CSE505: Graduate Programming Languages

Lecture 6 — Little Trusted Languages; Equivalence

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Looking back, looking forward

This is the last lecture using IMP (hooray!). Done:

- Abstract syntax
- Operational semantics (large-step and small-step)
- Semantic properties of (sets of) programs
- "Pseudo-denotational" semantics

Now:

- Packet-filter languages and other examples
- Equivalence of programs in a semantics
- Equivalence of different semantics

Next lecture: Local variables, lambda-calculus

Packet Filters

A very simple view of packet filters:

- Some bits come in off the wire
- Some application(s) want the "packet" and some do not (e.g., port number)
- For safety, only the O/S can access the wire
- For extensibility, the applications accept/reject packets

Conventional solution goes to user-space for every packet and app that wants (any) packets

Faster solution: Run app-written filters in kernel-space

What we need

Now the O/S writer is defining the packet-filter language!

Properties we wish of (untrusted) filters:

1. Do not corrupt kernel data structures
2. Terminate (within a time bound)
3. Run fast (the whole point)

Should we download some C/assembly code? (Get 1 of 3)

Should we make up a language and "hope" it has these properties?

Language-based approaches

1. Interpret a language

   + clean operational semantics, + portable, - may be slow (+ filter-specific optimizations), - unusual interface

2. Translate a language into C/assembly

   + clean denotational semantics, + employ existing optimizers, - upfront cost, - unusual interface

3. Require a conservative subset of C/assembly

   + normal interface, - too conservative w/o help

IMP has taught us about (1) and (2) — we'll get to (3)

A General Pattern

Packet filters move the code to the data rather than data to the code

General reasons: performance, security, other?

Other examples:

- Query languages
- Active networks
- Client-side web scripts (Javascript)

Equivalence motivation

- Program equivalence (we change the program):
  - code optimizer
  - code maintainer
- Semantics equivalence (we change the language):
  - interpreter optimizer
  - language designer
    - (prove properties for equivalent semantics with easier proof)

Note: Proofs may seem easy with the right semantics and lemmas

- (almost never start off with right semantics and lemmas)

Note: Small-step operational semantics often has harder proofs, but models more intesting things

What is equivalence?

Equivalence depends on what is *observable*!

- Partial I/O equivalence (if terminates, same ans)
  - **while 1 skip** equivalent to everything
  - not transitive
- Total I/O equivalence (same termination behavior, same ans)
- Total heap equivalence (same termination behavior, same heaps)
  - All (almost all?) variables have the same value
- Equivalence plus complexity bounds
  - Is $O(2^{n^n})$ really equivalent to $O(n)$?
  - Is "runs within 10ms of each other" important?
- Syntactic equivalence (perhaps with renaming)
  - Too strict to be interesting?

In PL, equivalence most often means total I/O equivalence

Program Example: Strength Reduction

Motivation: Strength reduction

- A common compiler optimization due to architecture issues

Theorem: $H\ ;\ e * 2 \Downarrow c$ if and only if $H\ ;\ e + e \Downarrow c$

Proof sketch:

- Prove separately for each direction
- Invert the assumed derivation, use hypotheses plus a little math to derive what we need
- Hmm, doesn't use induction. That's because this theorem isn't very useful...

Program Example: Nested Strength Reduction

Theorem: If e' has a subexpression of the form $e * 2$, then $H\ ;\ e' \Downarrow c'$ if and only if $H\ ;\ e'' \Downarrow c'$ where e'' is e' with $e * 2$ replaced with $e + e$

First some useful metanotation:

$$C ::= [\cdot] \mid C + e \mid e + C \mid C * e \mid e * C$$

$C[e]$ is "C with e in the hole" (inductive definition of "stapling")

Crisper statement of theorem:
$H\ ;\ C[e * 2] \Downarrow c'$ if and only if $H\ ;\ C[e + e] \Downarrow c'$

Proof sketch: By induction on structure ("syntax height") of C

- The base case ($C = [\cdot]$) follows from our previous proof
- The rest is a long, tedious, (and instructive!) induction

Proof reuse

As we cannot emphasize enough, proving is just like programming

The proof of nested strength reduction had nothing to do with $e * 2$ and $e + e$ except in the base case where we used our previous theorem

A much more useful theorem would parameterize over the base case so that we could get the "nested X" theorem for any appropriate X:

If ($H\ ;\ e_1 \Downarrow c$ if and only if $H\ ;\ e_2 \Downarrow c$),
then ($H\ ;\ C[e_1] \Downarrow c'$ if and only if $H\ ;\ C[e_2] \Downarrow c'$)

The proof is identical except the base case is "by assumption"

Small-step program equivalence

These sort of proofs also work with small-step semantics (e.g., our IMP statements), but tend to be more cumbersome, even to state.

Example: The statement-sequence operator is associative. That is,

(a) For all n, if $H\ ;\ s_1; (s_2; s_3) \ \rightarrow^n\ H'\ ;$ **skip** then there exist H'' and n' such that $H\ ;\ (s_1; s_2); s_3 \ \rightarrow^{n'}\ H''\ ;$ **skip** and $H''(ans) = H'(ans)$.

(b) If for all n there exist H' and s' such that $H\ ;\ s_1; (s_2; s_3) \ \rightarrow^n\ H'\ ;\ s'$, then for all n there exist H'' and s'' such that $H\ ;\ (s_1; s_2); s_3 \ \rightarrow^n\ H''\ ;\ s''$.

(Proof needs a much stronger induction hypothesis.)

One way to avoid it: Prove large-step and small-step *semantics* equivalent, then prove program equivalences in whichever is easier.

Language Equivalence Example

IMP w/o multiply large-step:

$$\textsc{const}\ \frac{}{H\ ;\ c \Downarrow c} \qquad \textsc{var}\ \frac{}{H\ ;\ x \Downarrow H(x)} \qquad \textsc{add}\ \frac{H\ ;\ e_1 \Downarrow c_1 \quad H\ ;\ e_2 \Downarrow c_2}{H\ ;\ e_1 + e_2 \Downarrow c_1{+}c_2}$$

IMP w/o multiply small-step:

$$\textsc{svar}\ \frac{}{H;\ x \to H(x)} \qquad \textsc{sadd}\ \frac{}{H;\ c_1 + c_2 \to c_1{+}c_2}$$

$$\textsc{sleft}\ \frac{H;\ e_1 \to e_1'}{H;\ e_1 + e_2 \to e_1' + e_2} \qquad \textsc{sright}\ \frac{H;\ e_2 \to e_2'}{H;\ e_1 + e_2 \to e_1 + e_2'}$$

Theorem: Semantics are equivalent: $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$ if and only if $H;\ e \to^* c$

Proof: We prove the two directions separately...

Proof, part 1

First assume $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$ and show $\exists n.\ H;\ e \to^n c$

Lemma (prove it!): If $H;\ e \to^n e'$, then $H;\ e_1 + e \to^n e_1 + e'$ and $H;\ e + e_2 \to^n e' + e_2$.

- Proof by induction on n
- Inductive case uses SLEFT and SRIGHT

Given the lemma, prove by induction on derivation of $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$

- CONST: Derivation with CONST implies $e = c$, and we can derive $H;\ c \to^0 c$
- VAR: Derivation with VAR implies $e = x$ for some x where $H(x) = c$, so derive $H;\ e \to^1 c$ with SVAR
- ADD: ...

Part 1, continued

First assume $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$ and show $\exists n.\ H;\ e \to^n c$

Lemma (prove it!): If $H;\ e \to^n e'$, then $H;\ e_1 + e \to^n e_1 + e'$ and $H;\ e + e_2 \to^n e' + e_2$.

Given the lemma, prove by induction on derivation of $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$

- ...
- ADD: Derivation with ADD implies $e = e_1 + e_2$, $c = c_1{+}c_2$, $H\ ;\ e_1 \Downarrow c_1$, and $H\ ;\ e_2 \Downarrow c_2$ for some e_1, e_2, c_1, c_2.
  By induction (twice), $\exists n_1, n_2$. $H;\ e_1 \to^{n_1} c_1$ and $H;\ e_2 \to^{n_2} c_2$.
  So by our lemma $H;\ e_1 + e_2 \to^{n_1} c_1 + e_2$ and $H;\ c_1 + e_2 \to^{n_2} c_1 + c_2$.
  By SADD $H;\ c_1 + c_2 \to c_1{+}c_2$.
  So $H;\ e_1 + e_2 \to^{n_1+n_2+1} c$.

Proof, part 2

Now assume $\exists n.\ H;\ e \to^n c$ and show $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$.

Proof by induction on n:

- $n = 0$: e is c and CONST lets us derive $H\ ;\ c \Downarrow c$
- $n > 0$: (Clever: break into *first* step and remaining ones)
  $\exists e'.\ H;\ e \to e'$ and $H;\ e' \to^{n-1} c$.
  By induction $H\ ;\ e' \Downarrow c$.
  So this lemma suffices: If $H;\ e \to e'$ and $H\ ;\ e' \Downarrow c$, then $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$.

Prove the lemma by induction on derivation of $H;\ e \to e'$:

- SVAR: ...
- SADD: ...
- SLEFT: ...
- SRIGHT: ...

Part 2, key lemma

Lemma: If $H;\ e \to e'$ and $H\ ;\ e' \Downarrow c$, then $H\ ;\ e \Downarrow c$.

Prove the lemma by induction on derivation of $H;\ e \to e'$:

- SVAR: Derivation with SVAR implies e is some x and $e' = H(x) = c$, so derive, by VAR, $H\ ;\ x \Downarrow H(x)$.
- SADD: Derivation with SADD implies e is some $c_1 + c_2$ and $e' = c_1{+}c_2 = c$, so derive, by ADD and two CONST, $H\ ;\ c_1 + c_2 \Downarrow c_1{+}c_2$.
- SLEFT: Derivation with SLEFT implies $e = e_1 + e_2$ and $e' = e_1' + e_2$ and $H;\ e_1 \to e_1'$ for some e_1, e_2, e_1'.
  Since $e' = e_1' + e_2$ inverting assumption $H\ ;\ e' \Downarrow c$ gives $H\ ;\ e_1' \Downarrow c_1$, $H\ ;\ e_2 \Downarrow c_2$ and $c = c_1{+}c_2$.
  Applying the induction hypothesis to $H;\ e_1 \to e_1'$ and $H\ ;\ e_1' \Downarrow c_1$ gives $H\ ;\ e_1 \Downarrow c_1$.
  So use ADD, $H\ ;\ e_1 \Downarrow c_1$, and $H\ ;\ e_2 \Downarrow c_2$ to derive $H\ ;\ e_1 + e_2 \Downarrow c_1{+}c_2$.
- SRIGHT: Analogous to SLEFT

The cool part, redux

Step through the SLEFT case more visually:

By assumption, we must have derivations that look like this:

$$\frac{H;\ e_1 \to e_1'}{H;\ e_1 + e_2 \to e_1' + e_2} \qquad \frac{H\ ;\ e_1' \Downarrow c_1 \quad H\ ;\ e_2 \Downarrow c_2}{H\ ;\ e_1' + e_2 \Downarrow c_1{+}c_2}$$

Grab the hypothesis from the left and the left hypothesis from the right and use induction to get $H\ ;\ e_1 \Downarrow c_1$.

Now go grab the one hypothesis we haven't used yet and combine it with our inductive result to derive our answer:

$$\frac{H\ ;\ e_1 \Downarrow c_1 \quad H\ ;\ e_2 \Downarrow c_2}{H\ ;\ e_1 + e_2 \Downarrow c_1{+}c_2}$$

A nice payoff

Theorem: The small-step semantics is deterministic:
if $H; e \rightarrow^* c_1$ and $H; e \rightarrow^* c_2$, then $c_1 = c_2$

Not obvious (see SLEFT and SRIGHT), nor do I know a direct proof

- Given $(((1 + 2) + (3 + 4)) + (5 + 6)) + (7 + 8)$ there are many execution sequences, which all produce 36 but with different intermediate expressions

Proof:

- Large-step evaluation is deterministic (easy induction proof)
- Small-step and and large-step are equivalent (just proved that)
- So small-step is deterministic
- Convince yourself a deterministic and a nondeterministic semantics cannot be equivalent

Conclusions

- Equivalence is a subtle concept
- Proofs "seem obvious" only when the definitions are right
- Some other language-equivalence claims:

Replace WHILE rule with

$$\frac{H \; ; e \Downarrow c \qquad c \leq 0}{H \; ; \textsf{while } e \; s \rightarrow H \; ; \textsf{skip}} \qquad \frac{H \; ; e \Downarrow c \qquad c > 0}{H \; ; \textsf{while } e \; s \rightarrow H \; ; s; \textsf{while } e \; s}$$

Equivalent to our original language

Change syntax of heap and replace ASSIGN and VAR rules with

$$\frac{}{H \; ; x := e \rightarrow H, x \mapsto e \; ; \textsf{skip}} \qquad \frac{H \; ; H(x) \Downarrow c}{H \; ; x \Downarrow c}$$

NOT equivalent to our original language