CSE 401 – Compilers

Languages, Automata, Regular Expressions & Scanners
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Winter 2015
Administrivia

• Read: textbook ch. 1 and sec. 2.1-2.4
• First homework: out by end of the week, due next Thursday. Written problems on this weeks’ material.
• If you haven’t already, please
  – Fill in the office hour doodle on the website
  – Post a followup on the discussion board
  – Pick a project partner
    • We’ll post a link to a catalyst form for ONE of you to send in partner info
Agenda

• Quick review of basic concepts of formal grammars
• Regular expressions
• Lexical specification of programming languages
• Using finite automata to recognize regular expressions
• Scanners and Tokens
• General ideas in lecture, then examples, details, and compiler applications in sections
Programming Language Specs

• Since the 1960s, the syntax of every significant programming language has been specified by a formal grammar
  – First done in 1959 with BNF (Backus-Naur Form), used to specify ALGOL 60 syntax
  – Borrowed from the linguistics community (Chomsky)
Formal Languages & Automata Theory (a review in one slide)

• Alphabet: a finite set of symbols and characters
• String: a finite, possibly empty sequence of symbols from an alphabet
• Language: a set of strings (possibly empty or infinite)
• Finite specifications of (possibly infinite) languages
  – Automaton – a recognizer; a machine that accepts all strings in a language (and rejects all other strings)
  – Grammar – a generator; a system for producing all strings in the language (and no other strings)
• A particular language may be specified by many different grammars and automata
• A grammar or automaton specifies only one language
Language (Chomsky) hierarchy: quick reminder

- Regular (Type-3) languages are specified by regular expressions/grammars and finite automata (FSAs)
  - Specs and implementation of scanners
- Context-free (Type-2) languages are specified by context-free grammars and pushdown automata (PDAs)
  - Specs and implementation of parsers
- Context-sensitive (Type-1) languages ... aren’t too important
- Recursively-enumerable (Type-0) languages are specified by general grammars and Turing machines
Example:
Grammar for a Tiny Language

\[
\text{program ::= statement | program statement}
\]
\[
\text{statement ::= assignStmt | ifStmt}
\]
\[
\text{assignStmt ::= id = expr ;}
\]
\[
\text{ifStmt ::= if ( expr ) statement}
\]
\[
\text{expr ::= id | int | expr + expr}
\]
\[
\text{id ::= a | b | c | i | j | k | n | x | y | z}
\]
\[
\text{int ::= 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9}
\]
Exercise: Derive a simple program

\[ a = 1 ; \quad \text{if} \quad ( a + 1 ) \quad b = 2 ; \]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{program} & ::= \text{statement} \mid \text{program statement} \\
\text{statement} & ::= \text{assignStmt} \mid \text{ifStmt} \\
\text{assignStmt} & ::= \text{id} = \text{expr} ; \\
\text{ifStmt} & ::= \text{if} \ ( \text{expr} ) \ \text{statement} \\
\text{expr} & ::= \text{id} \mid \text{int} \mid \text{expr} + \text{expr} \\
\text{id} & ::= a \mid b \mid c \mid i \mid j \mid k \mid n \mid x \mid y \mid z \\
\text{int} & ::= 0 \mid 1 \mid 2 \mid 3 \mid 4 \mid 5 \mid 6 \mid 7 \mid 8 \mid 9
\end{align*}
\]
Productions

• The rules of a grammar are called productions
• Rules contain
  – Nonterminal symbols: grammar variables (program, statement, id, etc.)
  – Terminal symbols: concrete syntax that appears in programs (a, b, c, 0, 1, if, =, (, ), ...)
• Meaning of
  nonterminal ::= <sequence of terminals and nonterminals>
  • In a derivation, an instance of nonterminal can be replaced by the sequence of terminals and nonterminals on the right of the production
• Often there are several productions for a nonterminal – can choose any in different parts of derivation
Alternative Notations

• There are several syntax notations for productions in common use; all mean the same thing

  \[
  ifStmt ::= if ( expr ) statement \\
  ifStmt \rightarrow if ( expr ) statement \\
  <ifStmt> ::= if ( <expr> ) <statement>
  \]

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Parsing

• Parsing: reconstruct the derivation (syntactic structure) of a program
• In principle, a single recognizer could work directly from a concrete, character-by-character grammar
• In practice this is never done
Parsing & Scanning

• In real compilers the recognizer is split into two phases
  – Scanner: translate input characters to tokens
    • Also, report lexical errors like illegal characters and illegal symbols
  – Parser: read token stream and reconstruct the derivation
Why Separate the Scanner and Parser?

• Simplicity & Separation of Concerns
  – Scanner hides details from parser (comments, whitespace, input files, etc.)
  – Parser is easier to build; has simpler input stream (tokens) / narrow interface

• Efficiency
  – Scanner recognizes regular expressions – proper subset of context free grammars
    • (But still often consumes a surprising amount of the compiler’s total execution time)
But ...

• Not always possible to separate cleanly
• Example: C/C++/Java *type* vs *identifier*
  – Parser would like to know which names are types and which are identifiers, but...
  – Scanner doesn’t know how things are declared
• So we hack around it somehow...
  – Either use simpler grammar and disambiguate later, or communicate between scanner & parser
  – Engineering issue: try to keep interfaces as simple & clean as possible
Typical Tokens in Programming Languages

• Operators & Punctuation
  – + - * / ( ) { } [ ] ; : :: < <= == = != ! ... 
  – Each of these is a distinct lexical class

• Keywords
  – if while for goto return switch void ... 
  – Each of these is also a distinct lexical class (*not a string*)

• Identifiers
  – A single ID lexical class, but parameterized by actual id

• Integer constants
  – A single INT lexical class, but parameterized by int value

• Other constants, etc.
Principle of Longest Match

• In most languages, the scanner should pick the longest possible string to make up the next token if there is a choice

• Example
  
  return maybe != iffy;

  should be recognized as 5 tokens

  \[\text{RETURN} \quad \text{ID}(\text{maybe}) \quad \text{NEQ} \quad \text{ID}(\text{iffy}) \quad \text{SCOLON}\]

  i.e., != is one token, not two; “iffy” is an ID, not IF followed by ID(fy)
Lexical Complications

• Most modern languages are free-form
  – Layout doesn’t matter
  – Whitespace separates tokens

• Alternatives
  – Fortran – line oriented
  – Haskell, Python – indentation and layout can imply grouping

• And other confusions
  – In C++ or Java, is >> a shift operator or the end of two nested templates or generic classes?
Regular Expressions and FAs

• The lexical grammar (structure) of most programming languages can be specified with regular expressions
  – (Sometimes a little cheating is needed)
• Tokens can be recognized by a deterministic finite automaton
  – Can be either table-driven or built by hand based on lexical grammar
Regular Expressions

• Defined over some alphabet $\Sigma$
  – For programming languages, alphabet is usually ASCII or Unicode

• If $re$ is a regular expression, $L(re)$ is the language (set of strings) generated by $re$
## Fundamental REs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$re$</th>
<th>$L(re)$</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$a$</td>
<td>${ a }$</td>
<td>Singleton set, for each $a$ in $\Sigma$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\varepsilon$</td>
<td>${ \varepsilon }$</td>
<td>Empty string</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\emptyset$</td>
<td>${ }$</td>
<td>Empty language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Operations on REs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>re</th>
<th>L(re)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rs</td>
<td>L(r)L(s)</td>
<td>Concatenation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>L(r) ∪ L(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r*</td>
<td>L(r)*</td>
<td>0 or more occurrences (Kleene closure)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Precedence: * (highest), concatenation, | (lowest)
- Parentheses can be used to group REs as needed
# Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>re</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>single + character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>single ! character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>single = character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!=</td>
<td>2 character sequence &quot;!=&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xyzzy</td>
<td>5 character sequence “xyzzy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1</td>
<td>0)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1</td>
<td>0)(1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1(0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

- The basic operations generate all possible regular expressions, but there are common abbreviations used for convenience. Some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>r+</td>
<td>((rr^*))</td>
<td>1 or more occurrences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r?</td>
<td>((r \mid \varepsilon))</td>
<td>0 or 1 occurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a-z]</td>
<td>((a\mid b\mid \ldots \mid z))</td>
<td>1 character in given range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[abxyz]</td>
<td>((a\mid b\mid x\mid y\mid z))</td>
<td>1 of the given characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>re</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[abc]+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[abc]*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0-9]+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[1-9][0-9]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a-zA-Z][a-zA-Z0-9_]*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

• Many systems allow abbreviations to make writing and reading definitions or specifications easier

  name ::= re

  – Restriction: abbreviations may not be circular (recursive) either directly or indirectly (else would be non-regular)
Example

• Possible syntax for numeric constants

\[\text{digit} ::= [0-9]\]
\[\text{digits} ::= \text{digit}+\]
\[\text{number} ::= \text{digits} ( . \text{digits} )? \]
\[\quad ( [eE] (+ | -)? \text{digits} ) ?\]

• How would you describe this set in English?
• What are some examples of legal constants (strings) generated by \textit{number}?
Recognizing REs

• Finite automata can be used to recognize strings generated by regular expressions
• Can build by hand or automatically
  – Reasonably straightforward, and can be done systematically
  – Tools like Lex, Flex, JFlex et seq do this automatically, given a set of REs
Finite State Automaton

• A finite set of states
  – One marked as initial state
  – One or more marked as final states
  – States sometimes labeled or numbered
• A set of transitions from state to state
  – Each labeled with symbol from $\Sigma$, or $\varepsilon$
• Operate by reading input symbols (usually characters)
  – Transition can be taken if labeled with current symbol
  – $\varepsilon$-transition can be taken at any time
• Accept when final state reached & no more input
  – Slightly different in a scanner where the FSA is a subroutine that accepts the longest input string matching a token regular expression, starting at the current location in the input
• Reject if no transition possible, or no more input and not in final state (DFA)
Example: FSA for "cat"
DFA vs NFA

• Deterministic Finite Automata (DFA)
  – No choice of which transition to take under any condition
  – No $\epsilon$ transitions (arcs)

• Non-deterministic Finite Automata (NFA)
  – Choice of transition in at least one case
  – Accept if some way to reach a final state on given input
  – Reject if no possible way to final state
  – i.e., may need to guess right path or backtrack
FAs in Scanners

• Want DFA for speed (no backtracking)
• But conversion from regular expressions to NFA is easy
• Fortunately, there is a well-defined procedure for converting a NFA to an equivalent DFA (subset construction)
From RE to NFA: base cases

\[ \begin{align*}
  &\text{a} \\
  \end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
  &\varepsilon \\
  \end{align*} \]
$rs$
\[ r \mid s \]
$r^*$
Exercise

• Draw the NFA for: $b(at|ag) \mid bug$
From NFA to DFA

• Subset construction
  – Construct a DFA from the NFA, where each DFA state represents a set of NFA states

• Key idea
  – State of the DFA after reading some input is the set of all NFA states that could have reached after reading the same input

• Algorithm: example of a fixed-point computation

• If NFA has $n$ states, DFA has at most $2^n$ states
  – => DFA is finite, can construct in finite # steps

• Resulting DFA may have more states than needed
  – See books for construction and minimization details
Exercise

• Build DFA for b(at|ag)|bug, given the NFA
To Tokens

• A scanner is a DFA that finds the next token each time it is called
• Every “final” state of a DFA emits (returns) a token
• Tokens are the internal compiler names for the lexemes
  
  == becomes EQUAL
  ( becomes LPAREN
  while becomes WHILE
  xyzzy becomes ID(xyzzy)

• You choose the names
• Also, there may be additional data ... \r\n might count lines; all tokens might include line #
DFA => Code

• Option 1: Implement by hand using procedures
  – one procedure for each token
  – each procedure reads one character
  – choices implemented using if and switch statements

• Pros
  – straightforward to write
  – fast

• Cons
  – a fair amount of tedious work
  – may have subtle differences from the language specification
DFA => Code [continued]

• Option 1a: Like option 1, but structured as a single procedure with multiple return points
  – choices implemented using if and switch statements

• Pros
  – also straightforward to write
  – faster

• Cons
  – a fair amount of tedious work
  – may have subtle differences from the language specification
DFA => code [continued]

• Option 2: use tool to generate table driven scanner
  – Rows: states of DFA
  – Columns: input characters
  – Entries: action
    • Go to next state
    • Accept token, go to start state
    • Error

• Pros
  – Convenient
  – Exactly matches specification, if tool generated

• Cons
  – “Magic”
DFA => code [continued]

• Option 2a: use tool to generate scanner
  – Transitions embedded in the code
  – Choices use conditional statements, loops

• Pros
  – Convenient
  – Exactly matches specification, if tool generated

• Cons
  – “Magic”
  – Lots of code – big but potentially quite fast
    • Would never write something like this by hand, but can generate it easily enough
Example: DFA for hand-written scanner

• Idea: show a hand-written DFA for some typical programming language constructs
  – Then use to construct hand-written scanner

• Setting: Scanner is called whenever the parser needs a new token
  – Scanner stores current position in input
  – From there, use a DFA to recognize the longest possible input sequence that makes up a token and return that token; save updated position for next time

• Disclaimer: Example for illustration only – you’ll use tools for the course project
Scanner DFA Example (1)

0 (whitespace or comments) →

0 (end of input) → 1 (Accept EOF) →

0 (Accept LPAREN) →

0 (Accept RPAREN) →

0 (Accept SCOLON) →

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Scanner DFA Example (2)

\[ \text{Accept NEQ} \]
\[ \text{Accept NOT} \]
\[ \text{Accept LEQ} \]
\[ \text{Accept LESS} \]
Scanner DFA Example (3)
Scanner DFA Example (4)

• Strategies for handling identifiers vs keywords
  – Hand-written scanner: look up identifier-like things in table of keywords to classify (good application of perfect hashing)
  – Machine-generated scanner: generate DFA will appropriate transitions to recognize keywords
    • Lots 'o states, but efficient (no extra lookup step)
Implementing a Scanner by Hand – Token Representation

• A token is a simple, tagged structure
  public class Token {
    public int kind;       // token’s lexical class
    public int intVal;     // integer value if class = INT
    public String id;      // actual identifier if class = ID
    // lexical classes
    public static final int EOF = 0;  // “end of file” token
    public static final int ID  = 1;  // identifier, not keyword
    public static final int INT = 2;  // integer
    public static final int LPAREN = 4;
    public static final int SCOLN = 5;
    public static final int WHILE = 6;
    // etc. etc. etc. ...
  }
Simple Scanner Example

// global state and methods

static char nextch;  // next unprocessed input character

// advance to next input char
void getch() { ... }

// skip whitespace and comments
void skipWhitespace() { ... }
Scanner getToken() method

// return next input token
public Token getToken() {
    Token result;

    skipWhiteSpace();

    if (no more input) {
        result = new Token(Token.EOF); return result;
    }

    switch(nextch) {
        case '(': result = new Token(Token.LPAREN); getch(); return result;
        case ')': result = new Token(Token.RPAREN); getch(); return result;
        case ';': result = new Token(Token.SCOLON); getch(); return result;
        // etc. ...
    }

    // etc. ...
getToken() (2)

case '!': // ! or !=
    getch();
    if (nextch == '=') {
        result = new Token(Token.NEQ); getch(); return result;
    } else {
        result = new Token(Token.NOT); return result;
    }

case '<': // < or <=
    getch();
    if (nextch == '=') {
        result = new Token(Token.LEQ); getch(); return result;
    } else {
        result = new Token(Token.LESS); return result;
    }
    // etc. ...
getToken() (3)

case '0': case '1': case '2': case '3': case '4':
case '5': case '6': case '7': case '8': case '9':
   // integer constant
   String num = nextch;
   getch();
   while (nextch is a digit) {
      num = num + nextch; getch();
   }
   result = new Token(Token.INT, Integer(num).intValue());
   return result;
...

case 'a': ... case 'z':
case 'A': ... case 'Z': // id or keyword
    string s = nextch; getch();
    while (nextch is a letter, digit, or underscore) {
        s = s + nextch; getch();
    }
    if (s is a keyword) {
        result = new Token(keywordTable.getKind(s));
    } else {
        result = new Token(Token.ID, s);
    }
return result;
MiniJava Scanner Generation

• We’ll use the jflex tool to automatically create a scanner from a specification file,
• We’ll use the CUP tool to automatically create a parser from a specification file,
• Token class is shared by jflex and CUP. Lexical classes are listed in CUP’s input file and it generates the token class definition.
• Details in next week’s section
Coming Attractions

• First homework: paper exercises on regular expressions, automata, etc.
• Then: first part of the compiler assignment – the scanner
• Next topic: parsing
  – Will do LR parsing first – we need this for the project, then LL (recursive-descent) parsing, which you should also know.