

Compiler Design

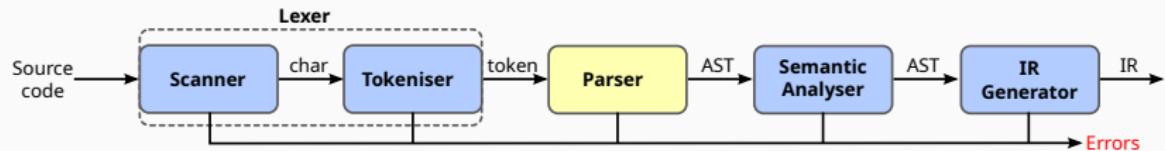
Lecture 5: Top-Down Parsing

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Winter 2026

Timestamp: 2026/01/16 11:03:00

The Parser



- Checks grammatical correctness of the stream of words/tokens produced by the lexer
- Outputs the AST (Abstract Syntax Tree) which represents the input program

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Motivation

As seen in previous lecture, regular expressions provide a compact way of defining a language.

Example:

```
register ::= 'r' ('0'|'1'|...|'9') ('0'|'1'|...|'9')*
```

In this lecture, we move beyond regular expressions and study how to write a recursive descent parser for the more general class of Context-Free Grammars (CFGs).

As a first step, we will see how any regular expression can be systematically translated into an equivalent context-free grammar, without relying on BNF notation.

Context-Free Grammar (CFG)

Definition

A Context-Free Grammar G is a quadruple (S, N, T, P) where:

- S is a start symbol
- N is a set of non-terminal symbols
- T is a set of terminal symbols or words
- P is a set of production or rewrite rules where **only a single non-terminal appears on the left-hand side** $P : N \rightarrow (N \cup T)^*$

From Regular Expression to Context-Free Grammar

- Kleene closure A^* :

replace A^* to A_{rep} in all production rules and add

$$A_{rep} = A A_{rep} \mid \epsilon$$

as a new production rule.

- Positive closure A^+ :

replace A^+ to A_{rep} in all production rules and add

$$A_{rep} = A A_{rep} | A$$

as a new production rule.

- Option $[A]$:

replace $[A]$ to A_{opt} in all production rules and add

$$A_{opt} = A \mid \epsilon$$

as a new production rule.

Example: function call

```
funcall ::= IDENT "(" [ IDENT (",," IDENT)* ] ")"
```

after removing the option:

```
funcall ::= IDENT "(" arglist ")"
arglist ::= IDENT (",," IDENT)*
          |  $\epsilon$ 
```

after removing the closure:

```
funcall ::= IDENT "(" arglist ")"
arglist ::= IDENT argrep
          |  $\epsilon$ 
argrep ::= ",," IDENT argrep
          |  $\epsilon$ 
```

Recursive-Descent Parsing

Main idea

Steps to derive a **syntactic analyser** (i.e. half a parser) for a context free grammar expressed in an EBNF style:

- Convert all the regular expressions as seen;
- Implement a function for each non-terminal symbol A.
This function recognises sentences derived from A;
- Recursion in the grammar corresponds to recursive calls of the created functions.

This technique is called recursive-descent parsing or predictive parsing.

Recursive-Descent Parsing

Writing a Parser

Parser class (pseudo-code)

```
Token currentToken;

void error(Category... expected) /* ... */

boolean accept(Category... expected) {
    return (currentToken ∈ expected);
}

void expect(Category... expected) {
    if (accept(expected))
        nextToken(); // modifies currentToken
    else
        error(expected);
}
```

Recursive-Descent Parser

```
void parseFunCall() {
    expect(IDENT);
    expect(LPAR);
    parseArgList();
    expect(RPAR);
}

void parseArgList() {
    if (accept(IDENT)) {
        nextToken();
        parseArgRep();
    }
    // else nothing to do
}

void parseArgRep() {
    if (accept(COMMA)) {
        nextToken();
        expect(IDENT);
        parseArgRep();
    }
    // else nothing to do
}
```

CFG for function call

```
funcall ::= IDENT "(" arglist ")"
arglist ::= IDENT argrep
          | ε
argrep ::= "," IDENT argrep
          | ε
```

Recursive vs Iterative approaches

Project hint: you can keep the EBNF syntax and use an iterative (rather than recursive) approach as this might simplify your code.

Example: function call

```
funcall ::= IDENT "(" [ IDENT (",", IDENT)* ] ")"
```

Recursive-Descent Parser with iterations

```
void parseFunCall() {
    expect(IDENT);
    expect(LPAR);
    if (accept(IDENT)) {
        nextToken();
        while (accept(COMMA)) {
            nextToken();
            expect(IDENT);
        }
    }
    expect(RPAR);
}
```

LL(K) grammars

LL(K) grammars

Need for lookahead

Consider the following bit of grammar

```
stmt    ::= assign ";"  
        | funcall ";"  
funcall ::= IDENT "(" arglist ")"  
assign  ::= IDENT "=" exp
```

```
void parseAssign() {  
    expect(IDENT);  
    expect(EQ);  
    parseExp();  
}  
  
void parseStmt() {  
    ???  
}
```

```
void parseFunCall() {  
    expect(IDENT);  
    expect(LPAR);  
    parseArgList();  
    expect(RPAR);  
}
```

If the parser picks the wrong production, it may have to backtrack.
Alternative is to look ahead to pick the correct production.

LL(K) grammars

LL(1) property

How much lookahead is needed?

- In general, an arbitrarily large amount

Fortunately:

- Large subclasses of CFGs can be parsed with limited lookahead
- Most programming language constructs fall in those subclasses

Among the interesting subclasses are LL(1) grammars.

LL(1)

Left-to-Right parsing;

Leftmost derivation; (i.e. apply production for leftmost non-terminal first)
only 1 current symbol required for making a decision.

Basic idea: given $A \rightarrow \alpha|\beta$, the parser should be able to choose between α and β .

First sets

For some symbol $\alpha \in N \cup T$, define $\text{First}(\alpha)$ as the set of symbols that appear first in some string that derives from α :

$$x \in \text{First}(\alpha) \text{ iif } \alpha \rightarrow \cdots \rightarrow x\gamma, \text{ for some } \gamma$$

The $LL(1)$ property: if $A \rightarrow \alpha$ and $A \rightarrow \beta$ both appear in the grammar, we would like:

$$\text{First}(\alpha) \cap \text{First}(\beta) = \emptyset$$

This would allow the parser to make the correct choice with a lookahead of exactly one symbol! (almost, see next slide!)

What about ϵ -productions (the ones that consume no symbols)?

```
G ::= C b
C ::= A
  | B
A ::= a
  |  $\epsilon$ 
B ::= b
```

input1: ab

input2: b

Both inputs are correct.

However, when seeing the **b** in the second example, the parser does not know whether to go down the **A** derivation or **B** derivation:

- In the case of **A**, we could choose the ϵ and consume nothing, and the **b** will be consumed in **G** (which is the only valid derivation);
- In the case of **B**, we could directly consume the **b**, but then we will have a problem later on and would need to **backtrack**.

Therefore, **the parser may have to backtrack** since it needs to try out different paths.

If $A \rightarrow \alpha$ and $A \rightarrow \beta$ and $\epsilon \in First(\alpha)$, then we need to ensure that $First(\beta)$ is disjoint from $Follow(\alpha)$.

$Follow(\alpha)$ is the set of all terminal symbols in the grammar that can legally appear immediately after α .

(See EaC§3.3 for details on how to build the $First$ and $Follow$ sets.)

Let's define $First^+(\alpha)$ as:

- $First(\alpha) \cup Follow(\alpha)$, if $\epsilon \in First(\alpha)$
- $First(\alpha)$ otherwise

$LL(1)$ grammar

A grammar is $LL(1)$ iff $A \rightarrow \alpha$ and $A \rightarrow \beta$ implies:

$$First^+(\alpha) \cap First^+(\beta) = \emptyset$$

Given a grammar that has the $LL(1)$ property:

- each non-terminal symbols appearing on the left hand side is recognised by a simple routine;
- the code is both simple and fast.

Predictive Parsing

Grammar with the $LL(1)$ property are called *predictive grammars* because the parser can “predict” the correct expansion at each point. Parsers that capitalise on the $LL(1)$ property are called **predictive parsers**. One kind of predictive parser is the *recursive descent parser*.

LL(K) grammars

LL(K)

Sometimes, we might need to lookahead one or more tokens.

LL(2) Grammar Example

```
stmt      ::= assign ";"  
          | funcall ";"  
funcall ::= IDENT "(" arglist ")"  
assign   ::= IDENT "=" exp
```

```
void parseStmt() {  
    if (accept(IDENT)) {  
        if (lookAhead(1) == LPAR)  
            parseFunCall();  
        else if (lookAhead(1) == EQ)  
            parseAssign();  
        else  
            error();  
    }  
    else  
        error();  
}
```

Problems with LL(k) parsers

Non-distinct first set in the grammar

Example

```
Exp     ::= Ident | Number | Ident "[" Exp "]"
Stmt    ::= Assign
          | Exp ";"
Assign  ::= Exp "=" Exp ";"
```

How do you choose between assignment or expression?

```
void parseStmt() {
    if (accept(first(Exp) ??))
        parseAssign();
    else if (accept(first(Exp) ???))
        parseExp();
}
```

What about using a lookahead?

⇒ not possible since **Exp** can be of any length.

Left factorization

Rewrite : $A \rightarrow \alpha\beta|\alpha\gamma|\dots$

Into:

$A \rightarrow \alpha A'$

$A' \rightarrow (\beta|\gamma)$

May need to apply this indirectly.

```
Stmt    ::= Assign
          | Exp ";""
Assign  ::= Exp "=" Exp ";"
```

becomes:

```
Stmt    ::= Exp Stmt'
Stmt'   ::= Assign | ;"
Assign  ::= "=" Exp ";"
```

```
void parseStmt() {
    parseExp();
    parseStmtPrime();
}
```

```
void parseStmtPrime() {
    if (accept(EQUAL))
        parseAssign();
    else
        expect(SC);
}
```

```
void parseAssign() {
    expect(EQUAL);
    parseExp();
    expect(SC);
}
```

Beware of left recursion!

Left Recursion

```
Expr ::= Expr Op Expr
       | "(" Expr ")"
       | Number
Op    ::= '+' | '*'
```

```
void parseExpr() {
    if (accept(LPAR, DIGIT))
        parseExpr();
    parseOp();
    parseExpr();
    else if (accept(LPAR)) {
        expect(LPAR);
        parseExpr();
        expect(RPAR);
    }
    else if (accept(DIGIT))
        parseNumber();
}
```

Example input: 1+1
Infinite recursion!

Removing Left Recursion

You can use the following rule to remove direct left recursion:

$$A \rightarrow A\alpha_1 | A\alpha_2 | \dots | A\alpha_m | \beta_1 | \beta_2 | \dots | \beta_n$$

where β_i does not start with an A and $\alpha_i \neq \varepsilon$

can be rewritten into:

$$A \rightarrow \beta_1 A' | \beta_2 A' | \dots | \beta_n A'$$

$$A' \rightarrow \alpha_1 A' | \alpha_2 A' | \dots | \alpha_m A' | \varepsilon$$

Hint

Use this to deal with binary operators, **arrayaccess** and **fieldaccess** in the project

Left recursive grammar

```
Expr ::= Expr Op Expr
      | "(" Expr ")"
      | Number
Op    ::= '+' | '*'
```

Equivalent non-left recursive grammar

```
Expr  ::= "(" Expr ")" Expr'
      | Number Expr'
Expr' ::= Op Expr Expr'
      | ε
Op    ::= "+" | '*'
```

```
void parseExpr() {
    if (accept(LPAREN)) {
        expect(LPAREN);
        parseExpr();
        expect(RPAREN);
        parseExprPrime();
    }
    else if (accept(DIGIT)) {
        parseNumber();
        parseExprPrime();
    }
    else
        expect(LPAREN, DIGIT);
}

void parseExprPrime() {
    if (accept(PLUS, TIMES)) {
        parseOp();
        parseExpr();
        parseExprPrime();
    }
}
```

All is good now!

Recap

To write a recursive descent parser, follow these steps:

1. Express the language syntax as an LL(k) CFG;
2. Left factorize the grammar if necessary;
3. Remove left recursion from the grammar if present;
4. Write the recursive parser using at most k lookaheads.

Your parser will never have to backtrack!

⇒ $O(N)$ time complexity, hurray!

Next lecture

- Bottom-up parsing