

Assembler using MATLAB

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Abstract— In this report, the assembler ‘.asm’ file is converted to a .hack file. After a thorough analysis, the required tools and techniques are selected accordingly. MATLAB is used to convert the .asm file, here. For this conversion, firstly the assembly file is imported to the MATLAB platform, and later parsing of the data is performed to structure the data. Then the mnemonics are created after removing comments, empty lines, and whitespace characters from the code. Then a symbol table is created and the hack assembly file is arranged. Once the hack code conversion starts and the mnemonics are converted to machine codes. The generated hack file is then executed in an assembler to evaluate the conversion by comparing the result of the hack file with that of the ‘.asm’ file.

Keywords— *MATLAB, Assembler, Hack File.*

Introduction

The assembler is the first and most fundamental module in the software hierarchy. An assembler is a particular kind of computer program that converts a software program that is written in assembly language by humans into a machine language, thus the assembler accepts the basic computer commands and instructions from the assembly code and then translates codes into binary codes which can be executed by a computer. In order for an assembly program to be run on a computer, it must first be interpreted into the binary machine language used by the computer. The translating work is performed by a program called the assembler. It accepts a series of assembly commands as input and creates as output binary instructions that are equal to the assembly commands. The generated code may be loaded into the computer's memory, and hardware can execute it. An assembler is indeed known as an assembly language compiler. It

moreover offers a translation service. Any programming language may be used to write the assembler.

Need of assembler

A computer program's most straightforward definition is a sequence of numbers that encode the basic CPU operations. This is known as machine code. Machine code applies to specific CPU manufacturers and, in many cases, a certain model type. Because machine code is very complex for people to understand or write, the lowest level of programming carried out by humans is in assembly language, a language in which each fundamental action is assigned a mnemonic code. Assembly language is a kind of programming language that humans can read and write, and it can be transformed into machine code through the use of an assembler. Assemblers are used to connect symbolic, coded instructions written in assembly language to the computer processor, memory, and other computational components. The primary function is to convert symbols into binary code. The symbol table allows the program to maintain user-defined symbols and recover them to physical memory addresses. Hack Assembler is a simplistic and straightforward illustration of the core software engineering ideas that go into creating an assembler. Assemblers are needed because it increases the efficiency of the programmer, if we don't use the assembler, the programmer will have to write the instruction in machine-level language, which is only zeros and ones, and this takes a lot of time and is very complex to proceed.

Selection of the language to write Assembler code

MATLAB is an acronym for matrix laboratory. MATLAB is a high-performance programming language for scientific and engineering applications. The process of changing the assembly file to a hack file will be carried out using the MATLAB coding language.

The program may be used as a scratchpad to test expressions written into the command line, or it can be used to run massive predefined programs in a single operation. Applications may be produced and updated using the integrated development environment (IDE), and they can be debugged using the MATLAB debugger (which is included). It is ideal for the rapid prototyping of new apps due to the fact that it is easy to learn and utilize. A large number of software development tools are provided, making the application simple to use. In addition, they provide an integrated editor and debugger, online documentation and guides, a workspace browser, and a large number of demonstrations. Its command-line interface and file-oriented structure make it simple to use. The MATLAB Software platform, which enables you to interact with your data in real-time, assists you in keeping track of files and variables and simplifies typical programming and debugging activities.

The MATLAB software includes a vast library of ready-to-use routines for a wide variety of applications, allowing the user to solve technical computer issues considerably more quickly than they could with conventional programming languages such as C++ and FORTRAN [1].

Background

Assembler and compiler both create executable code. The sole difference between assemblers and compilers is that assemblers only translate low-level code to machine code. Assembly languages are low-level programming languages that are grouped along with other programming languages. When we get to this level of abstraction, we can write our code using an easier-to-read set of instructions that are represented by mnemonics rather than huge numbers. An Assembler is used to translate assembly code into machine code. The set of instructions used by a given processor family is unique. For your system's CPU family, the assembler you choose must be able to produce instruction codes [2]. The assembler directives are the most significant distinction between assemblers. Although opcode mnemonics are similar to processor instruction codes, assembler directives are specific to each assembler. Despite the fact that current operating systems are largely written in high-level languages, certain programs can only be written in assembly. Writing device drivers, saving the state of a running program so that another application may utilize the CPU, recovering the stored state of a running program so that it can continue execution, and controlling memory and memory protection devices are all common uses of assembly language. Assembly language is now largely used to manipulate hardware directly, to get access to specialized processor instructions, and to resolve key performance concerns. Device drivers, low-level embedded systems, and real-time systems are all

examples of typical applications. Assembly is the one language that can interact directly with a machine or computer. It is the language that a particular CPU understands, and various CPUs understand different forms of it. Assembly language is plain and clear as compared to high-level languages, which are largely in the form of abstract data structures. Assembly language is the closest you can go to a machine's CPU as a programmer. You may use this to write code that reads registers and even directly works with memory addresses to get data and pointers.

Methodology

To achieve the desired result, the .asm file is converted to the .hack file in the following steps— first, parsing of the data is performed on the .asm program. The parsing technique consists of analyzing the stored symbols in a string. This process converts the unstructured data into a structured format like CSV or JSON. This technique of parsing the data verifies the rule of formal grammar. The data parsing technique is essential to detect the symbols and the words within the .asm file. All the empty spaces, comments are removed to be easily detected by the MATLAB code for converting the .asm file to .hack format. Otherwise, errors would occur in the binary values of the .hack file based on the white spaces and comments.

Next, it is necessary to check for any command remaining in the .asm file. And if there is any command detected then that command type is found and the code is being executed again by the data parsing technique to preprocess the data. In the next step, the code is written to convert the commands to their equivalent binary values.

Then to differentiate the variables and the reserved words, the mnemonics are created. Now the hack converter code is written in a way that the conversion of mnemonics to the machine codes takes place and then for the mnemonics the separate tables are created. Thus, all the mnemonics codes are converted to equivalent binary values.

Accordingly, a hack symbol table is created. Subsequently, the arrangement of the hack assembly table and parsing is performed. Then with the help of an input file parser is created. Now, the input file is scanned for labels and the file parser is begun again. Thereafter the binary code is commenced resulting in the conversion of the .asm file to a .hack file.

Discussion

Any high-performing language can be used to design a HACK assembler, but in this report, the Hack assembler is designed using MATLAB. And the same is explained further. The HACK assembler is generated in two stages: with and without symbols. This program I have separated

into 6 stages. In the first stage creation of the symbol table is then remove any white spaces and comments are removed from the test code, making the process easier for the design to be developed later 'A - instructions' and the 'C - instructions' are separated first. Then, any 'A' instructions are checked with decimal digits and are directly converted to equivalent 16-bit binary. Further, each 'C' instruction is checked, and each field is assigned with a digit, and then that digit is converted into a 16-bit binary code. Subsequently, an output file is generated with 16-bit instructions. Secondly, the assembler design is developed with symbols. For the process to execute correctly, a library is created consisting of predefined tables

pre-defined C instruction Table,
pre-defined valued for D instruction Table,
pre-defined value for Jump instruction Table,
and symbol Table for all others.

```

symbol ={'R0','R1','R2','R3','R4','R5','R6','R7','R8','R9','R10','R11','R12';
Address={'0','1','2','3','4','5','6','7','8','9','10','11','12','13','14';
symboltable=table(symbol,Address);% Symbol table created

d={' ','M','D','MD','A','AM','AD','AMD';
d_address={'000','001','010','011','100','101','110','111';
dcode=table(d,d_address); % D instruction table created

c={'0','1','-1','D','A','M','ID','IA','IM','-D','-A','-M','D+1','A+1','M+1';
c_address={'0101010','0111111','0111010','0001100','0110000','1110000';
ccode=table(c,c_address); % C instruction table created

jump={' ','JGT','JEQ','JGE','JLT','JNE','JLE','JMP';
jumpaddress={'000','001','010','011','100','101','110','111';
jumpcode=table(jump,jumpaddress); % Jump instruction table created

prompt = 'Input file name ';
```

Figure 1 Predefined instruction Table

```

% stage 1
% filtering started to remove white spaces and comments
while ischar(tline)
    k1 = strfind(tline,'//'); % Checks for '/'
    k2 = isempty(tline); % Checks for empty spaces
    k3 = strfind(tline,{' '}); % Checks for ' '

    if k1==1
        %disp('comment');
    elseif k2==1
        %disp('empty');
    elseif k3==1
        tline = strtok(tline, '/'); % trim line after '/'
        finalcode(i)=tline; % Storing code with label
        i=i+1;
    else
        tline = tline(find(~isspace(tline))); % remove space
        newline = strtok(tline, '/'); % remove comments after '/'
        k3 = strfind(newline, '@'); % checks for '@'
        if k3==1
            instr= instructionType(newline);
            finalcode(i)=instr; % Storing code with label
            interfinalcode{y}=instr; % Storing code without label
            i=i+1;
            y=y+1;
        else
            finalcode(i)=newline; % code with label
            interfinalcode{y}=newline; % code without label
            i=i+1;
            y=y+1;
        end
    end
```

Figure 2 Sortation (Stage 1)

While designing assembly code with symbols, it is necessary to add pre-defined symbols, label symbols, and

variable symbols. The pre-defined symbols represent unique memory locations, and the Hack language specification lists 23 of them. Now primarily, it is required to check—if it is an A instruction without any label; if yes, then the decimal value is given to it starting from 16. As shown from the table up to the value of 15, the Registers are already assigned. One example of A instructions is @0, which is directly converted to its equivalent binary value. The second one is @R0 to R15, which is also set with decimal numbers and converted to binary. The next one is @SCREEN or @KBD, which are assigned from 15 onward values.

Another one is checked for the C instruction. The C instruction instructs the compiler to achieve the program's goal. The function of the C instructions is to command the compiler to perform a specific action. For example, the C compiler does not know how to add two numbers unless written in a code or command using the arithmetic operator '+' and numbers. Now when the C instruction is checked here in this design, for example (=), it is assigned with a digit and then converted to the binary value. The C-instruction function takes the instruction as an input and generates a binary code as output concatenated with a comp value, destination value, and jump value. This whole process comes under parsing.

Another part of the design of the assembler is the pre-defined symbol table. Whenever such a situation arises, it checks—the symbols and corresponding values, the symbol names, and a variable that indicates the value of symbols in the array. In this way, Cell Array is created for both with and without symbols.

So, in stage 1 after the creation of Tables, the comments and empty spaces are separated from the given code. And the process for this involves—firstly, 'prompt' is written in the code which is used to intimate the user to type the input file name. Then this user file name is stored in the 'str'. Next, 'fopen' is operated, which opens the file stored in 'str'. The 'fgetl' read line from the file in the following line, removing newline characters. The 'finalcode' and 'interfinalcode' are used to create two Cell Arrays for copying the command with and without labels.

Furthermore, the 'i' and 'y' loop variables are written in the code for the iteration purpose to store code. The code is first read by the variable 'tline' and checked to see if it contains a comment or not. This is achieved by the command—'strfind' and 'isempty'. Using strfind command finds the comments in the tline Further, the 'isempty' command finds the empty spaces in the tline. In the next line, 'strfind' command checks for the label “(“, to find the label symbols in the given code. If we find the label, we will start to store that into cell array finalcode. Then finally it goes to check for else part, where it will determine it's a C instruction or A instruction. If it's a C instruction then it will store directly into a cell array. If it's an instruction it will go to function instructiontype. So, there it will check whether the A instruction is an

```
% stage 2
for x=1:length(interfinalcode)
    count=0;
    tf = isstrprop(interfinalcode{x},'digit');% checks the input is digit
    k5 = contains(interfinalcode{x},'=' ); % checks whole line contain '='
    k6 = strfind(interfinalcode{x},'@');% checks whole line have '@' symbol
    if k6==1 % A instruction conversion starts for symbols already in symbol table
        trim_Ainstruction = strip(interfinalcode{x},'left','@');%trim @
        k7 = ismember(trim_Ainstruction,symboltable.symbol); % checks symbol already in
        newtrim=(''+trim_Ainstruction+");";
    else % A instruction conversion starts for symbols which is not in symbol table
        out = dec2bin(str2double(symboltable.Address(strcmp(symboltable.symbol,trim_Ainstruction))));
        % converts symbol from decimal to binary those lines already in symbol table
        result{i}=out;% Store final result
    else % A instruction conversion starts for symbols not in symbol table
        for v=1:length(finalcode)
            k12 = contains(finalcode{v},';'); % checking for labels
            if k12==0
                count=count+1;
            end
            if finalcode{v}==newtrim
                disp(newtrim)
                out=dec2bin(count,16);
                d2s=int2str(count);% converting decimal to binary
                result{i}=out;% Store final result
                new=(trim_Ainstruction,d2s); % Added new row
            end
        end
    end
end
```

```

symboltable=[symboltable;new] ; % inserting new symbol
    end
end
end

elseif tf==1
    result(i)=interfinalcode{x}; % Store final result those who already
elseif k5==1 % C instruction conversion starts
    %disp('c instruction found');
    first = '111';
    jumpbin = '000';
    csecond_comp= extractAfter(interfinalcode{x},"=");%Take value after
    cfirst_dest = extractBefore(interfinalcode{x},"=");%Take value before
    dest      = dcode.d_address(strcmp(dcode.d,cfirst_dest));
    comp      = ccode.c_address(strcmp(ccode.c,csecond_comp));
    out       = dec2bin(uint16(bin2dec(strcat(first,comp,dest,jumpbin)
    result(i)=out;% Store final result

else %c instruction jump conversion starts
    %disp('jump found');
    first = '111';
    dest = '000'; % jump instruction conversion starts
    jsecond_comp= extractAfter(interfinalcode{x},";");%Take value after
    jfirst_jump = extractBefore(interfinalcode{x},";");%Take value before
    jumpbin     = jumpcode.jumpaddress(strcmp(jumpcode.jump,jsecond_comp));
    comp        = ccode.c_address(strcmp(ccode.c,jfirst_jump));
    out         = dec2bin(uint16(bin2dec(strcat(first,comp,dest,jumpbin)
    result(i)=out;% Store final result

end
i=i+1;

```

Now the program moves to stage 2, where the code is checked with a for loop for separation and conversion purposes. Here the for-loop iteration length is code length

```
% stage 3

for x=1:length(interfinalcode)% A instruction conversion starts for symbols
    k14 = strfind(interfinalcode{x}, '@');
    if k14==1 % A instruction conversion starts for symbols not in in symbol table
        trim_Ainstruction = strip(interfinalcode{x}, 'left', '@'); % trim @
        k15 = ismember(trim_Ainstruction, symboltable.symbol); % checks for A instruction
        if k15==0
            out=dec2bin(new_register,16); % convert decimal to binary
            d2s=int2str(new_register); % convert integer to string
            result(x)=out; % Store final result
            new={trim_Ainstruction,d2s};
            symboltable=[symboltable;new] ; % inserting new symbols into symbol table
            new_register=new_register+1; %incrementing register
        else
            out = dec2bin(str2double(symboltable.Address(strcmp(symboltable.symbol,trim_Ainstruction))),16);
            result(x)=out; % Store final result
        end
    end
end
```



```

% stage 4
% .hack file creation starts
fid=fopen([str(1:end-4) '.hack'],'w');
for x=1:length(result)
    fprintf(fid, [ result{x} '\n']);
end
fclose(fid);

disp(symboltable)% final symbol table

```

Figure 6 Output file creation (Stage 4)

```

% function 1
function res = instructionType(instruction) % function to process A instruction
newstr=strip(instruction,'left','@');% trim @
tf = isstrprop(newstr,'digit'); % check for integer
if tf==1
    k= str2num(string(newstr));
    k = dec2bin(k,16) ; % Converts A instruction those who have decimal value
    res = k; % returns binary value
else
    res=instruction; % returns A instruction
end
end

```

Figure 7 Function 1

Now the assembler will move to stage 3, the final sortation of A-instruction. Here we will convert A-instruction which doesn't have a label or doesn't have in the predefined symbols in the symbol table. The new symbol will be added to the symbol table and assigned a decimal value from 16(because 0 to 15 there are already reserved registers stored in the symbol table). If the same symbols are repeated in the code, it will retrieve data from the symbol table else new symbol came then it will be added to the symbol table and give decimal value 17 and so on. Once we assigned a decimal value to a symbol, we will convert that value into a binary value and store that into a result array.

The final or fourth stage of the assembler code is generating a hack file in the text format, for this purpose we will retrieve the data that have been stored in the 'result' array. In this code, we use one function only.

Result Evaluation

The result evaluation was done with the help of Java Assembler which has already been given. The MATLAB assembler will auto-generate a hack file. We need to upload one asm file on one side and need to upload MATLAB generated hack file on another side of the Assembler. If the generated result is correct the assembler will show compilation and comparison success. In this way, we tested 4 ASM files which have given in Lab 6 and compared them successfully.

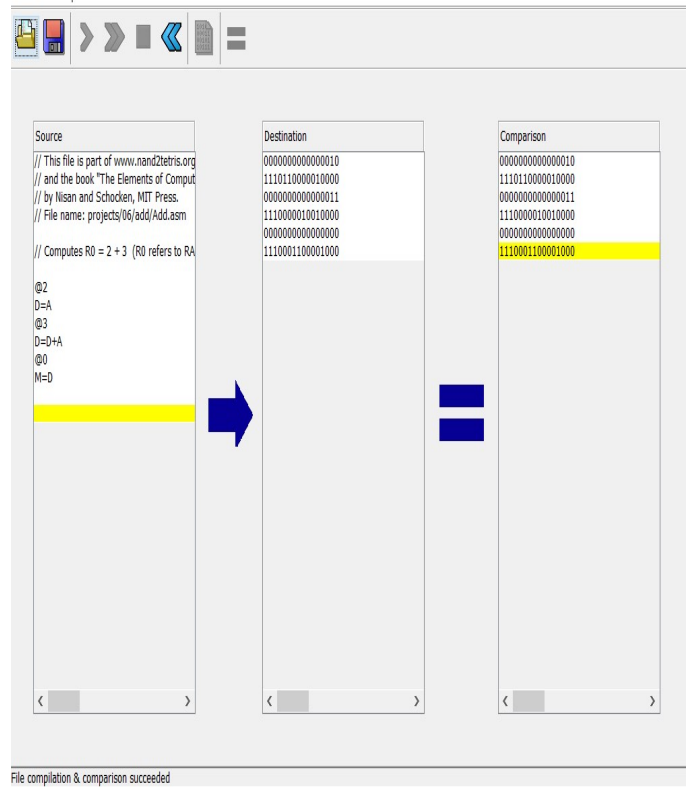


Figure 8 Add.asm

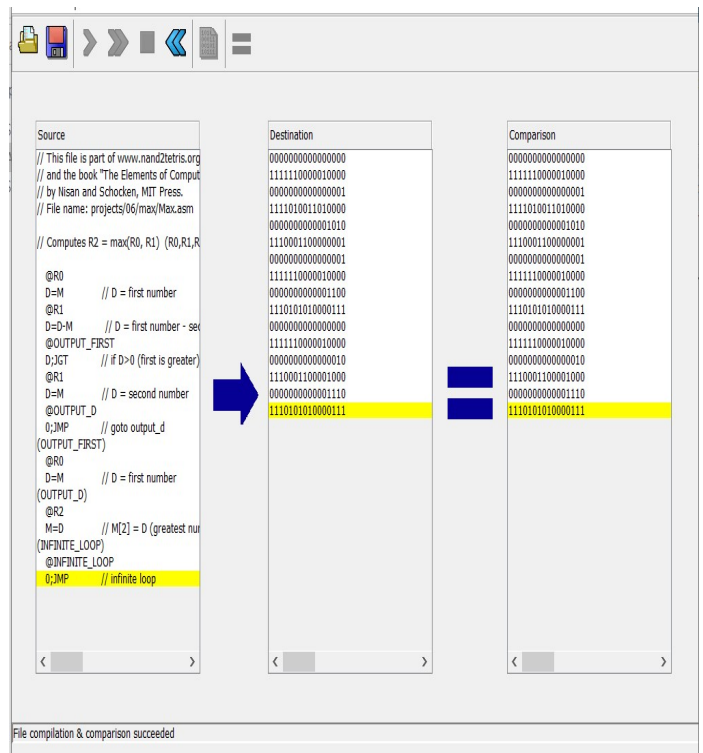


Figure 9 max.asm

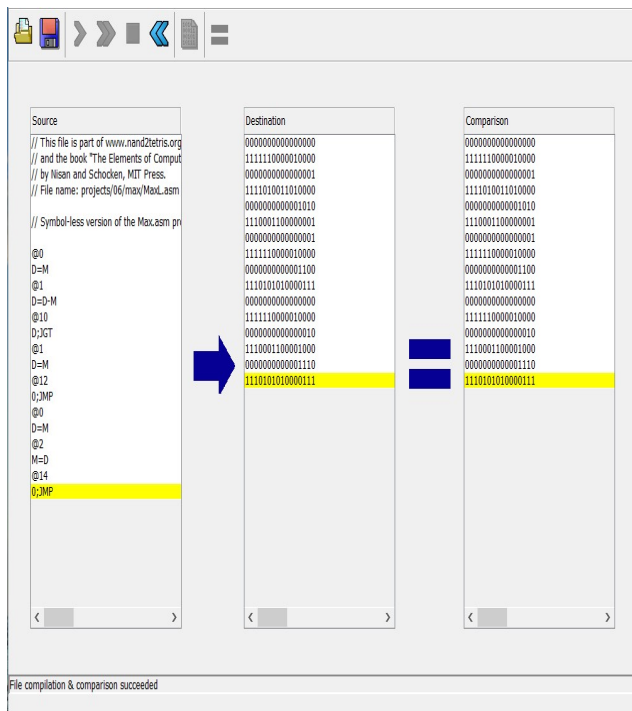


Figure 10 maxl.asm

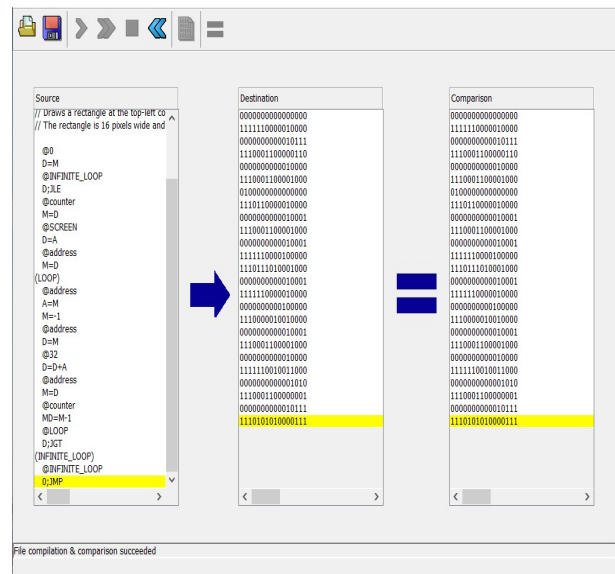


Figure 12 rect.asm

Critical reflection

The designed assembler with the MATLAB code has faced a few issues like— This code can't handle complex symbol notations. Its processing time is higher for lengthy codes as compared to the other assemblers. Moreover, it has limitations in processing complex instruction types, because as complexity increases the symbol table increases. While comparing with the conversion time of pongl.asm file with pong.asm file the MATLAB assembler taking more time for conversion for pong.asm (around **30 seconds**!). Except for pong.asm all other programs are taking only **1 to 2 seconds**. So, the MATLAB compiler takes more time for converting those codes to have more symbols and more number lines. While creating MATLAB assembler code the more challenges I faced was for the sortation logic of A-instruction code which we need to add from register 16 onwards in the symbol table. So, I created a separate for-loop outside the main parsing for-loop. To increase MATLAB iteration speed in multicore computers we can use **parallel for loops (parfor)** to run independent iteration in parallel iteration.

Another important point noted down during execution time is this MATLAB assembler won't work if any C-instruction came in the below-mentioned way. Mathematically **D+A** is equal to **A+D** but our assembler won't understand this. We need to specify this in our Table also. For testing purposes, I added both values to the table. But it will be difficult to add all possibilities to the table. Because the program length will increase and program execution time will also increase. For further investigation purposes, I tried to execute **mult.asm** in **lab**

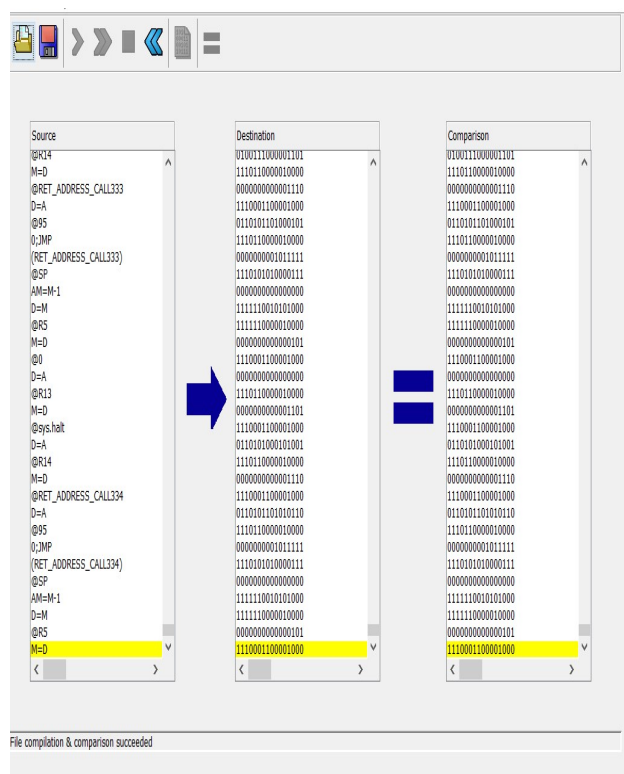


Figure 11 Pong.asm

4 but there are a few lines that can't be converted due to the above reasons.

```
M=-1
@address
D=M
@32
D=A+D // D+A
@address
M=D
```

Figure 13 Rect.asm

Conclusion

The prime objective of our project was to create an assembler program using the MATLAB platform that translates programs written in the symbolic hack assembly language into binary code. We consider MATLAB as a platform to create assemblers because when it comes to numeric calculation or analysis, MATLAB gives faster results than the other programming languages. The Hack assembler reads input as a text file named Prog.asm (a code with .asm extension) and develops a text file named Prog.hack (a code with '.hack' extension), that contains a translated Hack machine code. While moving from add.asm to pong.asm it was observed that execution time increased. Finally, the code generated from MATLAB assembler is compared with code generated from Java assembler.

References

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