Higher-Order Programming:

Iterative computation (CTM Section 3.2)

Closures, procedural abstraction, genericity, instantiation, embedding (CTM Section 3.6.1)

Carlos Varela

RPI

September 17, 2019

Adapted with permission from:

Seif Haridi

KTH

Peter Van Roy

UCL

Iterative computation

- An iterative computation is one whose execution stack is bounded by a constant, independent of the length of the computation
- Iterative computation starts with an initial state S_0, and transforms the state in a number of steps until a final state S_{final} is reached:

$$S_0 \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow \ldots \rightarrow S_{final}$$

From a general scheme to a control abstraction (1)

fun {Iterate S_i}
    if {*IsDone* S_i} then S_i
    else S_{i+1} in
        S_{i+1} = {*Transform* S_i}
        {Iterate S_{i+1}}
    end
end

- *IsDone* and *Transform* are problem dependent

From a general scheme to a control abstraction (2)

```
fun {Iterate S IsDone Transform}
   if {IsDone S} then S
   else S1 in
      S1 = {Transform S}
      {Iterate S1 IsDone Transform}
   end
end
```

fun {Iterate S_i}
  if {*IsDone* S_i} then S_i
  else S_{i+1} in
    S_{i+1} = {*Transform* S_i}
    {Iterate S_{i+1}}
  end
end

Sqrt using the Iterate abstraction

```
fun {Sqrt X}
   fun {Improve Guess}
      (Guess + X/Guess)/2.0
   end
   fun {GoodEnough Guess}
      {Abs X - Guess*Guess}/X < 0.000001
   end
   Guess = 1.0
in
   {Iterate Guess GoodEnough Improve}
end
```

Sqrt using the control abstraction

```
fun {Sqrt X}
   {Iterate
     1.0
     fun {$ G} {Abs X - G*G}/X < 0.000001 end
     fun {$ G} (G + X/G)/2.0 end
   }
end
```

Iterate could become a linguistic abstraction

Sqrt in Haskell

```
let sqrt x = head (dropWhile (not . goodEnough) sqrtGuesses)
     where
       goodEnough guess = (abs (x – guess*guess))/x < 0.00001
       improve guess = (guess + x/guess)/2.0
       sqrtGuesses = 1:(map improve sqrtGuesses)
```

This sqrt example uses infinite lists enabled by lazy evaluation, and the map control abstraction.

Higher-order programming

- Higher-order programming = the set of programming techniques that are possible with procedure values (lexically-scoped closures)
- Basic operations
  - Procedural abstraction: creating procedure values with lexical scoping
  - Genericity: procedure values as arguments
  - Instantiation: procedure values as return values
  - Embedding: procedure values in data structures
- Higher-order programming is the foundation of component-based programming and object-oriented programming

Procedural abstraction

- Procedural abstraction is the ability to convert any statement into a procedure value
  - A procedure value is usually called a closure, or more precisely, a lexically-scoped closure
  - A procedure value is a pair: it combines the procedure code with the environment where the procedure was created (the contextual environment)
- Basic scheme:
  - Consider any statement <s>
  - Convert it into a procedure value: P = proc {$} <s> end
  - Executing {P} has exactly the same effect as executing <s>

Procedural abstraction

```
fun {AndThen B1 B2}
   if B1 then B2 else false
   end
end
```

Procedural abstraction

```
fun {AndThen B1 B2}
  if {B1} then {B2} else false
  end
end
```

A common limitation

- Most popular imperative languages (C, Pascal) do not have procedure values
- They have only half of the pair: variables can reference procedure code, but there is no contextual environment
- This means that control abstractions cannot be programmed in these languages
  - They provide a predefined set of control abstractions (for, while loops, if statement)
- Generic operations are still possible
  - They can often get by with just the procedure code. The contextual environment is often empty.
- The limitation is due to the way memory is managed in these languages
  - Part of the store is put on the stack and deallocated when the stack is deallocated
  - This is supposed to make memory management simpler for the programmer on systems that have no garbage collection
  - It means that contextual environments cannot be created, since they would be full of dangling pointers
- Object-oriented programming languages can use objects to encode procedure values by making external references (contextual environment) instance variables.

Genericity

- Replace specific entities (zero 0 and addition +) by function arguments
- The same routine can do the sum, the product, the logical or, etc.

```
fun {SumList L}
   case L
   of   nil then 0
   []   X|L2 then X+{SumList L2}
   end
end
```

⇩

```
fun {FoldR L F U}
   case L
   of   nil then U
   []   X|L2 then {F X  {FoldR L2 F U}}
   end
end
```

Instantiation

```
fun {FoldFactory F U}
    fun {FoldR L}
        case L
        of nil then U
        [] X|L2 then {F X {FoldR L2}}
        end
    end
in
    FoldR
end
```

- Instantiation is when a procedure returns a procedure value as its result
- Calling {FoldFactory fun {$ A B} A+B end 0} returns a function that behaves identically to SumList, which is an « instance » of a folding function

Embedding

- Embedding is when procedure values are put in data structures
- Embedding has many uses:
  - Modules: a module is a record that groups together a set of related operations
  - Software components: a software component is a generic function that takes a set of modules as its arguments and returns a new module. It can be seen as specifying a module in terms of the modules it needs.
  - Delayed evaluation (also called explicit lazy evaluation): build just a small part of a data structure, with functions at the extremities that can be called to build more. The consumer can control explicitly how much of the data structure is built.

Exercises

15. CTM Exercise 3.10.2 (page 230)
16. CTM Exercise 3.10.3 (page 230)
17. Develop a control abstraction for iterating over a list of elements.
18. CTM Exercise 3.10.5 (page 230)
19. Suppose you have two sorted lists. Merging is a simple method to obtain an again sorted list containing the elements from both lists. Write a `Merge` function that is generic with respect to the order relation.

Exercises

20. Instantiate the FoldFactory to create a ProductList function to multiply all the elements of a list.
21. Create an AddFactory function that takes a list of numbers and returns a list of functions that can add by those numbers, e.g. {AddFactory [1 2]} => [Inc1 Inc2] where Inc1 and Inc2 are functions to increment a number by 1 and 2 respectively, e.g., {Inc2 3} => 5.
22. Implement exercises 18-21 in both Oz and Haskell.