrightarrow \text{false} \quad (\text{E-ISZEROSUCC})$$

$$\frac{t_1 \longrightarrow t'_1}{\text{iszero } t_1 \longrightarrow \text{iszero } t'_1} \quad (\text{E-ISZERO})$$

What properties remain true?

- Thm: Values are normal forms
 - OK
- Thm: all normal forms are values?
 - NO: succ false is in normal form and not a value
- Def: a term is **stuck** if it is in normal form and not a value
 - Stuck terms model runtime errors
 - A key goal of type systems will be to remove such runtime errors

Wrap up

- Our model of programming languages:
 - Syntax is an inductively defined set of Abstract Syntax Trees, called **terms** (that can be rendered to and parsed from strings if needed by using parentheses)
 - Semantics consists of:
 - An inductively defined **evaluation relation** between terms
 - A definition of a subset of terms (the **values**) that are deemed to be end-results of computation
 - A program (term) leads to a run-time error if it gets **stuck**, i.e. evaluates to a normal form that is not a value

The untyped lambda calculus

Introduction

- We now switch to a more interesting programming language than the expression language we considered so far
- The lambda calculus is:
 - A Turing-complete language
 - And its key abstractions – function definition and application – are closely related to abstractions found in programming languages

Syntax

$t ::=$	<i>terms</i>
x	<i>variable</i>
$\lambda x. t$	<i>abstraction</i>
$t t$	<i>application</i>

- Some syntactic conventions:

- ▶ Application associates to the left

E.g., $t u v$ means $(t u) v$, not $t (u v)$

- ▶ Bodies of λ - abstractions extend as far to the right as possible

E.g., $\lambda x. \lambda y. x y$ means $\lambda x. (\lambda y. x y)$, not $\lambda x. (\lambda y. x) y$

Scope and free variables

- In the term $\lambda x.t$, the variable x is **bound** in t is the **scope** of the binding
- A variable is **free** if it is not bound by any enclosing abstraction
- A term without free variables is called a **closed term**

Operational semantics (informal)

- Evaluating terms always boils down to performing function application:
 - An actual parameter (term) is substituted for the formal parameter in the body of a lambda abstraction
- Making this precise is more tricky than appears at first sight: we will give the formal definition later

Multiple arguments

- Functions with more than one argument can be simulated using higher order functions:
 - Instead of $\lambda(x,y).s$, we write $\lambda x. \lambda y.s$
 - Instead of $f(a,b)$ we write $f a b$

The Church Booleans

```
tru  =  $\lambda t. \lambda f. t$   
fls  =  $\lambda t. \lambda f. f$ 
```

```
      tru v w  
=  $(\lambda t. \lambda f. t)$  v w  by definition  
→  $(\lambda f. v)$  w      reducing the underlined redex  
→ v                  reducing the underlined redex
```

```
      fls v w  
=  $(\lambda t. \lambda f. f)$  v w  by definition  
→  $(\lambda f. f)$  w      reducing the underlined redex  
→ w                  reducing the underlined redex
```

Functions on Booleans

```
not  =  λb. b fls tru
```

```
and  =  λb. λc. b c fls
```

- Exercise: Compute a logical expression

Encoding Pairs

```
pair =  $\lambda f. \lambda s. \lambda b. b f s$   
fst  =  $\lambda p. p \text{ tru}$   
snd  =  $\lambda p. p \text{ fls}$ 
```

```
fst (pair v w)  
=  fst (( $\lambda f. \lambda s. \lambda b. b f s$ ) v w)  by definition  
→  fst (( $\lambda s. \lambda b. b v s$ ) w)      reducing  
→  fst ( $\lambda b. b v w$ )              reducing  
=  ( $\lambda p. p \text{ tru}$ ) ( $\lambda b. b v w$ )    by definition  
→  ( $\lambda b. b v w$ ) tru              reducing  
→  tru v w                          reducing  
→* v                                 as before.
```


Church Numerals

Idea: represent the number n by a function that “repeats some action n times.”

$$c_0 = \lambda s. \lambda z. z$$

$$c_1 = \lambda s. \lambda z. s z$$

$$c_2 = \lambda s. \lambda z. s (s z)$$

$$c_3 = \lambda s. \lambda z. s (s (s z))$$

That is, each number n is represented by a term c_n that takes two arguments, s and z (for “successor” and “zero”), and applies s , n times, to z .

Church Numerals

Successor:

$$\text{succ} = \lambda n. \lambda s. \lambda z. s (n s z)$$

Addition:

$$\text{plus} = \lambda m. \lambda n. \lambda s. \lambda z. m s (n s z)$$

Multiplication:

$$\text{times} = \lambda m. \lambda n. m (\text{plus } n) c_0$$

Zero test:

$$\text{iszro} = \lambda m. m (\lambda x. \text{fls}) \text{tru}$$

Recursion

- Evaluation in the lambda calculus can diverge:

$$\text{omega} = (\lambda x. x x) (\lambda x. x x)$$

- More surprisingly: arbitrary recursive functions can be defined in the lambda calculus!
 - There exists a lambda term `fix`, that has the property that:
 - `fix f v` evaluates to: `f (fix f) v`, and hence to:
 - `f (f (fix f)) v`, and to:
 - `f (f (f (fix f))) v`

Recursion

- We can use fix to define recursive functions:
 - First abstract out the recursive call:

```
f = λfct.  
    λn.  
        if n=0 then 1  
        else n * (fct (pred n))
```

- Then apply fix:
 - fix f n will compute the factorial of n

Encoding versus extending the syntax

- The previous exercises show that various programming language features can be “encoded” in the lambda calculus
- But in our further study, we will introduce all these features by extending the syntax instead of encoding
 - This does not gain expressive power
 - But it does gain readability and typability
- The encoding we discussed will play no major role in the rest of this course

Operational Semantics (formal)

$t ::=$	<i>terms</i>
x	<i>variable</i>
$\lambda x. t$	<i>abstraction</i>
$t t$	<i>application</i>

$v ::=$	<i>values</i>
$\lambda x. t$	<i>abstraction value</i>

Computation rule:

$$(\lambda x. t_{12}) v_2 \longrightarrow [x \mapsto v_2]t_{12} \quad (\text{E-APPABS})$$

Congruence rules:

$$\frac{t_1 \longrightarrow t'_1}{t_1 t_2 \longrightarrow t'_1 t_2} \quad (\text{E-APP1})$$

$$\frac{t_2 \longrightarrow t'_2}{v_1 t_2 \longrightarrow v_1 t'_2} \quad (\text{E-APP2})$$

Operational Semantics (formal)

- Free variables in a term:

$$FV(x) = \{x\}$$

$$FV(\lambda x. t_1) = FV(t_1) \setminus \{x\}$$

$$FV(t_1 t_2) = FV(t_1) \cup FV(t_2)$$

- Substitution:
 - Is tricky to define correct. We proceed in a number of attempts to the correct definition

Substitution, take 1

Consider the following definition of substitution:

$$[x \mapsto s]x = s$$

$$[x \mapsto s]y = y$$

if $x \neq y$

$$[x \mapsto s](\lambda y. t_1) = \lambda y. ([x \mapsto s]t_1)$$

$$[x \mapsto s](t_1 t_2) = ([x \mapsto s]t_1)([x \mapsto s]t_2)$$

What is wrong with this definition?

It substitutes for free and *bound* variables!

$$[x \mapsto y](\lambda x. x) = \lambda x. y$$

This is not what we want!

Substitution, take 2

$$[x \mapsto s]x = s$$

$$[x \mapsto s]y = y \quad \text{if } x \neq y$$

$$[x \mapsto s](\lambda y. t_1) = \lambda y. ([x \mapsto s]t_1) \quad \text{if } x \neq y$$

$$[x \mapsto s](\lambda x. t_1) = \lambda x. t_1$$

$$[x \mapsto s](t_1 t_2) = ([x \mapsto s]t_1)([x \mapsto s]t_2)$$

What is wrong with this definition?

It suffers from *variable capture*!

$$[x \mapsto y](\lambda y. x) = \lambda x. x$$

This is also not what we want.

Substitution, take 3

$$[x \mapsto s]x = s$$

$$[x \mapsto s]y = y$$

if $x \neq y$

$$[x \mapsto s](\lambda y. t_1) = \lambda y. ([x \mapsto s]t_1)$$

if $x \neq y, y \notin FV(s)$

$$[x \mapsto s](\lambda x. t_1) = \lambda x. t_1$$

$$[x \mapsto s](t_1 t_2) = ([x \mapsto s]t_1)([x \mapsto s]t_2)$$

What is wrong with this definition?

Now substitution is a *partial function*!

E.g., $[x \mapsto y](\lambda y. x)$ is undefined.

But we want an result for every substitution.

Alpha-equivalence

- To make substitution a total operation again, we observe that:
 - Names of bound variables do not matter
- Two terms are alpha-equivalent if they only differ in the choice of names for bound variables

Substitution, final definition

Now consider substitution as an operation over *alpha-equivalence classes* of terms.

$$[x \mapsto s]x = s$$

$$[x \mapsto s]y = y$$

if $x \neq y$

$$[x \mapsto s](\lambda y. t_1) = \lambda y. ([x \mapsto s]t_1)$$

if $x \neq y, y \notin FV(s)$

$$[x \mapsto s](\lambda x. t_1) = \lambda x. t_1$$

$$[x \mapsto s](t_1 t_2) = ([x \mapsto s]t_1)([x \mapsto s]t_2)$$

Examples:

- ▶ $[x \mapsto y](\lambda y. x)$ must give the same result as $[x \mapsto y](\lambda z. x)$. We know the latter is $\lambda z. y$, so that is what we will use for the former.
- ▶ $[x \mapsto y](\lambda x. z)$ must give the same result as $[x \mapsto y](\lambda w. z)$. We know the latter is $\lambda w. z$ so that is what we use for the former.

Exercise

So what does

$$(\lambda x. x (\lambda y. x y)) (\lambda x. x y x)$$

reduce to?

Wrap-up

- The lambda-calculus is a simple, yet powerful model of computation
- We will use it as the core of most of the programming languages we study in this course
- It is also at the core of some real-life languages such as ML, Haskell, Lisp and Scheme