Programming Languages

A computer typically executes programs written in many different programming languages.

**Machine Languages**: statements are interpreted by the hardware itself
- A fixed set of instructions invoke operations implemented by the circuitry of the central processing unit (CPU)
- Operations refer to specific hardware memory addresses; no abstraction mechanisms

**High-level Languages**: statements & expressions are interpreted by another program or compiled (translated) into another language
- Provide means of abstraction such as naming, function definition, and objects
- Abstract away system details to be independent of hardware and operating system

```
from dis import dis
dis(square)

def square(x):
    return x * x
```

Python 3 Byte Code

```
LOAD_FAST                0 (x)
LOAD_FAST                0 (x)
BINARY_MULTIPLY
RETURN_VALUE
```

Metalinguistic Abstraction

A powerful form of abstraction is to define a new language that is tailored to a particular type of application or problem domain.

**Type of application**: Erlang was designed for concurrent programs. It has built-in elements for expressing concurrent communication. It is used, for example, to implement chat servers with many simultaneous connections.

**Problem domain**: The MediaWiki mark-up language was designed for generating static web pages. It has built-in elements for text formatting and cross-page linking. It is used, for example, to create Wikipedia pages.

A programming language has:
- **Syntax**: The legal statements and expressions in the language
- **Semantics**: The execution/evaluation rule for those statements and expressions

To create a new programming language, you either need a:
- **Specification**: A document describe the precise syntax and semantics of the language
- **Canonical Implementation**: An interpreter or compiler for the language

Reading Scheme Lists

A Scheme list is written as elements in parentheses:

```
(element_0 element_1 ... element_n)
```

A Scheme list can be a combination or primitive

```
(+ (* 3 (+ (* 2 4) (+ 3 5))) (+ (- 10 7) 6))
```

The task of parsing a language involves coercing a string representation of an expression to the expression itself.

(Demo)


Parsing

A Parser takes text and returns an expression

- **Text**: `(+ 1 (- 23) (* 4 5.6))`
- **Tags**: `('+', '(', '1', '(', '-', '23', ')', '(', '*', '4', '5.6', ')', ')')`
- **Expression**: `(+ 1 (- 23) (* 4 5.6))`

- **Syntax analysis**
  - **Iterative process**
  - **Checks for malformed tokens**
  - **Determines types of tokens**
  - **Processes one line at a time**

- **Semantic analysis**
  - **Language process**
  - **Balances parentheses**
  - **Returns tree structure**
  - **Processes multiple lines**
Syntactic Analysis

Syntactic analysis identifies the hierarchical structure of an expression, which may be nested:

Each call to scheme_read consumes the input tokens for exactly one expression.

Base case: symbols and numbers
Recursive call: scheme_read sub-expressions and combine them.

'(', '+', 1, '(', '-', 23, ')', '(', '*', 4, 5.6, ')', ')

Calculator Syntax

The Calculator language has primitive expressions and call expressions. (That's it!)
A primitive expression is a number:   2   -4   5.6
A call expression is a combination that begins with an operator (+, -, *, /) followed by 0 or more expressions:   (+ 1 2 3)     (/ 3 (+ 4 5))
Expressions are represented as Scheme lists (Pair instances) that encode tree structures:

Expression Tree

Expression

Calculator Semantics

The value of a calculator expression is defined recursively.

Primitive: A number evaluates to itself.
Call: A call expression evaluates to its argument values combined by an operator.
+: Sum of the arguments
*: Product of the arguments
-: If one argument, negate it. If more than one, subtract the rest from the first.
/: If one argument, invert it. If more than one, divide the rest from the first.

Expression

The Eval Function

The eval function computes the value of an expression, which is always a number.
It is a generic function that dispatches on the type of the expression (primitive or call).

Evaluation

Applying Built-in Operators

The apply function applies some operation to a (Scheme) list of argument values.
In calculator, all operations are named by built-in operators: +, -, *, /
The user interface for many programming languages is an interactive interpreter

1. Print a prompt
2. Read text input from the user
3. Parse the text input into an expression
4. Evaluate the expression
5. If any errors occur, report those errors, otherwise
6. Print the value of the expression and repeat

Raising Exceptions

Exceptions are raised within lexical analysis, syntactic analysis, eval, and apply

Example exceptions
- Lexical analysis: The token 2.1.4 raises ValueError("invalid numeral")
- Syntactic analysis: An extra | raises SyntaxError("unexpected token")
- Eval: An empty combination raises TypeError("() is not a number or call expression")
- Apply: No arguments to - raises TypeError("- requires at least 1 argument")

Handling Exceptions

An interactive interpreter prints information about each error
A well-designed interactive interpreter should not halt completely on an error, so that the user has an opportunity to try again in the current environment