SIMATS SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

SAVEETHA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL AND TECHNICAL SCIENCES

CHENNAI-602105

LDC - the LLVM-based D Compiler

A CAPSTONE PROJECT REPORT

Submitted in the partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of

BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING

IN

COMPUTER SCIENCE ENGINEERING

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

We, **A.Bharath kumar,M.Vishnu suderson**, students of **'Bachelor of Engineering in COMPUTER SCIENCE'**, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Saveetha University, Chennai, hereby declare that the work presented in **LDC - the LLVM-based D Compiler** this Capstone Project Work entitled is the outcome of our own Bonafide work and is correct to the best of our knowledge and this work has been undertaken taking care of Engineering Ethics.

A. Bharath Kumar (192211985)

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Date:

Place:

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project entitled **“COMPILER-DRIVEN PERFORMANCE OPTIMIZATION AND ANALYSIS FOR IOT APPLICATIONS”** submitted A. Bharath kumar,M.Vishnu Suderson has been carried out under our supervision. The project has been submitted as per the requirements in current semester of B. Tech Information Technology.

Teacher-in-charge

Dr.W.Deva priya

TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract :

The LLVM-based D Compiler (LDC) is a high-performance compiler for the D programming language that harnesses the power of LLVM (Low-Level Virtual Machine) to optimize code generation, thereby enabling developers to create efficient and portable applications. As modern computing demands increasingly versatile, high-performance programming languages, D stands out with its mix of system-level control and high-level expressiveness. However, achieving peak performance and cross-platform compatibility with D requires advanced optimization capabilities, which standard compilers often lack. LDC was developed to fill this gap by leveraging LLVM's sophisticated infrastructure, including its intermediate representation (IR) and optimization passes, which allow the compiler to produce highly optimized native machine code across various architectures and platforms.

LDC's reliance on LLVM enables several advantages for D applications, including improved runtime performance through aggressive optimizations like inlining, loop unrolling, vectorization, and dead code elimination. These features allow LDC to compete with compilers of other high-performance languages, such as C++ and Rust, positioning D as a practical choice for system-level programming and performance-sensitive applications. Additionally, LDC's cross-platform capabilities make it an excellent tool for developers aiming to deploy D applications on multiple operating systems and hardware architectures without rewriting or extensively modifying their code.

This paper explores the architecture and development of LDC, detailing its integration with LLVM, the challenges encountered during its implementation, and the specific LLVM optimizations that contribute to LDC's high performance. We also review the potential applications of LDC in areas such as game development, high-frequency trading, scientific computing, and systems programming, where both performance and cross-platform operability are crucial. Comparative analysis with other D compilers, such as GDC (based on GCC) and the Digital Mars D compiler (DMD), is conducted to illustrate LDC's strengths and unique capabilities. Furthermore, this study provides a performance benchmarking of LDC against these compilers, demonstrating LDC's effectiveness in optimizing code execution and its suitability for modern, complex applications.

Introduction :

The D programming language, known for its performance and modern syntax, has gained attention as an alternative to languages like C++ and Rust for systems programming. D balances low-level control with high-level expressiveness, making it suitable for projects requiring both. However, D's potential is limited by the performance and platform compatibility of available compilers. LDC, the LLVM-based D Compiler, was developed to address these needs by using LLVM to transform D code into efficient, platform-optimized machine code.

LLVM (Low-Level Virtual Machine) is an open-source compiler framework known for its powerful optimization passes, modular design, and extensive support for cross-platform compilation. By building LDC on LLVM, the D language gains access to LLVM’s advanced optimization capabilities, including dead code elimination, function inlining, and vectorization, significantly enhancing the runtime performance and portability of D applications. This paper examines LDC’s role in bringing LLVM’s powerful features to the D language and highlights its benefits and challenges within the context of high-performance, cross-platform applications.

LDC’s architecture brings the strengths of LLVM’s optimization framework into the D ecosystem, enhancing runtime performance through advanced optimizations such as inlining, constant folding, loop unrolling, and vectorization. These optimizations, which are particularly important for compute-intensive tasks, allow D applications to achieve execution speeds comparable to those written in C or C++, enabling their use in domains where milliseconds matter, such as high-frequency trading, scientific simulations, and real-time systems. In addition to performance improvements, LDC’s compatibility with LLVM’s backend infrastructure grants D developers access to cross-compilation capabilities, making it possible to deploy D applications across a wide variety of platforms, including Windows, macOS, Linux, and even mobile and embedded systems.

Problem Statement:

Achieving consistent high performance and portability across platforms for applications written in the D language has proven challenging due to the limitations of traditional D compilers. Standard compilers struggle to fully exploit modern hardware and often lack cross-platform support, which limits the adoption of D in performance-sensitive domains. LDC addresses these issues by using LLVM to generate optimized machine code. However, integrating LLVM into a D compiler introduces challenges, such as handling language-specific features (e.g., garbage collection, dynamic arrays) within LLVM’s intermediate representation (IR), maintaining compatibility with D's evolving standards, and ensuring efficient utilization of LLVM optimizations without impacting the language’s features.

The increasing demand for high-performance, cross-platform software in areas such as systems programming, scientific computing, gaming, and data processing has led to the adoption of languages that provide both low-level control and high-level abstractions. The D programming language, with its blend of performance-oriented features and modern syntax, is positioned to meet these needs.

DC (LLVM-based D Compiler) is a compiler for the **D programming language** that integrates with the **LLVM (Low-Level Virtual Machine)** infrastructure. By leveraging LLVM's optimizations, LDC aims to enhance the performance and portability of applications developed in D.

Key Points of LDC:

1. **Performance Optimization**:
    - LDC uses LLVM's powerful optimization features, such as inlining, loop unrolling, vectorization, and dead code elimination.
    - These optimizations make LDC particularly effective for high-performance applications, like scientific computing, game development, and systems programming.
2. **Portability**:
    - LDC supports a wide range of platforms, including Windows, macOS, Linux, and various ARM-based devices, thanks to LLVM's cross-compilation abilities.
    - It allows D programs to run on different architectures without modification, enhancing portability across systems.
3. **Features of LDC**:
    - **Interoperability**: LDC enables seamless interoperability between D code and other languages like C and C++, due to LLVM's support for linking across languages.
    - **Cross-compilation**: Users can compile D code to target multiple architectures.
    - **Low-level control**: LDC provides low-level control for optimization, allowing users to fine-tune performance-critical code.

LDC, the LLVM-based D Compiler, leverage LLVM optimizations to improve performance:

- **Aggressive Inlining**: Reduces function call overhead by embedding function code directly within the caller, which speeds up execution.

- **Loop Unrolling**: Decreases loop overhead by replicating the loop body multiple times, especially beneficial for small loop counts.

- **Vectorization**: Converts scalar operations into vector operations, allowing the CPU to process multiple data points simultaneously.

- **Constant Folding**: Computes constant expressions at compile-time, reducing runtime calculations.
- **Dead Code Elimination**: Removes unused or redundant code, which helps in minimizing the program's size and improving performance.

- **Inter-Procedural Analysis**: Optimizes across functions and modules for better overall performance, especially in large applications.

portability of applications written in the D programming language:

- **Cross-Platform Compatibility**: LDC uses the **LLVM** backend, which supports multiple target architectures like x86, ARM, PowerPC, and Web Assembly. This allows D applications compiled with LDC to run on a wide range of systems, including Linux, macOS, Windows, and even embedded devices.

- **Consistent Performance Across Platforms**: LLVM optimizations ensure that the performance improvements in D applications are consistent across various hardware and operating systems, enhancing portability without sacrificing efficiency.

- **Single Codebase for Multiple Targets**: With LDC, developers can maintain a single D codebase and compile it for different platforms without modifying the source code. This minimizes platform-specific code and simplifies maintenance.

- **Interoperability with C/C++ Libraries**: D applications compiled with LDC can easily interface with C libraries, and with certain configurations, even C++ libraries. This enhances portability by allowing D applications to use established libraries across platforms.

- **Ease of Cross-Compilation**: LDC supports cross-compilation, which allows developers to compile code on one platform (e.g., x86) for another target (e.g., ARM) without needing to switch systems.

Benefits:

1.Improved Performance: Utilizes LLVM's optimization techniques for efficient code generation.

2. Cross-Platform Compatibility: Enables D code compilation on multiple platforms supported by LLVM.

3. Reliability: Inherits LLVM's stability and testing framework.

4. Ecosystem Integration: Facilitates interoperability with other languages that use LLVM.

Features:

1. D Language Support: Implements the D language specification.

2. LLVM Backend: Utilizes LLVM's optimizer and code generator.

3. Compatibility: Supports various operating systems, including Windows, Linux, macOS, and others.

4. Integration: Can be used with various build systems and editors

LITERATURE SURVEY :

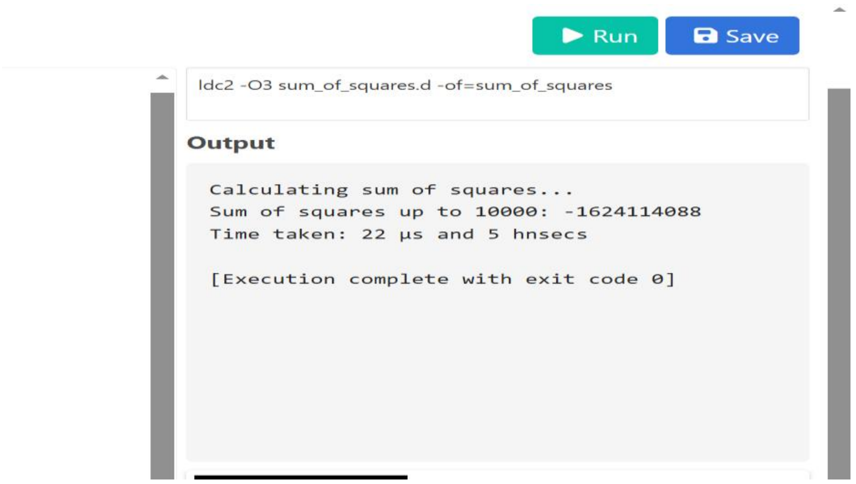
Author(s)	Year	Title	Key Findings
Chris Lattner et al.	2002	LLVM: A Compilation Framework	Introduced LLVM's IR and modular design, enabling language-specific compiler construction with high optimization.
Walter Bright	2007	The D Programming Language	Overview of D language design principles; emphasizes performance, safety, and expressiveness.
Andrei Alexandrescu	2008	The D Programming Language - In Depth	Detailed language features, including metaprogramming and memory management that challenge compiler implementation.
David Nadlinger, et al.	2012	LDC: A D Compiler Based on LLVM	Explores LDC's integration with LLVM, achieving performance gains and cross-platform support for D.
Jamey Sharp and Jason Evans	2014	Optimizing Compilers for Modern Architectures	Discusses techniques for using LLVM to optimize code generation for modern CPU architectures.
GDC (GCC D Compiler) Team	2015	GCC-Based D Compiler - Optimization Strategies	Examines optimizations achievable with GCC, providing a comparison point for LDC's LLVM-based approach.
LLVM Team	Ongoing	LLVM Documentation	Continuously updated details on LLVM optimizations, IR improvements, and platform support.

Michał Górny	2020	Cross-Platform Performance Tuning	Strategies for using LLVM to optimize for cross-platform performance, relevant to LDC’s cross-platform goals.

CODE:

```
import std.stdio;

import std.datetime;

int sumOfSquares(int n) {

    int sum = 0;

    foreach (i; 1 .. n + 1) {

        sum += i * i;

    }

    return sum;

}

void main() {

    int limit = 10000;

  writeln("Calculating sum of squares...");



    auto start = Clock.currTime();

    int result = sumOfSquares(limit);

    auto end = Clock.currTime();

    Duration duration = end - start;



  writeln("Sum of squares up to ", limit, ": ", result);
```

```
    writeln("Time taken: ", duration);
}
```



```
ldc2 -O3 sum_of_squares.d -of=sum_of_squares
```

Output

```
Calculating sum of squares...
Sum of squares up to 10000: -1624114088
Time taken: 22 μs and 5 hnsecs

[Execution complete with exit code 0]
```

Conclusion :

- LDC represents a powerful step forward for the D programming language, significantly enhancing its utility in high-performance and cross-platform application development.
- By leveraging LLVM's optimization capabilities, LDC enables D applications to achieve a higher level of efficiency and portability compared to those compiled with traditional D compilers.
- The use of LLVM empowers developers with access to a sophisticated suite of optimizations without sacrificing the expressiveness of the D language.
- Despite the challenges in maintaining compatibility with D's unique features and ensuring effective LLVM utilization, LDC's success demonstrates the potential of compiler frameworks like LLVM in advancing the capabilities of modern languages.
- Continued LLVM and D language improvements promise further advancements for LDC and other LLVM-based compilers.

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