Programming Languages and Compilers (CS 421)

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Based in part on slides by Mattox Beckman, as updated by Vikram Adve and Gul Agha

Recursion Example

Compute n^2 recursively using:

$$n^2 = (2 * n - 1) + (n - 1)^2$$

```
# let rec nthsq n =          (* rec for recursion *)
   match n                   (* pattern matching for cases *)
   with 0 -> 0                  (* base case *)
   | n -> (2 * n -1)            (* recursive case *)
          + nthsq (n -1);;      (* recursive call *)
val nthsq : int -> int = <fun>
# nthsq 3;;
-  : int = 9
```

Structure of recursion similar to inductive proof

Recursion and Induction

```
# let rec nthsq n = match n with 0 -> 0
      | n -> (2 * n - 1) + nthsq (n - 1) ;;
```

- Base case is the last case; it stops the computation
- Recursive call must be to arguments that are somehow smaller - must progress to base case
- **if** or **match** must contain base case
- Failure of these may cause failure of termination

Structural Recursion

- Functions on recursive datatypes (eg lists) tend to be recursive
- Recursion over recursive datatypes generally by structural recursion
  - Recursive calls made to components of structure of the same recursive type
  - Base cases of recursive types stop the recursion of the function

Structural Recursion : List Example

```
# let rec length list = match list
  with [ ] -> 0   (* Nil case *)
  | x :: xs -> 1 + length xs;;  (* Cons case *)
val length : 'a list -> int = <fun>
# length [5; 4; 3; 2];;
- : int = 4
```

- Nil case [ ] is base case
- Cons case recurses on component list xs

Forward Recursion

- In structural recursion, you split your input into components
- Forward recursion limited form of structural recursion
- In forward recursion:
  - First call function recursively on all recursive components
  - Recursive calls use only components and input agruments, no other computation
  - Build result from results of component

Forward Recursion: Examples

```
# let rec double_up list =
    match list
    with [ ] -> [ ]
       | (x :: xs) -> (x :: x :: double_up xs);;
val double_up : 'a list -> 'a list = <fun>

# let rec poor_rev list =
  match list
  with [] -> []
     | (x::xs) -> poor_rev xs @ [x];;
val poor_rev : 'a list -> 'a list = <fun>
```

Mapping Recursion

- One common form of structural recursion applies a function to each element in the structure

```
# let rec doubleList list = match list
   with [ ] -> [ ]
   | x::xs -> 2 * x :: doubleList xs;;
val doubleList : int list -> int list = <fun>
# doubleList [2;3;4];;
- : int list = [4; 6; 8]
```

Recall Map

```
# let rec map f list =
  match list
  with [] -> []
  | (h::t) -> (f h) :: (map f t);;
val map : ('a -> 'b) -> 'a list -> 'b list = <fun>
# map plus_two fib5;;
- : int list = [10; 7; 5; 4; 3; 3]
```

- Same as List.map

Mapping Recursion

- Can use the higher-order recursive map function instead of direct recursion

```
# let doubleList list =
    List.map (fun x -> 2 * x) list;;
val doubleList : int list -> int list = <fun>
# doubleList [2;3;4];;
- : int list = [4; 6; 8]
```

- Same function, but no rec

Folding Recursion

- Another common form "folds" an operation over the elements of the structure

```
# let rec multList list = match list
  with [ ] -> 1
  | x::xs -> x * multList xs;;
val multList : int list -> int = <fun>
# multList [2;4;6];;
- : int = 48
```

- Computes (2 * (4 * (6 * 1)))

Folding Recursion

- multList folds to the right
- Same as:

```
# let multList list =
    List.fold_right
    (fun p -> fun x -> x * p)
    list 1;;
val multList : int list -> int = <fun>
# multList [2;4;6];;
- : int = 48
```

Folding Functions over Lists

How are the following functions similar?

```
# let rec sumlist list = match list with
  [ ] -> 0 | x::xs -> x + sumlist xs;;
val sumlist : int list -> int = <fun>
# sumlist [2;3;4];;
- : int = 9
# let rec prodlist list = match list with
  [ ] -> 1 | x::xs -> x * prodlist xs;;
val prodlist : int list -> int = <fun>
# prodlist [2;3;4];;
- : int = 24
```

Folding

```
# let rec fold_left f a list = match list
  with [] -> a | (x :: xs) -> fold_left f (f a x) xs;;
val fold_left : ('a -> 'b -> 'a) -> 'a -> 'b list -> 'a =
  <fun>
```

fold_left f a [x_1; x_2;…;x_n] = f(…(f (f a x_1) x_2)…)x_n

```
# let rec fold_right f list b = match list
  with [ ] -> b | (x :: xs) -> f x (fold_right f xs b);;
val fold_right : ('a -> 'b -> 'b) -> 'a list -> 'b -> 'b =
  <fun>
```

fold_right f [x_1; x_2;…;x_n] b = f x_1(f x_2 (…(f x_n b)…))

Folding - Forward Recursion

```
# let sumlist list = fold_right (+) list 0;;
val sumlist : int list -> int = <fun>
# sumlist [2;3;4];;
- : int = 9
# let prodlist list = fold_right ( * ) list 1;;
val prodlist : int list -> int = <fun>
# prodlist [2;3;4];;
- : int = 24
```

Encoding Recursion with Fold

```
# let rec append list1 list2 = match list1 with
  [ ] -> list2 | x::xs -> x :: append xs list2;;
val append : 'a list -> 'a list -> 'a list = <fun>
```

Base Case | Operation | Recursive Call

```
# let append list1 list2 =
   fold_right (fun x y -> x :: y) list1 list2;;
val append : 'a list -> 'a list -> 'a list = <fun>
# append [1;2;3] [4;5;6];;
 - : int list = [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6]
```

Map from Fold

let map f list =

fold_right (fun x y -> f x :: y) list [ ];;

val map : ('a -> 'b) -> 'a list -> 'b list =
<fun>

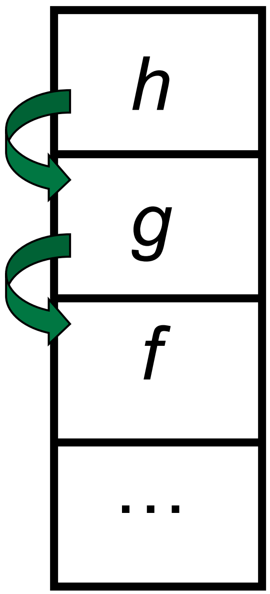
map ((+)1) [1;2;3];;

- : int list = [2; 3; 4]

- Can you write fold_right (or fold_left) with just map? How, or why not?

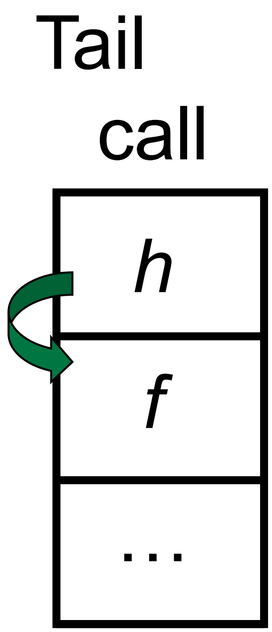
An Important Optimization

Normal call



- When a function call is made, the return address needs to be saved to the stack so we know to where to return when the call is finished
- What if *f* calls *g* and *g* calls h, but calling *h* is the last thing *g* does (a *tail call*)?

An Important Optimization



- When a function call is made, the return address needs to be saved to the stack so we know to where to return when the call is finished
- What if *f* calls *g* and *g* calls *h*, but calling *h* is the last thing g does (a *tail call*)?
- Then *h* can return directly to *f* instead of *g*

Tail Recursion

- A recursive program is tail recursive if all recursive calls are tail calls
- Tail recursive programs may be optimized to be implemented as loops, thus removing the function call overhead for the recursive calls
- Tail recursion generally requires extra "accumulator" arguments to pass partial results
  - May require an auxiliary function

Tail Recursion - Example

```
# let rec rev_aux list revlist =
  match list with [ ] -> revlist
  | x :: xs -> rev_aux xs (x::revlist);;
val rev_aux : 'a list -> 'a list -> 'a list = <fun>

# let rev list = rev_aux list [ ];;
val rev : 'a list -> 'a list = <fun>
```

- What is its running time?

Comparison

- poor_rev [1,2,3] =
- (poor_rev [2,3]) @ [1] =
- ((poor_rev [3]) @ [2]) @ [1] =
- (((poor_rev [ ]) @ [3]) @ [2]) @ [1] =
- ((([ ] @ [3]) @ [2]) @ [1]) =
- ([3] @ [2]) @ [1] =
- (3:: ([ ] @ [2])) @ [1] =
- [3,2] @ [1] =
- 3 :: ([2] @ [1]) =
- 3 :: (2:: ([ ] @ [1])) = [3, 2, 1]

Comparison

- rev [1,2,3] =
- rev_aux [1,2,3] [ ] =
- rev_aux [2,3] [1] =
- rev_aux [3] [2,1] =
- rev_aux [ ] [3,2,1] = [3,2,1]

Folding

- Can replace recursion by fold_right in any forward primitive recursive definition
  - Primitive recursive means it only recurses on immediate subcomponents of recursive data structure
- Can replace recursion by fold_left in any tail primitive recursive definition