Five different things

1. Syntax: How do you write language constructs?
3. Idioms: What are typical patterns for using language features to express your computation?
4. Libraries: What facilities does the language (or a well-known project) provide "standard"? (E.g., file access, data structures)
5. Tools: What do language implementations provide to make your job easier? (E.g., REPL, debugger, code formatter, …)

- Not actually part of the language

These are 5 separate issues
- In practice, all are essential for good programmers
- Many people confuse them, but shouldn’t

Our Focus

This course focuses on semantics and idioms

- Syntax is usually uninteresting
  - A fact to learn, like "The American Civil War ended in 1865"
  - People obsess over subjective preferences
- Libraries and tools crucial, but often learn new ones "on the job"
  - We are learning semantics and how to use that knowledge to understand all software and employ appropriate idioms
  - By avoiding most libraries/tools, our languages may look “silly” but so would any language used this way

How to build bigger types

- Already know:
  - Have various base types like int bool unit char
  - Ways to build (nested) compound types: tuples, lists, options
- Coming soon: more ways to build compound types
- First: 3 most important type building blocks in any language
  - “Each of”: A t value contains values of each of t1 t2 … tn
  - “One of”: A t value contains values of one of t1 t2 … tn
  - “Self reference”: A t value can refer to other t values

Remarkable: A lot of data can be described with just these building blocks

Note: These are not the common names for these concepts

Examples

- Tuples build each-of types
  - int * bool contains an int and a bool
- Options build one-of types
  - int option contains an int or it contains no data
- Lists use all three building blocks
  - int list contains an int and another int list or it contains no data
- And of course we can nest compound types
  - ((int * int) option * (int list list)) option

Rest of this Lecture

- Another way to build each-of types in ML
  - Records: have named fields
  - Connection to tuples and idea of syntactic sugar
- A way to build and use our own one-of types in ML
  - For example, a type that contains an int or a string
  - Will lead to pattern-matching, one of ML’s coolest and strangest-to-Java-programmers features
- Later in course: How OOP does one-of types
  - Key contrast with procedural and functional programming
Records

Record values have fields (any name) holding values

\{f_1 = v_1, \ldots, f_n = v_n\}

Record types have fields (and name) holding types

\{f_1 : t_1, \ldots, f_n : t_n\}

The order of fields in a record value or type never matters
– REPL alphabetizes fields just for consistency

Building records:

\{f_1 = e_1, \ldots, f_n = e_n\}

Accessing components:

\#myfieldname e

(Evaluation rules and type-checking as expected)

Example

\{name = "Matai", id = 4 - 3\}

Evaluates to

\{id = 1, name = "Matai"\}

And has type

\{id : int, name : string\}

If some expression such as a variable x has this type, then get fields with:

\#id x \#name x

Note we did not have to declare any record types
– The same program could also make a

\{id=true,ego=false\} of type \{id:bool,ego:bool\}

By name vs. by position

• Little difference between \((4,7,9)\) and \{f=4,g=7,h=9\}
  – Tuples a little shorter
  – Records a little easier to remember “what is where”
  – Generally a matter of taste, but for many (6? 8? 12?) fields, a
    record is usually a better choice

• A common decision for a construct’s syntax is whether to refer to
  things by position (as in tuples) or by some (field) name (as
  with records)
  – A common hybrid is like with Java method arguments (and
    ML functions as used so far):
    • Caller uses position
    • Callee uses variables
  – Could totally do it differently; some languages have

The truth about tuples

Previous lecture gave tuples syntax, type-checking rules, and evaluation rules

But we could have done this instead:
– Tuple syntax is just a different way to write certain records
  – \((e_1,\ldots,e_n)\) is another way of writing \{1=e_1,\ldots,n=en\}
  – \(t_1\ldots t_n\) is another way of writing \{1:t_1,\ldots,n:tn\}
  – In other words, records with field names 1, 2, ...

In fact, this is how ML actually defines tuples
– Other than special syntax in programs and printing, they don’t exist
– You really can write \{1=4,2=7,3=9\}, but it’s bad style

Syntactic sugar

“Tuples are just syntactic sugar for records with fields named 1, 2, … n”

• Syntactic: Can describe the semantics entirely by the corresponding record syntax
• Sugar: They make the language sweeter 😊

Will see many more examples of syntactic sugar
– They simplify understanding the language
– They simplify implementing the language
Why? Because there are fewer semantics to worry about even though we have the syntactic convenience of tuples

Another example we saw: andalso and orelse vs. if then else

Datatype bindings

A “strange” (?) and totally awesome (!) way to make one-of types:
– A datatype binding

\[
\text{datatype mytype = TwoInts of int * int} \\
| \text{Str of string} \\
| \text{Pizza}
\]

• Adds a new type \text{mytype} to the environment
• Adds constructors to the environment: \text{TwoInts, Str, and Pizza}
• A constructor is (among other things), a function that makes values of the new type (or is a value of the new type):
  – \text{TwoInts : int * int -> mytype}
  – \text{Str : string -> mytype}
  – \text{Pizza : mytype}
The values we make

Any value of type mytype is made from one of the constructors
The value contains:
- A "tag" for "which constructor" (e.g., TwoInts)
- The corresponding data (e.g., (7, 9))
Examples:
- TwoInts(3+4,5+4) evaluates to TwoInts(7,9)
- Str(if true then "hi" else "bye") evaluates to Str("hi")
- Pizza is a value

Using them

So we know how to build datatype values; need to access them
There are two aspects to accessing a datatype value
1. Check what variant it is (what constructor made it)
2. Extract the data (if that variant has any)

Notice how our other one-of types used functions for this:
- null and isSome check variants
- hd, tl, and valOf extract data (raise exception on wrong variant)

ML could have done the same for datatype bindings
- For example, functions like “isStr” and “getStrData”
- Instead it did something better

Case

ML combines the two aspects of accessing a one-of value with a case expression and pattern-matching
- Pattern-matching much more general/powerful (Lecture 5)
Example:

fun f x = (* f has type mytype -> int *)
case x of
  Pizza => 3
  | TwoInts(i1,i2) => i1+i2
  | Str s => String.size s

- A multi-branch conditional to pick branch based on variant
- Extracts data and binds to variables local to that branch
- Type-checking: all branches must have same type
- Evaluation: evaluate between case ... of and the right branch

Patterns

In general the syntax is:

case e0 of
  p1 => e1
  | p2 => e2
  ...
  | pn => en

For today, each pattern is a constructor name followed by the right number of variables (i.e., C or C x or C(x,y) or …)
- Syntactically most patterns (all today) look like expressions
- But patterns are not expressions
  • We do not evaluate them
  • We see if the result of e0 matches them

Why this way is better

0. You can use pattern-matching to write your own testing and data-extractions functions if you must
   But do not do that on your homework
1. You cannot forget a case (inexhaustive pattern-match warning)
2. You cannot duplicate a case (a type-checking error)
3. You will not forget to test the variant correctly and get an exception (like hd [])
4. Pattern-matching can be generalized and made more powerful, leading to elegant and concise code