Compiler Design

Lecture 12: Introduction to Code Generation

Christophe Dubach

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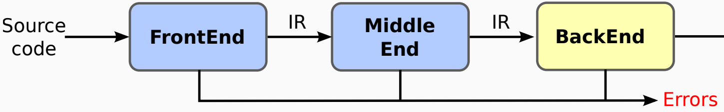
Introduction

Overview

Overview



Front-end

- Lexer
- Parser
- AST builder
- Semantic Analyser

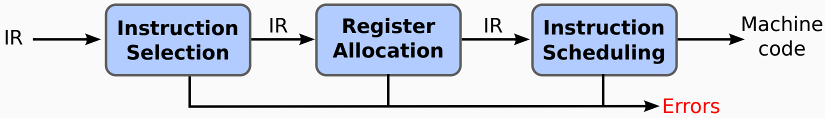
Middle-end

- Optimizations (Compiler Optimisations course)

Introduction

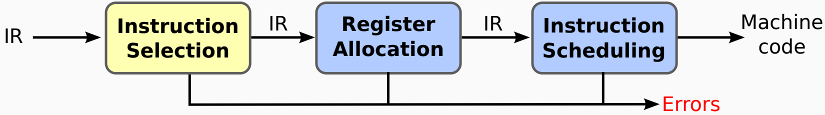
The Backend

The Back end



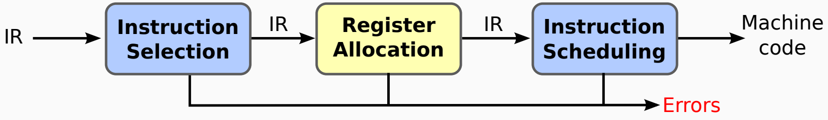
- Translate IR into target machine code
- Choose instructions to implement each IR operation
- Decide which value to keep in registers
- Ensure conformance with system interfaces
- Automation has been less successful in the back end

Instruction Selection



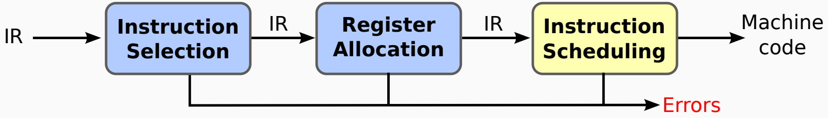
- Mapping the IR into assembly code
  (in our case AST to MIPS assembly)
- Combining operations (e.g. using addressing modes)

Register Allocation



- Deciding which value reside in a register
- Minimise amount of spilling

Instruction Scheduling



- Avoid hardware stalls and interlocks
- Reordering operations to hide latencies
- Use all functional units productively

Instruction scheduling is an optimisation

Improves quality of the code. Not strictly required.

Introduction

The Big Picture

The Big Picture

How hard are these problems?

- Instruction selection
  - Can make locally optimal choices, with automated tool
  - Global optimality is NP-Complete
- Instruction scheduling
  - Single basic block ⇒ heuristic work quickly
  - General problem, with control flow ⇒ NP-Complete
- Register allocation
  - Single basic block, no spilling ⇒ linear time
  - Whole procedure is NP-Complete (graph colouring algorithm)

These three problems are tightly coupled!

However, conventional wisdom says we lose little by solving these problems independently.

How to solve these problems?

- Instruction selection
    - Use fix instruction template or some form of pattern matching
    - Assume enough registers
- Instruction scheduling
    - Within a block, list scheduling is “close” to optimal
    - Across blocks, build framework to apply list scheduling
- Register allocation
    - Start from virtual registers & map “enough” into k registers
    - With targeting, focus on “good” priority heuristic

Approximate solutions

Will be important to define good metrics for “close”, “good”, “enough”, ...

Code Generation

Register-based machine

- Most real physical machine are register-based
- Instruction operates on registers.
- The number of architecture register available to the compiler can vary from processor to processors.

The first phase of code generation usually assumes an unlimited numbers of registers (virtual registers).

Later phases (register allocator) converts these virtual registers to the finite set of available physical architectural registers (more on this in lecture on register allocation).

Generating Code for Register-Based Machine

The key code quality issue is holding values in registers

When can a value be safely allocated to a register?

- when only one name can reference its value
- pointers, structs & arrays all cause trouble

When should a value be allocated to a register?

- when it is both safe & profitable

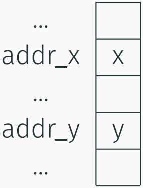
Encoding this knowledge into the IR

- assign a virtual register to anything that goes into one
- load or store the others at each reference

Register allocation is key

All this relies on a strong register allocator.

Memory



Example: x+y

```
lw   $t0, addr_x # load content of memory at addr_x into $t0
lw   $t1, addr_y # load content of memory at addr_y into $t1
add  $t2, $t0, $t1
```

Exercise

Write down the list of equivalent assembly instructions for `4+x*y`

Exercise

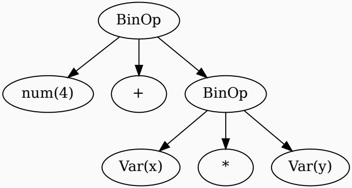
Assuming you have an instruction `addi` (`add i`mmediate), rewrite the previous example.

This illustrates the instruction selection problem
(more on this in following lectures).

Code Generator for Arithmetic Expressions

Generating Code for Arithmetic Expressions

```
4 + x * y
```



Main idea:

- Traverse AST: depth first, post-order;
- After traversing a subtree, returns the register that contains the result of evaluating the subtree.

We will assume an unlimited number of registers is available to us (virtual registers).

Two helper functions:

- `newVirtualRegister` to obtain a unique register
- `emit` to produce an instruction

The following example shows how to implement each pattern-matched case to produce code that evaluates expressions.

Expression Code Generator

Expression code generator class

```
class ExprCodeGen {

  Register visit(Expr expr) {
    return switch(expr) {
      case ... ->
      case ... ->
    }
  }
}
```

Patter-Matching expressions

IntLiteral

```
case IntLiteral it -> {
   Register resReg = newVirtualRegister();
   emit("li", resReg, it.value);
   yield resReg;
 }
```

Var

```
case Var v -> {
   Register resReg  = newVirtualRegister();
   emit("lw", resReg, v.label);
   yield resReg;
 }
```

Here we assume our variables are all `integer` and global.

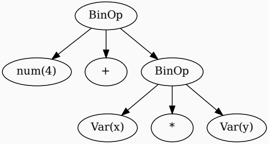
We will see how to deal with arrays/structs and stack allocated variables in another lecture.

Binary operators

```
case BinOp bo -> {
  Register lhsReg = visit(bo.lhs);
  Register rhsReg = visit(bo.rhs);
  Register resReg = newVirtualRegister();
  switch(bo.op) {
    case ADD:
      emit("add", resReg, lhsReg, rhsReg);
      break;
    case MUL:
      emit("mult", lhsReg, rhsReg);
      emit("mflo", resReg);
      break;
  }
  yield resReg;
}
```

Let see all this in action for `4+x*y`

```
case IntLiteral it -> {
  Register resReg = newVirtualRegister();
  emit("li", resReg, it.value);
  yield resReg;
}
case Var v -> {
  Register resReg = newVirtualRegister();
  emit("lw", resReg, v.label);
  yield resReg;
}
case BinOp bo -> {
  Register lhsReg = visit(bo.lhs);
  Register rhsReg = visit(bo.rhs);
  Register resReg = newVirtualRegister();
  switch(bo.op) {
    case ADD:
      emit("add", resReg, lhsReg, rhsReg);
      break;
    case MUL:
      emit("mult", lhsReg, rhsReg);
      emit("mflo", resReg);
      break;
  }
  yield resReg;
}
```



Next lecture

More about code generation:

- Logical and Relational Operators
- Control flow (if-then-else, loops, switch statement)