The Coral Language Specification

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Preface

Coral is a Ruby-like programming language which enhances advanced object-oriented programming with elements of functional programming. Every value is an object, in this sense it is a pure object-oriented language. Object blueprints are described by classes. Classes can be composed in multiple ways – classic inheritance and/or mixin composition, along with prototype-oriented inheritance.

Coral is also a functional language in the sense that every function is also an object. Therefore, function definitions can be nested and higher-order functions are supported out-of-the-box. Coral also has a limited support for pattern matching, which can emulate the algebraic types used in other functional languages.

Coral has been developed from 2012 in a home environment out of pure enthusiasm for programming and out of a desire for a truly versatile language. This document is a work in progress and will stay that way forever. It acts as a reference for the language definition and some core library classes.

Some of the languages that had major influence on the development of Coral, including syntax and behavior patterns, are Ruby, Ada, Scala, Java, C# and F#. Coral tries to inherit their good parts and put them together in its own way.

Chapter 1

Lexical Syntax

Coral programs are written using the Unicode character set; Unicode supplementary characters are supported as well. Coral programs are preferably encoded with the UTF-8 character encoding. While every Unicode character is supported, usage of Unicode escapes is encouraged, since fonts that IDEs might use may not support the full Unicode character set.

1.1 Identifiers

Syntax:

```
simple_id   ::= lower [id_rest]
variable_id ::= simple_id | '_'
constant_id ::= upper [id_rest]
function_id ::= simple_id [id_rest_ext]
id_rest     ::= {letter | digit | '_'}
id_rest_mid ::= id_rest [('/' | '+' | '-') id_rest]
id_rest_ext ::= id_rest [id_rest_mid] ['?' | '!' | '=']
```

There are three kinds of identifiers.

First, *variable identifiers*, which are simply a lower-case letter followed by arbitrary sequence of letters (any-case), digits and underscores, or just one underscore (which has special meaning).

Second, *constant identifiers*, which are just like variable identifiers, but starting with an upper-case letter and never just an underscore.

And third, *function identifiers*, which are the most complicated ones. They can start as a variable identifier, then optionally followed by one of "/", "+" and "-", and then optionally ended with "?" or "!".

Coral programs are parsed greedily, so that a longest match rule applies. Letters from the syntax may be any Unicode letters, but English alphabet letters are recommended, along with English names.

1.2 Keywords

A set of identifiers is reserved for language features instead of for user identifiers. However, unlike in most other languages, keywords are not being recognized inside of paths, except for a few specific cases.

The following names are the reserved words.

alias	**annotation**	**as**	**begin**	**bitfield**
break	**case**	**cast**	**catch**	**class**
clone	**constant**	**constructor**	**declare**	**def**
destructor	**do**	**else**	**elsif**	**end**
ensure	**enum**	**for**	**for-some**	**function**
goto	**if**	**implements**	**in**	**include**
interface	**is**	**let**	**loop**	**match**
memoize	**message**	**method**	**mixin**	**module**
native	**next**	**nil**	**no**	**of**

opaque	**operator**	**out**	**property**	**protocol**
raise	**range**	**record**	**redo**	**refine**
rescue	**retry**	**return**	**self**	**skip**
struct	**super**	**template**	**test**	**then**
this	**throw**	**transparent**	**type**	**undef**
unless	**until**	**union**	**unit-of-measure**	
use	**val**	**var**	**void**	**yes**
when	**while**	**with**	**yield**	

Not every reserved word is a keyword in every context, this behavior will be further explained. For example, the bitfield reserved word is only recognized as a keyword inside an enumeration definition context, in a specific place. Every reserved word may be used as a function identifier, with a little workaround when used with an implicit receiver.

1.3 Newline Characters

Syntax:

```
semi ::= nl {nl} | ';'
```

Coral is a line-oriented language, in which statements are expressions and may be terminated by newlines, as well as by semi-colon operator. A newline in a Coral source file is treated as the special separator token `nl` if the following criterion is satisfied:

1. The token immediately preceding the newline can terminate an expression.

Since Coral may be interpreted in a REPL[1] fashion, there are no other suitable criteria. Such a token that can terminate an expression is, for instance, not a binary operator or a message sending operator, which both require further tokens to create an expression. Keywords that expect any following tokens also can not terminate expressions. Coral interpreters and compilers do not look-ahead beyond newlines.

If the token immediately preceding the newline can not terminate an expression and is followed by more than one newline, Coral still sees that as only a one significant newline, to prevent any confusion.

Keywords that can terminate an expression are: **`break`**, **`end`**, **`opaque`**, **`native`**, **`next`**, **`nil`**, **`no`**, **`redo`**, **`retry`**, **`return`**, **`self`**, **`skip`**, **`super`**, **`this`**, **`transparent`**, **`void`**, **`yes`**, **`yield`**.

[1] Read-Eval-Print Loop

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