1.2 History of Java

During 1990, James Gosling, Bill Joy and others at Sun Microsystems began

developing a language called Oak. They primarily intended it as a language for

microprocessors embedded in consumer devices such as cable set-top boxes,

VCRs, and handheld computers (now known as personal data assistants or

PDAs).

To serve these goals, Oak needed the following features:

platform independence, since it must run on devices from multiple manufacturers

extreme reliability (can't expect consumers to reboot their VCRs!)

compactness, since embedded processors typically have limited memory

They also wanted a next-generation language that built on the strengths and

avoided the weaknesses of earlier languages. Such features would help the new

language provide more rapid software development and faster debugging.

By 1993 the interactive TV and PDA markets had failed to take off, but internet

and web activity began its upward zoom. So Sun shifted the target market to

internet applications and changed the name of the project to Java.

The portability of Java made it ideal for the Web, and in 1995 Sun's HotJava

browser appeared. Written in Java in only a few months, it illustrated the power of

applets - programs that run within a browser - and the ability of Java to accelerate

program development.

Riding atop the tidal wave of interest and publicity in the Internet, Java quickly

gained widespread recognition (some would say hype ), and expectations grew for

it to become the dominant software for browsers and perhaps even for desktop

programs. However, the early versions of Java did not possess the breadth and

depth of capabilities needed for desktop applications. For example, the graphics

in Java 1.0 appeared crude and clumsy compared with the graphics features

available in software written in C and other languages and targeted at a single

operating system.