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Growing a Language

September 11, 2015

I thought the concept of this talk was very intriguing. I liked how he demonstrated creating a new language by creating his own language while he went through his talk, I think that it served the intended purpose well. I agree with Guy Steel’s statement that languages should start small and grow as they age, that way – people pick up the language while it is easy to learn and as the language grows, people who use it then are able to give input as to how the language is grown. For a lot of languages, it can be intimidating if they are a hodgepodge of different functions that may or may not be important to the usage you are looking for from it, so it is better to have a language that can be groomed to perform any task, or can be expanded to do special tasks when the user requires it. A Bazaar can be intimidating to someone who just needs to find a single item, because it is possible for them to spend hours searching for it and every time they think they’ve found it, realize that it is not of the quality they were expecting. With a small language that is grown, if there is a set master plan, it can help with the creation of features that the creators were interested in, but might not be in the best interest of the language as a whole. Steele says that the “High Point” of his talk is where he talks about how languages should make use of their users as they plan for the future, how they should have a general idea of where they would like to go, but still make use of the functionality that their users create. I believe that this is still very relevant. Languages that are built to do everything tend to overlook some pretty basic functionality that will cause some users to avoid the language. I am not sure if I would update any of the parts of his speech other than updating the features that he would add to the language as those are already parts of the language. This talk has not changed the way that I thought of programming languages, but it has given me a more concrete understanding on the ideas that I already had about programming languages. I think that it is a very interesting video to watch even if it is just for the spectacle of watching him build his own vocabulary throughout the presentation.