

# Compilers

## A C-to-P-Compiler

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### Abstract

For the project of the Compilers-course you will develop, in groups of 2 students (or alone, though this will make the assignment obviously more challenging), a compiler capable of translating a program written in a subset of C towards instructions for the P stack machine. The compiler must be written in Python. From the large gamma of parser/AST generators[5, 17] you will use the Java-based ANTLR tool. This tool converts a declarative lexer and parser specification (*e.g.*, [8] and [9]) into Python code capable of constructing an explicit abstract syntax tree (AST) from a given C source file. The declarative parser specification consists of a grammar of the source language (C). The tree, which should be serializable, should be traversed a number of times and Python code should be added in order to check input programs for semantic validity, apply optimizations and generate P code.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Goal

In this project you integrate the compiler techniques from theory classes to a functioning compiler for a simple language. In this process, you acquire practical insight on the workings of a compiler, and you learn how parser generator tools such as ANTLR can be of assistance.

## 2 Assignment

Invoking the “build” command in your base dir should result in the generation of necessary C compiler classes including a Python script named `c2p.py`. This script, when invoked with `python c2p.py c_prog p_prog`, will compile the C grammar(s) and start the compilation of an input C program `c_prog` into a P

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<sup>1</sup>Based on Project descriptions by Pieter Van Gorp and by Naomi Christis.

code file named `p_prog`. Additionally, provide a “test” command that generates the necessary C compiler classes and subsequently executes all tests. Your commands should be simple, cross-platform scripts, that can make use of commands “java”, “python” and/or “python3” with expected behaviour.

## 2.1 The Source Language: a C subset

Since support for the full ANSI C [3] specification is unrealistic for the project, the assignment is limited to a subset of the language, based on Small-C [4], a language slightly smaller than what we require, but a useful starting point. In this section, we enumerate the features your compiler should support in order to pass the course and possibly earn extra grades. You are allowed to suggest extra features yourself. Inspiration can be found in Stroustrups appendices [13].

1. (mandatory) Types.  
Minimally, there should be support for the primitive data types *char*, *float*, *int*, and *pointer* types.
2. (mandatory) Import.  
The import of *stdio* should be supported (`#include <stdio.h>`). Furthermore, only the functions `int printf(char *format, ...)` and `int scanf(const char *format, ...)` must be supported, as defined in [11]: the format string allows interpretation of sequences of the form `%[width][code]` (width only in case of output). Provide support for at least for the type codes *d*, *i*, *s* and *c*. You may consider the *char\** types to be char arrays. Flags and modifiers, as described in [14], do not need to be supported. The behavior of *scanf* is well documented in the man pages [15, 10].
3. (mandatory) Reserved words.  
Minimally *if*, *else*, *return* and *while* must be supported, next to the types *char*, *int*, *float* and *void*.
  - (a) (optional) *for*.
  - (b) (optional) *const*.
  - (c) (optional) *break*.
  - (d) (optional) *continue*.

If you want to go beyond these, a full list can be found in [2, 16].

4. (mandatory) Local and global variables.
5. (mandatory) Comments.  
Support for single line comments.
6. (mandatory) Functions.  
This feature is mandatory and entails the definition and calling of functions and procedures, including support for passing parameters of basic

types by value as well as by reference (pointers). Moreover, consistency of a return statement with the type of the enclosing function must be checked. You should also verify consistency between forward declarations and function definition signatures.

- (a) (optional) Check whether all paths in a function body end with a return statement (not required for procedures that return void).

7. (mandatory) Arrays.

Array variables should be supported, as well as operations on individual array elements. Mind the correct use of dimensions and indices. Support for 1-dimensional static arrays is a mandatory feature; support for multi-dimensional arrays is optional, as well as dynamic arrays and assignments of complete arrays or array rows

- (a) (optional) multi-dimensional arrays.

- i. (optional) assignments of complete arrays or array rows in case of multi-dimensional arrays.

- (b) (optional) dynamic arrays.

8. (optional) Conversions. As a first extension you can support implicit conversions. Consider the following order on the basic types:

`float isRicherThan int isRicherThan char`

Implicit conversions of a richer to a poorer type (e.g. assignment of an *int* to a *char* variable) should cause a warning indicating possible loss of information. Another extension could be support for explicit casts (i.e. the cast operator). This enables the programmer to indicate he is aware of possible information loss. Hence the compiler should not yield a warning anymore.

## 2.2 Error Analysis

The compiler is allowed to stop when it encounters a syntax error. An indication of the location of the syntax error should be displayed, but diagnostic information about the type of error is optional (and non-trivial). For semantical errors, it is necessary to output more specific information about the encountered error. For example, for usage of a variable of the wrong type, you might output: “[Error ] line 54, position 13: variable x has type y while it should be z”. When in doubt, the Gnu C Compiler [6] with options *ansi* and *pedantic* is the reference.

## 2.3 Target Language: P

This language is the machine language of the virtual P stack machine from the course material, augmented with input, output and halt instructions. Documentation on this stack machine, as well as executables, can be found on the compilers website [1].

Remarks for code generation from C to P:

- Initialization of variables without initializer. By default, initialize variables without initializer to 0. This is also possible for char. Obviously this has a negative effect on performance, especially with arrays, which is why initialization is usually performed dynamically in a loop. Hence, it is possible, as optional optimization, not to implement default initialization of array elements and generate a warning when an array is read from before its elements have been initialized. Note that a warning should be generated for variables which are initialized with themselves.
- `scanf` and strings. For a `scanf("%s", ...)` statement, generate a loop of *in c* instructions. Exit the loop upon reading the escape character (ascii code 27).

## 2.4 Optimisations

Apart from correctness, some attention can be paid to the performance of your compiler, e.g. the runtime performance of the generated stack machine program, or the size of your target code in terms of primitive P instructions. Through static evaluation of constants, you can already obtain a large speedup. Apart from that, you might implement diverse “peephole optimisations”. Such optimisations are optional; if you add any, do remember to carefully document which optimisations you developed and elaborate on the rationale.

## 2.5 Reference

If you want to compare certain properties (output, performance, ...) of your compiler to an existing compiler, the reference is the Gnu C Compiler [6] with options `ansi` and `pedantic`. When in doubt over the behavior of a piece of code (syntax error, semantical error, correct code, ...), GCC 4.6.2 is the reference. Apart from that, you can consult the ISO and IEC standards [7], although only with regards to the basic requirements.

## 3 Tools

The framework of your compiler is generated by specialized tools:

- In order to convert your grammar to parsing code, you use ANTLR [12]. ANTLR has got several advantages compared to the more classic Lex/Yacc tools. On the one hand, your grammar specifications are shorter. On the other hand, the generated Python code is relatively readable.
- CAUTION: you should construct an **explicit** AST from the parse tree generated by ANTLR, and it should be serializable such that it can be saved to file using the `c2p` option `-saveast`.
- DO NOT edit generated files. Import and extend classes instead.

Make sure your compiler is platform independent. In other words, take care to avoid absolute file paths in your source code. Moreover, your compilation and test process should be controlled by the “test” script.

## 4 Deadlines and Evaluation

### Evaluation:

To fully test each group members understanding of their compiler, evaluations will take place **individually**.

### Deadlines:

The following deadlines are strict:

- By **25 March 2016** you should send an e-mail with the members of your group (usually 2 people, recommended).
- By **29 april 2016**, you should be able to demonstrate that your compiler is capable of detecting lexical and syntactic errors, as well as constructing an AST from a valid input program, and your compiler will have to detect and report semantical errors. The grammar file, AST classes and symbol tables should be completed and in use.
  - Make sure your compiler has been thoroughly tested on a number of C files. Describe briefly (in the README file) which input files test which constructions.
  - You should be able to demonstrate that you understand the relations between the different rules.
  - You should understand the role of a symbol table. Make sure you can indicate which data structure you will use and how this relates to the AST structure.
  - Show that every rule instantiates an AST class.
  - Show which rules fill the symbol table and which rules read from it.
- By **10 June 2016**, the final version of your project should be submitted. The semantical analysis should be complete now, and code generation should be working. Indicate, in the README file, which optimizations you chose to implement.

No solutions will be accepted via e-mail; only timely submissions posted on BlackBoard will be accepted and assessed.

### 4.1 Groups

The members of your group should be reported by e-mail. Mention the names and student numbers of the group members. Students are graded based on the intermediary presentations as well as the exam. Each student should demonstrate **individually** to fully understand the software of the group and be able to identify :

- the cause of possible errors.
- which classes are involved in the implementation of new functionality.

## 4.2 Intermediary Evaluation

You will have to give a small demonstration (individually). This will only take about 10 minutes of your time and a power-point is therefore not needed. Cover the following points:

- Demo:
  - Demonstrate, by means of a couple of C examples, that the required syntactic and semantical errors can be detected and reported.
  - Explain which extras your compiler is capable of.
  - Run the C examples from blackboard (will be provided) and explain the results.
- Architecture:
  - Which are the most important components of your compiler? Show some fragments of your grammar, show the documentation.
  - How does everything work together in order to compile a program? Discuss the use of the symbol table.
  - Demonstrate that you master your compiler sufficiently in order to fix bugs and add new features. Recall that work submitted for grading must ultimately be your **own work**, reflecting your personal learning curve and performance. Cheating is a serious academic offense; we do not tolerate cheating, nor assisting others to do so.

## 4.3 Reporting

At each evaluation point, a version of your compiler should be submitted. Upload a zip file on blackboard which contains the following (if applicable):

- A minimal report that discusses your progress, discussing the implementation status of every required, and optional (if implemented), feature.
- ANTLR grammar.
- Python Sources of the compiler.
- “build” and “test” scripts.
- C sample sources, and oracles (if necessary).

## 4.4 Exam

The schedule for the final presentations will be available on blackboard and discussed with all groups. In case you wish to report on the progress of your compiler at an earlier date than indicated, please let us know.

## 4.5 Questions

Questions will be answered via e-mail, and additional remarks may appear on Blackboard. Keep in mind that a certain amount of time is needed to read and answer emails.

## References

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- [5] Fraunhofer Institute for Computer Architecture and Software Technology. Lexer and parser generators. <http://catalog.compilertools.net/lexparse.html>.
- [6] Free Software Foundation. GCC home page. <http://gcc.gnu.org/>.
- [7] International Organization for Standardization and International Electrotechnical Commission. ISO/IEC 9899:201x. <http://www.openstd.org/jtc1/sc22/WG14/www/docs/n1539.pdf>.
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- [13] Bjarne Stroustrup. The C++ Programming Language, Third Edition. AddisonWesley, 1997.
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- [17] WikiPedia. Comparison of parser generators. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparisonofparsergenerators>.