Mutual Recursion

You’ve already seen how multiple functions can recursively call each other in HW 2.

ML uses the keyword and to provide different scope rules. Example:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fun even } i &= \text{if } i = 0 \text{ then true else odd (i-1)} \\
\text{and odd } i &= \text{if } i = 0 \text{ then false else even (i-1)}
\end{align*}
\]

Roughly extends the binding form for functions from \( \text{fun } f_1\ x_1 = e_1 \) to \( \text{fun } f_1\ x_1 = e_1 \text{ and } f_2\ x_2 = e_2 \text{ and } \ldots \text{ and } f_n\ x_n = e_n. \)

Syntax gotcha: Easy to forget that you write and \( f_i\ x_i = e_i \), not and \( \text{fun } f_i\ x_i = e_i. \)
Mutual Recursion Idioms

1. Encode a state machine (see product_sign example)
   - Sometimes easier to understand than explicit state values.

2. Process mutually recursive types, as in HW 2
Equivalence

“Equivalence” is a fundamental programming concept

- Code maintenance / backward-compatibility
- Program verification
- Program optimization
- Abstraction and strong interfaces

But what does it mean for an expression (or program) $e_1$ to be “equivalent” to expression $e_2$?
Equivalence I: where?

Context (i.e., “where equivalent”)

- Given where $e_1$ occurs in a program $e$, replacing $e_1$ with $e_2$ makes a program $e'$ equivalent to $e$

- At any point in any program, replacing $e_1$ with $e_2$ makes an equivalent program.

The latter (contextual equivalence) is much more interesting.

For the former, the body of an unused function body is equivalent to everything (that typechecks).
Equivalence II: how?

“how equivalent”

- “partial”: $e$ and $e'$ are equivalent if they input and output the same data (any limits on input?)

- “total”: partial plus $e$ and $e'$ have the same termination behavior

- efficiency: $e$ and $e'$ are totally equivalent and one never takes more than (for example) $c$ times longer than the other (or uses much more space or ...)

- syntactic notions: $e$ and $e'$ differ only in whitespace and comments (for example)

Key notion: what is observable? (memory, clock, REP-loop, file-system, ...)

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Accounting for “Effects”

Consider whether \( f \ x \rightarrow e_1 \) and \( f \ x \rightarrow e_2 \) are totally contextually equivalent.

Is this enough? For all environments, \( e_1 \) terminates and evaluates to \( v \) under the environments if and only if \( e_2 \) terminates and evaluates to \( v \) under the environment.

Functions produce values; may also produce (side-) effects. Consider both!

Purely functional languages have fewer/none, but ML is not purely functional.

In real languages, contextual equivalence usually requires many things. Nonetheless, “equivalence” usually means total contextual equivalence for practical purposes (optimization, reasoning about correctness, etc.).
Syntactic Sugar

“Syntactic sugar causes cancer of the semicolon.”

– Alan Perlis

When all expressions using one construct are totally equivalent to another more primitive construct, we say the former is “syntactic sugar”.

• Makes language definition easier
• Makes language implementation easier

Examples:

• e1 andalso e2 (define as a conditional)
• if e1 then e2 else e3 (define as a case)
• fun f x y = e (define with an anonymous function)
More sugar

\[ \text{#1 \ e is just } \text{let val (x,...) = e in x end} \]

*If we ignore types*, then we have even more sugar:

\[ \text{let val p = e1 in e2 end is just (fn p => e2) e1.} \]

In fact, if we let every program type-check (or just use one big datatype), then a language with just functions and function application is as powerful as ML or Java (in the Turing Tarpit sense).

This language is called “lambda calculus” – we’ll learn a bit more about it later.
Equivalences for Functions

While sugar defines one construct in terms of another, there are also important notions of *meaning-preserving* changes involving functions and bound variables.

They’re so important that a goal of language design is that a language supports them.

But the correct definitions are subtle.

First example: systematic renaming

Is \( \text{fn } x \Rightarrow e1 \) equivalent to \( \text{fn } y \Rightarrow e2 \) where \( e2 \) is \( e1 \) with every \( x \) replaced by \( y \)?
Systematic renaming requires care

Is \( \text{fn } x \Rightarrow e_1 \) is equivalent to \( \text{fn } y \Rightarrow e_2 \) where \( e_2 \) is \( e_1 \) with every \( x \) replaced by \( y \)?

What if \( e_1 \) is \( y \)?

What if \( e_1 \) is \( \text{fn } x \Rightarrow x \)?

Need caveats: \( \text{fn } x \Rightarrow e_1 \) is equivalent to \( \text{fn } y \Rightarrow e_2 \) where \( e_2 \) is \( e_1 \) with every free \( x \) replaced by \( y \) and \( y \) is not free in \( e_1 \), and no free \( x \) occurs within the scope of a binding for \( y \) (capture; e.g.: \( \text{fn } x \Rightarrow \text{let } y = 2 \text{ in } x + y \text{ end} \); see also next slide.)

Note: We can provide a very precise recursive (meta-)definition of free variables in an expression.

Next: Is \( (\text{fn } x \Rightarrow e_1) \) \( e_2 \) equivalent to \( e_3 \) where \( e_3 \) is \( e_1 \) with every \( x \) replaced by \( e_2 \)?
Argument Substitution

Is \((\textit{fn} \ x \Rightarrow \ e_1) \ e_2\) equivalent to \(e_3\) where \(e_3\) is \(e_1\) with every \(x\) replaced by \(e_2\)?

- Every \textit{free} \(x\) (of course).
- A free variable in \(e_2\) must not be bound at an occurrence of \(x\). (Called “capture”.)
  - Always satisfiable by renaming bound variables.
- Evaluating \(e_2\) must have no effects (printing, exceptions, infinite-loop, etc.)
  - Closely tied to the rule that arguments are evaluated to values \textit{before} function application. (Not true for all languages)
  - In ML, many expressions have no such effects (\(x\), \#\texttt{foo} \(x\), ...); much fewer in Java.
- Efficiency? Could be faster or slower. (Why?)
Unnecessary Function Wrapping

A common source of bad style for beginners

Is e1 equivalent to fn x => e1 x?

Sure, provided:

- e1 is effect-free
- x does not occur free in e1

Example:

List.map (fn x => SOME x) lst
List.map SOME lst
Summary

We breezed through some core programming-language facts and design goals:

• Definition of equivalence depends on observable behavior

• Syntactic sugar “makes a big language smaller” by defining constructs in terms of equivalence

• Notion of free and bound variables crucial to understanding function equivalence.

• Three common forms of function equivalence:
  – Systematic Renaming
  – Argument Substitution
  – Unnecessary Function Wrapping