

# Compiler Construction

## Lecture 2: Lexical Analysis I (Simple Matching Problem)

Thomas Noll

Lehrstuhl für Informatik 2  
(Software Modeling and Verification)

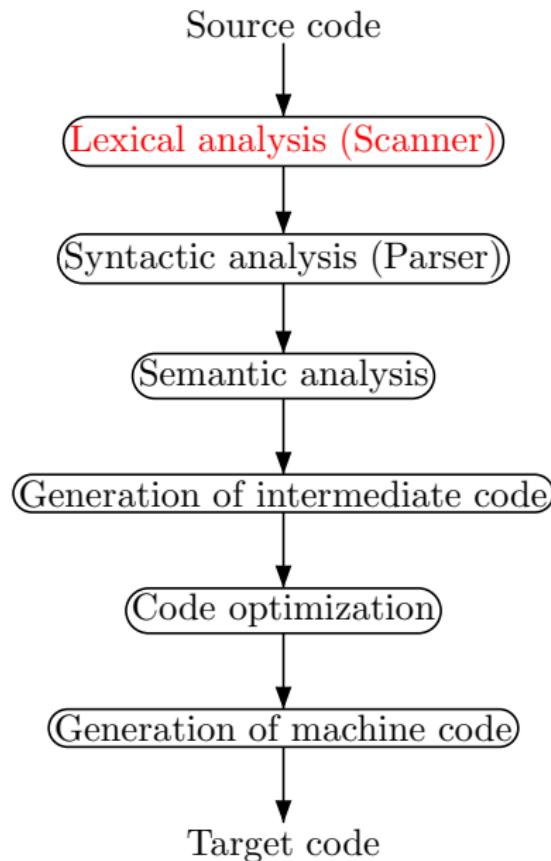
RWTH Aachen University

[noll@cs.rwth-aachen.de](mailto:noll@cs.rwth-aachen.de)

<http://www-i2.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/i2/cc08/>

Summer semester 2008

# Conceptual Structure of a Compiler



- 1 Problem Statement
- 2 Specification of Symbol Classes
- 3 The Simple Matching Problem

- **Starting point:** source program  $P$  as a **character sequence**
  - $\Omega$  (finite) **character set** (e.g., ASCII, ISO Latin-1, Unicode, ...)
  - $a, b, c, \dots \in \Omega$  **characters** (= lexical atoms)
  - $P \in \Omega^*$  **source program**  
(of course, not every  $w \in \Omega^*$  is a valid program)
- $P$  exhibits **lexical structures**:
  - natural language for keywords, identifiers, ...
  - mathematical notation for numbers, formulae, ...  
(e.g.,  $x^2 \rightsquigarrow \mathbf{x}^{**2}$ )
  - spaces, linebreaks, indentation
  - comments and compiler directives (pragmas)
- Translation of  $P$  follows its hierarchical structure (later)
- Pragmatic aspects mostly irrelevant (e.g.,  $\mathbf{x}^{**2}$  or  $\mathbf{x}^{\wedge}2$  for  $x^2$ )

# Observations

- ① Syntactic atoms (called **symbols**) are represented as sequences of lexical atoms, called **lexemes**

## First goal of lexical analysis

### Decomposition of $P$ into a **sequence of lexemes**

- ② Differences between similar lexemes are (mostly) irrelevant (e.g., identifiers do not need to be distinguished)
  - lexemes grouped into **symbol classes**  
(e.g., identifiers, numbers, ...)
  - symbol classes abstractly represented by **tokens**
  - symbols identified by additional **attributes**  
(e.g., identifier names, numerical values, ...; required for semantic analysis and code generation)  
     $\Rightarrow$  **symbol = (token, attribute)**

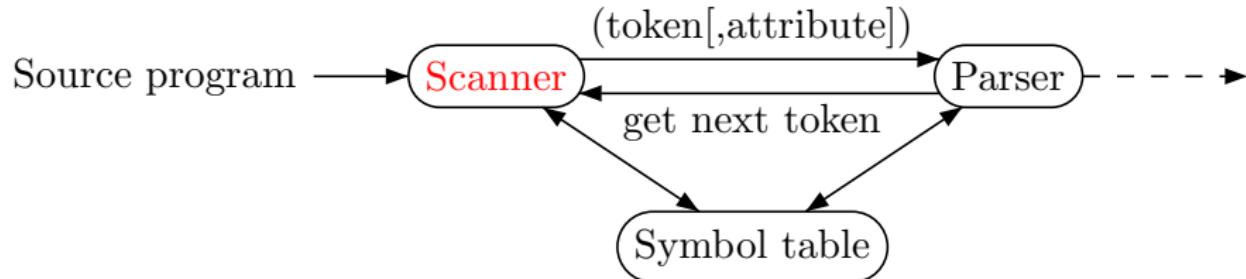
## Second goal of lexical analysis

### Transformation of a sequence of lexemes into a **sequence of symbols**

## Definition 2.1

The goal of **lexical analysis** is to decompose a source program into a sequence of lexemes and their transformation into a sequence of symbols.

The corresponding program is called a **scanner**:



**Example:**

...  $\lfloor x1 \rfloor := y2 + \lfloor 1 \rfloor ; \lfloor \dots$   
   $\Downarrow$   
... (id, p<sub>1</sub>)(gets, )(id, p<sub>2</sub>)(plus, )(int, 1)(sem, ) ...

# Important Classes of Symbols

**Identifiers:**

- for naming variables, constants, types, procedures, classes, ...
- usually a sequence of letters and digits, starting with a letter
- keywords usually forbidden; length possibly restricted

**Keywords:**

- identifiers with a predefined meaning
- for representing control structures (**while**), operators (**and**), ...

**Numerals:** certain sequences of digits, +, -, letters (for exponent and hexadecimal representation)

**Simple symbols:**

- one special character, e.g., +, \*, <, (, ;, ...)
- each makes up a symbol class (plus, ...)

**Composite symbols:**

- two or more special characters, e.g., :=, \*\*, <=, ...
- each makes up a symbol class (gets, ...)

**White spaces:**

- blanks, tabs, linebreaks, ...
- usually for separating symbols (exception: FORTRAN)

**Representation** of symbols: **symbol = (token, attribute)**

**Token:** (binary) denotation of symbol class (id, gets, plus, ...)

**Attribute:** additional information required in later compilation phases

- reference to symbol table
- value of numeral
- ...
- usually empty for singleton symbol classes

**Observation:** symbol classes are **regular sets**

⇒

- specification by **regular expressions**
- recognition by **finite automata**
- enables automatic generation of scanners (**[f]lex**)

- 1 Problem Statement
- 2 Specification of Symbol Classes
- 3 The Simple Matching Problem

## Definition 2.2 (Syntax of regular expressions)

Given some alphabet  $\Omega$ , the set of **regular expressions over  $\Omega$** ,  $RE_\Omega$ , is the least set with

- $\Lambda \in RE_\Omega$ ,
- $\Omega \subseteq RE_\Omega$ , and
- whenever  $\alpha, \beta \in RE_\Omega$ , also  $\alpha + \beta, \alpha \cdot \beta, \alpha^* \in RE_\Omega$ .

### Remarks:

- abbreviation:  $\alpha^+ := \alpha \cdot \alpha^*$
- $\alpha \cdot \beta$  often written as  $\alpha\beta$
- $*$  binds stronger than  $\cdot$ ,  $\cdot$  binds stronger than  $+$   
(i.e.,  $a + b \cdot c^* := a + (b \cdot (c^*))$ )

# Regular Expressions II

Regular expressions specify regular languages:

## Definition 2.3 (Semantics of regular expressions)

The **semantics of a regular expression** is defined by the mapping

$$[\![\cdot]\!] : RE_{\Omega} \rightarrow 2^{\Omega^*} \text{ where}$$

$$\begin{aligned} [\![\Lambda]\!] &:= \emptyset \\ [\![a]\!] &:= \{a\} \\ [\![\alpha + \beta]\!] &:= [\![\alpha]\!] \cup [\![\beta]\!] \\ [\![\alpha \cdot \beta]\!] &:= [\![\alpha]\!] \cdot [\![\beta]\!] \\ [\![\alpha^*]\!] &:= [\![\alpha]\!]^* \end{aligned}$$

**Remarks:** for formal languages  $L, M \subseteq \Omega^*$ , we have

- $L \cdot M := \{vw \mid v \in L, w \in M\}$
- $L^* := \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} L^n$  where  $L^0 := \{\varepsilon\}$  and  $L^{n+1} := L \cdot L^n$   
( $\implies L^* = \{w_1 w_2 \dots w_n \mid n \in \mathbb{N}, w_i \in L\}$  and  $\varepsilon \in L^*$ )
- $[\![\Lambda^*]\!] = [\![\Lambda]\!]^* = \emptyset^* = \{\varepsilon\}$

- 1 Problem Statement
- 2 Specification of Symbol Classes
- 3 The Simple Matching Problem

# The Simple Matching Problem I

## Problem 2.4 (Simple matching problem)

Given  $\alpha \in RE_\Omega$  and  $w \in \Omega^*$ , decide whether  $w \in \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket$  or not.

This problem can be solved using the following concept:

## Definition 2.5 (Finite automaton)

A **nondeterministic finite automaton (NFA)** is of the form

$\mathfrak{A} = \langle Q, \Omega, \delta, q_0, F \rangle$  where

- $Q$  is a finite set of **states**
- $\Omega$  denotes the **input alphabet**
- $\delta : Q \times \Omega_\varepsilon \rightarrow 2^Q$  is the **transition function** where  $\Omega_\varepsilon := \Omega \cup \{\varepsilon\}$
- $q_0 \in Q$  is the **initial state**
- $F \subseteq Q$  is the set of **final states**

The set of all NFA over  $\Omega$  is denoted by  $NFA_\Omega$ .

If  $\delta(q, \varepsilon) = \emptyset$  and  $|\delta(q, a)| = 1$  for every  $q \in Q$  and  $a \in \Omega$  (i.e.,  $\delta : Q \times \Omega \rightarrow Q$ ), then  $\mathfrak{A}$  is called **deterministic (DFA)**. Notation:  $DFA_\Omega$

# The Simple Matching Problem II

## Definition 2.6 (Acceptance condition)

Let  $\mathfrak{A} = \langle Q, \Omega, \delta, q_0, F \rangle \in NFA_{\Omega}$ .

- The  **$\varepsilon$ -closure**  $\varepsilon(T) \subseteq Q$  of a subset  $T \subseteq Q$  is defined by
  - $T \subseteq \varepsilon(T)$  and
  - if  $q \in \varepsilon(T)$ , then  $\delta(q, \varepsilon) \subseteq \varepsilon(T)$
- The **extended transition function** of  $\mathfrak{A}$ ,  $\hat{\delta} : 2^Q \times \Omega^* \rightarrow 2^Q$ , is given by
  - $\hat{\delta}(T, \varepsilon) := \varepsilon(T)$  and
  - $\hat{\delta}(T, wa) := \varepsilon \left( \bigcup_{q \in \hat{\delta}(T, w)} \delta(q, a) \right)$  ( $w \in \Omega^*$ ,  $a \in \Omega$ )
- $\mathfrak{A}$  **recognizes** the language

$$L(\mathfrak{A}) := \{w \in \Omega^* \mid \hat{\delta}(\{q_0\}, w) \cap F \neq \emptyset\}$$

## Example 2.7

NFA for  $a^*b + a^*$  (on the board)

## Remarks:

- NFA as specified in Definition 2.5 are sometimes called **NFA with  $\varepsilon$ -transitions ( $\varepsilon$ -NFA)**.
- For  $\mathfrak{A} \in DFA_{\Omega}$ , the acceptance condition yields  $\hat{\delta} : Q \times \Omega^* \rightarrow Q$  with  $\hat{\delta}(q, \varepsilon) = q$  and  $\hat{\delta}(q, wa) = \delta(\hat{\delta}(q, w), a)$ , and

$$L(\mathfrak{A}) = \{w \in \Omega^* \mid \hat{\delta}(q_0, w) \in F\}.$$

# The DFA Method

Known from *Automata Theory and Formal Languages*:

Algorithm 2.8 (DFA method)

**Input:** regular expression  $\alpha \in RE_\Omega$ , input string  $w \in \Omega^*$

**Procedure:** ① using Kleene's Theorem, construct  $\mathfrak{A}_\alpha \in NFA_\Omega$  such that  $L(\mathfrak{A}_\alpha) = \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket$

② apply powerset construction to obtain

$\mathfrak{A}'_\alpha = \langle Q', \Omega, \delta', q'_0, F' \rangle \in DFA_\Omega$  with  
 $L(\mathfrak{A}'_\alpha) = L(\mathfrak{A}_\alpha) = \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket$

③ solve the matching problem by deciding whether  
 $\hat{\delta}'(q'_0, w) \in F'$

**Output:** “yes” or “no”

Example 2.9

- ① Kleene's Theorem (on the board)
- ② Powerset construction (on the board)

① in construction phase:

- **Kleene method:** time and space  $\mathcal{O}(|\alpha|)$  ( $|\alpha| :=$  length of  $\alpha$ )
- **Powerset construction:** time and space  $\mathcal{O}(2^{|\mathfrak{A}_\alpha|}) = \mathcal{O}(2^{|\alpha|})$   
( $|\mathfrak{A}_\alpha| := \#$  of states)

② at runtime:

- **Word problem:** time  $\mathcal{O}(|w|)$  ( $|w| :=$  length of  $w$ ), space  $\mathcal{O}(1)$   
(but  $\mathcal{O}(2^{|\alpha|})$  for storing DFA)

⇒ nice runtime behavior but memory requirements too high  
(and exponential time in construction phase)

# The NFA Method

**Idea:** decrease memory requirements by **applying powerset construction at runtime**, i.e., only “to the run of  $w$  through  $\mathfrak{A}_\alpha$ ” (direct computation of  $\hat{\delta}(\{q_0\}, w)$ ; see Example 2.7)

## Algorithm 2.10 (NFA method)

**Input:** automaton  $\mathfrak{A}_\alpha = \langle Q, \Omega, \delta, q_0, F \rangle \in NFA_\Omega$ ,  
input string  $w \in \Omega^*$

**Variables:**  $T \subseteq Q$ ,  $a \in \Omega$ ,  $w' \in \Omega^*$

**Procedure:**  $T := \varepsilon(\{q_0\})$ ;  
**while**  $w \neq \varepsilon$  **do**  
     $aw' := w$ ;  
     $T := \varepsilon \left( \bigcup_{q \in T} \delta(q, a) \right)$ ;  
     $w := w'$   
**od**

**Output:** if  $T \cap F \neq \emptyset$  then “yes” else “no”

## For NFA Method at runtime:

- Space:  $\mathcal{O}(|\alpha|)$  (for storing NFA and  $T$ )
- Time:  $\mathcal{O}(|\alpha| \cdot |w|)$   
(in the loop's body,  $|T|$  states need to be considered)

⇒ trades exponential space for increase in time

## Comparison:

Method	Space	Time (for " $w \in \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket$ ?"")
DFA	$\mathcal{O}(2^{ \alpha })$	$\mathcal{O}( w )$
NFA	$\mathcal{O}( \alpha )$	$\mathcal{O}( \alpha  \cdot  w )$

## In practice:

- Exponential blowup of DFA methode usually does not occur in “real” applications ( ⇒ used in `f1ex`)
- Improvement of NFA method: caching of transitions  $\hat{\delta}(T, a)$   
⇒ combination of both methods