

Imperative Syntax for Dependent Types

Towards a user study...



Dependent Types

a.k.a. types that can depend on terms

```
data List : Type -> Type where
  Nil : List a
  Cons : a -> List a -> List a
```



```
data Vect : Nat -> Type -> Type where
  Nil : Vect 0 a
  Cons : a -> Vect n a -> Vect (S n) a
```

“Dependent types are HARD”

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But WHY?

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But WHY?

And for WHOM?

“Dependent types are HARD”

But WHY?

And for WHOM?

It depends.

An Experienced Software Engineer

a.k.a our desired audience

- Likes side effects
- Is able to comprehend complex imperative programming features
- ??????

Before dependent types

a.k.a functional programming

- Most dependently typed languages use typically functional syntax
- Imperative and functional languages differ significantly in style
- While implementation details may differ, many core concepts exist within both paradigms

Before dependent types

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- Most dependently typed languages use typically functional syntax
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- While implementation details may differ, many core concepts exist within both paradigms
- An (important) example: Algebraic data types and pattern matching

Algebraic Data Types

In imperative languages

```
@dataclass
class Nil:
    pass

@dataclass
class Cons:
    head: int
    tail: List
List = Nil | Cons
```

Python: dataclasses
& tagged unions

```
struct Nil final {};
struct Cons final {
    int head;
    std::unique_ptr<std::variant<Nil, Cons>> tail;
};
using List = std::variant<Nil, Cons>;
```

C++: structs & variants

```
sealed interface List<T> {
    record Nil<T>() implements List<T> {}
    record Cons<T>(T head, List<T> tail)
    implements List<T> {}
```

Java: sealed interfaces & records

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Imperative syntax for an existing dependent type theory can enhance usability for an experienced programmer.

Syntax

Simple syntactic transformations

a.k.a. the low hanging fruit

```
type Vect(Nat n, Ty t) {  
  constructor Nil() of Vect(0, t);  
  constructor Cons(t head, Vect(n, t) tail) of Vect(n+1, t);  
}
```

Datatypes

```
data Vect : Nat -> Type -> Type where  
  Nil : Vect 0 t  
  Cons : (head : t) -> (tail : Vect n t) -> Vect (S n) t
```

Simple syntactic transformations

a.k.a. the low hanging fruit

```
func replicate<Ty t>(t x, Nat n) of Vect(t, n) {  
  switch(n) {  
    case 0: { return Nil; }  
    case S(n): { return Cons(x, replicate(x, n)); }  
  }  
}
```

Pattern matching

```
replicate : {t : Type} -> t -> Nat -> Vect t n  
replicate x n = case n of  
  0 => Nil  
  S n => Cons x (replicate x n)
```

Simple syntactic transformations

a.k.a. the low hanging fruit

```
func varManip (Nat x, Nat y) of Nat {  
    let Nat z = x + y;  
    if (z < 10) {  
        z = z + 10;  
    } else {  
        z = z + 1;  
    }  
    z = z + x;  
    return z;  
}
```

*Block
statements /
variable
reassignment*

```
varManip : Nat -> Nat -> Nat  
varManip x y =  
    let z : Nat = (x + y) in  
        if (z < 10) then  
            let z : Nat = (z + 10) in  
                let z : Nat = (z + x) in  
                    z  
        else  
            let z : Nat = (z + 1) in  
                let z : Nat = (z + x) in  
                    z
```

Loops

a.k.a recursion

```
func f(t1 x, t2 y, ...) of t {  
    head  
    while(condition) {  
        body  
    }  
    tail  
}
```

Loops

a.k.a recursion

```
func f(t1 x, t2 y, ...) of t {  
    head  
    f'(x, y, ..., xh, yh, ...)  
}  
where  
func f'(t1 x, t2 y, ..., th1 xh, th2 yh, ...) of t {  
    if(condition) {  
        body  
        f'(x, y, ..., xh, yh, ...)  
    } else {  
        tail  
    }  
}
```

```
func f(t1 x, t2 y, ...) of t {  
    head  
    f'(x, y, ..., xh, yh, ...)  
}  
tail
```

```
}
```

Loops

a.k.a recursion

```
func f(t1 x, t2 y, ...) of t {  
  head  
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  f'(x, y, ..., xh, yh, ...)  
}  
where  
func f'(t1 x, t2 y, ..., th1 xh, th2 yh, ...) of t {  
  if(condition) {  
    body  
    f'(x, y, ..., xh, yh, ...)  
  } else {  
    tail  
  }  
}
```

From booleans to propositions

a.k.a enabling dependent pattern matching

```
if(x == Nil) {  
    return 0;  
} else {  
    return head(x);  
}
```



```
case (decEq x Nil) of  
  Yes prf => 0  
  No  prf => head x
```

```
head : (x : List a) -> {_ : Not (x = Nil)} -> a
```

Decidable Equality...

```
data Vect : (n : Nat) -> (t : Type) -> Type where
  Nil : Vect 0 t
  Cons : (head : t) -> (tail : Vect n t) -> Vect (S n) t

{n : Nat} -> {t : Type} -> (DecEq t) => DecEq (Vect n t) where
  decEq (Nil) (Nil) = Yes Refl
  decEq (Cons head1 tail1) (Cons head2 tail2) with (decEq head1 head2)
    decEq (Cons head1 tail1) (Cons head1 tail2) | Yes Refl with (decEq tail1 tail2)
      decEq (Cons head1 tail1) (Cons head1 tail1) | Yes Refl | Yes Refl = Yes Refl
      decEq (Cons head1 tail1) (Cons head1 tail2) | Yes Refl | No prf = No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl)))
    decEq (Cons head1 tail1) (Cons head2 tail2) | No prf = No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl)))
```

Decidable Equality for FREE

```
data SoManyArgs : (t : Type) -> Type where
  C1 : (a : t) -> (b : t) -> (c : t) -> (d : t) -> SoManyArgs t
  C2 : (x : t) -> (y : t) -> SoManyArgs t

{t : Type} -> (DecEq t) => DecEq (SoManyArgs t) where
  decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a2 b2 c2 d2) with (decEq a1 a2)
    decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a1 b2 c2 d2) | Yes Refl with (decEq b1 b2)
      decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a1 b1 c2 d2) | Yes Refl | Yes Refl with (decEq c1 c2)
        decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a1 b1 c1 d2) | Yes Refl | Yes Refl | Yes Refl with (decEq d1 d2)
        decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) | Yes Refl | Yes Refl | Yes Refl | Yes Refl = Yes Refl
        decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a1 b1 c1 d2) | Yes Refl | Yes Refl | Yes Refl | No prf = (No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl))))
        decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a1 b1 c2 d2) | Yes Refl | Yes Refl | No prf = (No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl))))
        decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a1 b2 c2 d2) | Yes Refl | No prf = (No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl))))
        decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C1 a2 b2 c2 d2) | No prf = (No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl))))
  decEq (C1 a1 b1 c1 d1) (C2 x2 y2) = (No (\h => (case h of Refl impossible)))
  decEq (C2 x1 y1) (C1 a2 b2 c2 d2) = (No (\h => (case h of Refl impossible)))
  decEq (C2 x1 y1) (C2 x2 y2) with (decEq x1 x2)
    decEq (C2 x1 y1) (C2 x1 y2) | Yes Refl with (decEq y1 y2)
      decEq (C2 x1 y1) (C2 x1 y1) | Yes Refl | Yes Refl = Yes Refl
      decEq (C2 x1 y1) (C2 x1 y2) | Yes Refl | No prf = (No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl))))
      decEq (C2 x1 y1) (C2 x2 y2) | No prf = (No (\h => (prf (case h of Refl => Refl))))
```

Putting it all together

```
func search (Nat n, Vect(n, Nat) ls, Nat x) of Maybe(Fin(n)) {
    let Nat i = 0;
    let Maybe(Fin(n)) ret = Nothing;
    ewhile(i < n) {
        eif (index(natToFinLT(i), ls) == x) {
            ret = Just(natToFinLT(i));
        }
        else { ;; }
        i = 1 + i;
    }
    return ret;
}
```

Putting it all together

```
search : (n : Nat) -> (ls : Vect n Nat) -> (x : Nat) -> Maybe (Fin n)
search n ls x =
  let i : Nat = 0 in
  let ret : Maybe (Fin n) = Nothing in
  (search_rec0 n ls x i ret)
```

where

```
search_rec0 : (n : Nat) -> (ls : Vect n Nat) -> (x : Nat) -> (i : Nat) -> (ret : Maybe (Fin n)) -> Maybe (Fin n)
search_rec0 n ls x i ret =
  (case (isLT i n) of
    No noprif => ret
    Yes yesprf => (case (decEq (index (natToFinLT i) ls) x) of
      No noprif => let i : Nat = (S i) in
      (search_rec0 n ls x i ret)
      Yes yesprf => let ret : Maybe (Fin n) = Just (natToFinLT i) in
      let i : Nat = S i in
      search_rec0 n ls x i ret))
```

Syntax isn't everything

a.k.a. *type theory matters*

- Errors!!!!
- Semantics of effects (eg. mutability)
- Interactive type-checking (explicit proofs)
- And more ...

A study

What does it look like?

- Target participants: experienced software engineers
 - Does the choice of the (imperative) language they are experienced in matter?
 - A purely syntactic comparison
 - Is it possible to evaluate usability of dependent types without interactivity?

Conclusion

- Designed an imperative syntax for dependently typed programming that can be elaborated to executable Idris code
- Developed an algorithm for automatic derivation of decidable equality
- Syntax isn't everything — dedicated semantics are necessary for true usability
 - Specifically, we need a better understanding of **how** imperative programmers would make use of dependent types
- This syntax is to be evaluated via a qualitative user study