

# Lecture 26 – Type Inference (2)

## COSE212: Programming Languages

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- **Type inference** is the process of automatically inferring the types of expressions.
- We have seen three examples to learn how the type inference works.

```
/* RFAE */ def sum(x) = if (x < 1) 0 else x + sum(x - 1); sum
```

```
/* RFAE */ val app = n => f => f(n); app(42)(x => x)
```

```
/* RFAE */ val id = x => x; val n = id(42); val b = id(true); b
```

- In this lecture, let's learn the details of the type inference algorithm.
- **TIFAE** – TRFAE with **type inference**.
  - **Type Checker** and **Typing Rules** with **Type Inference**
  - Interpreter and Natural Semantics

## 1. Type Checker and Typing Rules with Type Inference

- Solutions for Type Constraints

- Numbers

- Additions

- Conditionals

- Immutable Variable Definitions and Identifier Lookup

- Function Definitions

- Recursive Function Definitions

- Function Applications

## 2. Type Unification

- Type Resolving

- Occurrence Checking

- Type Unification

## 3. Type Inference with Let-Polymorphism

- Type Generalization

- Type Instantiation

## 1. Type Checker and Typing Rules with Type Inference

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Let's ❶ design **typing rules** of TIFAE to define when an expression is well-typed in the form of:

$$\Gamma \vdash e : \tau$$

and ❷ implement a **type checker** in Scala according to typing rules:

```
def typeCheck(expr: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv): Type = ???
```

The type checker returns the **type** of  $e$  if it is well-typed, or rejects it and throws a **type error** otherwise.

We will keep track of the **variable types** using a **type environment**  $\Gamma$  as a mapping from variable names to their types.

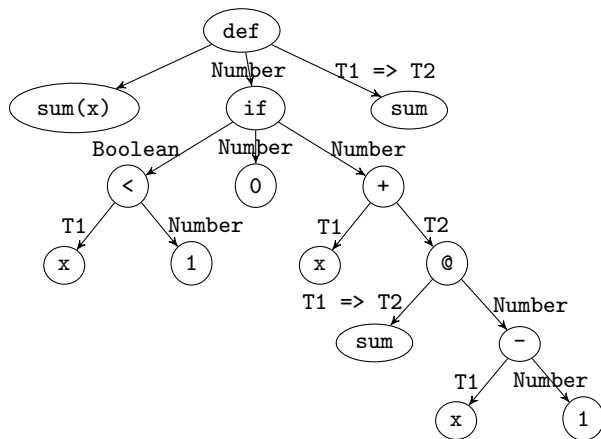
$$\text{Type Environments} \quad \Gamma \in \Gamma = \mathbb{X} \xrightarrow{\text{fin}} \mathbb{T} \quad (\text{TypeEnv})$$

```
type TypeEnv = Map[String, Type]
```

## Recall: Example 1 – sum

In addition, we need to keep track of the **solution** for **type constraints** over **type variables** to infer the types of expressions.

```
/* RFAE */ def sum(x) = if (x < 1) 0 else x + sum(x - 1); sum
```



Type Environment

$X$	$T$
<code>x</code>	<code>T1</code>
<code>sum</code>	<code>T1 =&gt; T2</code>

Solution

$X_\alpha$	$T$
<code>T1</code>	<code>Number</code>
<code>T2</code>	<code>Number</code>

A **solution** is a mapping from **type variables** to **types**.

Solutions  $\psi \in \Psi = \mathbb{X}_\alpha \xrightarrow{\text{fin}} (\mathbb{T} \uplus \{\perp\})$  (Solution)

Type Variables  $\alpha \in \mathbb{X}_\alpha$  (Int)

```
type Solution = Map[Int, Option[Type]]
```

Note that  $\perp$  (None) represents a **not yet solved** (**free**) type variable.

Now, we have new forms of **type checker** and **typing rules**.

```
def typeCheck(expr: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = ???
```

$$\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi$$

Similar to the memory passing in MFAE for mutation, we will pass the solution  $\psi$  and update it during type checking.

```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
...
case Num(n) => (NumT, sol)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-Num} \frac{}{\Gamma, \psi \vdash n : \text{num}, \psi}$$



```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
...
case Add(l, r) =>
  val (lty, sol1) = typeCheck(l, tenv, sol)
  val (rty, sol2) = typeCheck(r, tenv, sol1)
  val sol3 = unify(lty, NumT, sol2)
  val sol4 = unify(rty, NumT, sol3)
  (ty, sol4)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-Add} \frac{\begin{array}{cc} \Gamma, \psi_0 \vdash e_1 : \tau_1, \psi_1 & \Gamma, \psi_1 \vdash e_2 : \tau_2, \psi_2 \\ \text{unify}(\tau_1, \text{num}, \psi_2) = \psi_3 & \text{unify}(\tau_2, \text{num}, \psi_3) = \psi_4 \end{array}}{\Gamma, \psi_0 \vdash e_1 + e_2 : \text{num}, \psi_4}$$

The unify function that takes two types must be the same and updates the solution. We will see how it works later.

```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
...
case If(c, t, e) =>
  val (cty, sol1) = typeCheck(c, tenv, sol)
  val (tty, sol2) = typeCheck(t, tenv, sol1)
  val (ety, sol3) = typeCheck(e, tenv, sol2)
  val sol4 = unify(cty, BoolT, sol3)
  val sol5 = unify(tty, ety, sol4)
  (tty, sol5)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-If} \frac{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e_c : \text{bool}, \psi_c \quad \Gamma, \psi_c \vdash e_t : \tau_t, \psi_t \quad \Gamma, \psi_t \vdash e_e : \tau_e, \psi_e \quad \text{unify}(\tau_c, \text{bool}, \psi_e) = \psi' \quad \text{unify}(\tau_t, \tau_e, \psi') = \psi''}{\Gamma, \psi \vdash \text{if } (e_c) e_t \text{ else } e_e : \tau_t, \psi''}$$

```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
  ...

case Val(x, e, b) =>
  val (ety, sol1) = typeCheck(e, tenv, sol)
  typeCheck(b, tenv + (x -> ety), sol1)

case Id(x) => tenv.getOrElse(x, error(s"free identifier: $x"))
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-Val} \frac{\Gamma, \psi_0 \vdash e_1 : \tau_1, \psi_1 \quad \Gamma[x : \tau_1] \vdash e_2 : \tau_2, \psi_2}{\Gamma, \psi_0 \vdash \text{val } x = e_1; e_2 : \tau_2, \psi_2}$$

$$\tau\text{-Id} \frac{x \in \text{Domain}(\Gamma)}{\Gamma, \psi \vdash x : \Gamma(x), \psi}$$

```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
...
case Fun(p, b) =>
  val (pty, sol1) = newTypeVar(sol)
  val (rty, sol2) = typeCheck(b, tenv + (p -> pty), sol1)
  (ArrowT(pty, rty), sol2)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-Fun} \frac{\alpha_p \notin \psi \quad \Gamma[x : \alpha_p], \psi[\alpha_p \mapsto \perp] \vdash e : \tau, \psi'}{\Gamma, \psi \vdash \lambda x. e : \alpha_p \rightarrow \tau, \psi'}$$

```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
...
case Rec(f, p, b, s) =>
  val (pty, sol1) = newTypeVar(sol)
  val (rty, sol2) = newTypeVar(sol1)
  val fty = ArrowT(pty, rty)
  val tenv1 = tenv + (f -> fty)
  val tenv2 = tenv1 + (p -> pty)
  val (bty, sol3) = typeCheck(b, tenv2, sol2)
  val sol4 = unify(bty, rty, sol3)
  typeCheck(s, tenv1, sol4)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-Rec} \frac{\begin{array}{l} \alpha_p, \alpha_r \notin \psi \quad \alpha_p \neq \alpha_r \quad \Gamma_1 = \Gamma[x_f \mapsto (\alpha_p \rightarrow \alpha_r)] \\ \Gamma_2 = \Gamma_1[x_p \mapsto \alpha_p] \quad \Gamma_2, \psi[\alpha \mapsto \perp, \alpha' \mapsto \perp] \vdash e_b : \tau_b, \psi_b \\ \text{unify}(\tau_b, \alpha_r, \psi_b) = \psi_r \quad \Gamma_1, \psi_r \vdash e_s : \tau_s, \psi_s \end{array}}{\Gamma, \psi \vdash \text{def } x_f(x_p) = e_b; e_s : \tau_s, \psi_s}$$

```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
...
case App(f, a) =>
  val (fty, sol1) = typeCheck(f, tenv, sol)
  val (aty, sol2) = typeCheck(a, tenv, sol1)
  val (rty, sol3) = newTypeVar(sol2)
  val sol4 = unify(ArrowT(aty, rty), fty, sol3)
  (rty, sol4)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-App} \frac{\begin{array}{c} \Gamma, \psi \vdash e_f : \tau_f, \psi_f \quad \Gamma, \psi_f \vdash e_a : \tau_a, \psi_a \\ \alpha_r \notin \psi_a \quad \text{unify}(\tau_a \rightarrow \alpha_r, \tau_f, \psi_a[\alpha_r \mapsto \perp]) = \psi' \end{array}}{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e_1(e_2) : \alpha_r, \psi'}$$

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## Definition (Type Unification)

**Type unification** is the process of updating a solution to make two types equal. If the types are not unifiable, then this process fails and throws an exception.

$$\text{unify} : (\mathbb{T} \times \mathbb{T} \times \Psi) \rightarrow \Psi$$

For example, if we unify a type variable  $\alpha$  and the number type `num`, the empty solution  $\emptyset$  is updated to  $[\alpha \mapsto \text{num}]$ .

$$\text{unify}(\alpha, \text{num}, \emptyset) = [\alpha \mapsto \text{num}]$$

Before, we define the type unification, we need to define the **type resolving** and **occurrence checking** functions.

- 1 **Type resolving** is the process of recursively resolving a type variable to its representative type to deal with the **type aliasing**.
- 2 **Occurrence checking** is the process of checking whether a type variable occurs in a type to detect **cyclic types**.



To understand why we need the **type resolving** function, let's consider the following example:

$$\text{unify}(\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \psi_1) = \psi_2$$

$$\text{unify}(\alpha_1, \text{num}, \psi_2) = \psi_3$$

Solution

 $\psi_1 =$ 

$\mathbb{X}_\alpha$	T
$\alpha_1$	$\perp$
$\alpha_2$	$\perp$

Solution

 $\psi_2 =$ 

$\mathbb{X}_\alpha$	T
$\alpha_1$	$\alpha_2$
$\alpha_2$	$\perp$

Solution

 $\psi_3 =$ 

$\mathbb{X}_\alpha$	T
$\alpha_1$	num
$\alpha_2$	$\perp$

Unfortunately, we cannot know that  $\alpha_2$  are num with the solution  $\psi_3$ .

We need to **resolve** the type variable  $\alpha_1$  to find its **representative type** and update its solution to num to deal with the **type aliasing**.

Solution

$$\text{unify}(\text{resolve}(\alpha_1, \psi_2), \text{num}, \psi_2) = \psi'_3 =$$

$\mathbb{X}_\alpha$	T
$\alpha_1$	$\alpha_2$
$\alpha_2$	num

We can define the **type resolving** function as follows:

$$\text{resolve} : (\mathbb{T} \times \Psi) \rightarrow \mathbb{T}$$

$$\text{resolve}(\tau, \psi) = \begin{cases} \text{resolve}(\tau', \psi) & \text{if } \tau = \alpha \wedge \psi(\alpha) = \tau' \\ \tau & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

and implement it in Scala as follows:

```
def resolve(ty: Type, sol: Solution): Type = ty match
  case VarT(k) => sol(k) match
    case Some(ty) => resolve(ty, sol)
    case None => ty
  case _ => ty
```

Let's understand why we need the **occurrence checking** function:

$$\text{unify}(\alpha_1, \text{num} \rightarrow \alpha_1, \psi) = \psi'$$

It actually fails because the type variable  $\alpha_1$  occurs in the type  $\text{num} \rightarrow \alpha_1$ , which means it requires **cyclic types** not supported in our type system.

Let's define the **occurrence checking** function as follows:

$$\text{occur} : (\mathbb{X}_\alpha \times \mathbb{T} \times \Psi) \rightarrow \text{bool}$$

$$\text{occur}(\alpha, \tau, \psi) = \begin{cases} \text{true} & \text{if } \tau = \alpha \\ \text{occur}(\alpha, \tau_p, \psi) \vee \text{occur}(\alpha, \tau_r, \psi) & \text{if } \tau = (\tau_p \rightarrow \tau_r) \\ \text{false} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

and implement it in Scala as follows:

```
def occurs(k: Int, ty: Type, sol: Solution): Boolean = resolve(ty, sol) match
  case VarT(l) => k == l
  case ArrowT(pty, rty) => occurs(k, pty, sol) || occurs(k, rty, sol)
  case _ => false
```

Using the **type resolving** and **occurrence checking** functions, we could define the **type unification** as a partial function:

$$\text{unify} : (\mathbb{T} \times \mathbb{T} \times \Psi) \rightarrow \Psi$$

$$\text{unify}(\tau_1, \tau_2, \psi) = \begin{cases} \psi & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \text{num} \wedge \tau'_2 = \text{num} \\ \psi & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \text{bool} \wedge \tau'_2 = \text{bool} \\ \text{unify}(\tau_{1,r}, \tau_{2,r}, \text{unify}(\tau_{1,p}, \tau_{2,p}, \psi)) & \text{if } \tau'_1 = (\tau_{1,p} \rightarrow \tau_{1,r}) \wedge \tau'_2 = (\tau_{2,p} \rightarrow \tau_{2,r}) \\ \psi & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \alpha = \tau'_2 \\ \psi[\alpha \mapsto \tau'_2] & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \alpha \wedge \neg \text{occur}(\alpha, \tau'_2) \\ \psi[\alpha \mapsto \tau'_1] & \text{if } \tau'_2 = \alpha \wedge \neg \text{occur}(\alpha, \tau'_1) \end{cases}$$

where  $\tau'_1 = \text{resolve}(\tau_1, \psi)$  and  $\tau'_2 = \text{resolve}(\tau_2, \psi)$ .

- 1 First, it resolves the types  $\tau_1$  and  $\tau_2$  with the current solution  $\psi$  into  $\tau'_1$  and  $\tau'_2$  using the **type resolving** function `resolve`.
- 2 If only one of them ( $\tau'_1$  or  $\tau'_2$ ) is a type variable, it checks cyclic types using the **occurrence checking** function `occur`.
- 3 Then, it unifies types  $\tau'_1$  and  $\tau'_2$  and updates the solution  $\psi$ .

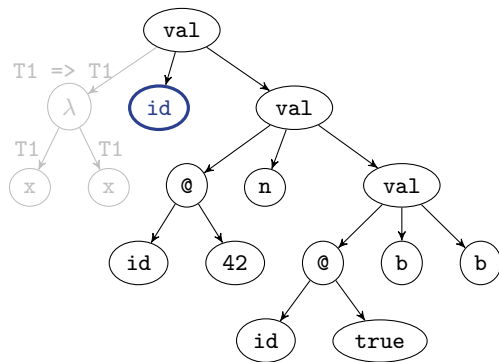
And, we can implement the **type unification** function in Scala as follows:

```
def unify(lty: Type, rty: Type, sol: Solution): Solution =
  (resolve(lty, sol), resolve(rty, sol)) match
    case (NumT, NumT) => sol
    case (BoolT, BoolT) => sol
    case (ArrowT(lpty, lrty), ArrowT(rpty, rrty)) =>
      unify(lrty, rrty, unify(lpty, rpty, sol))
    case (VarT(k), VarT(l)) if k == l => sol
    case (VarT(k), rty) if !occurs(k, rty, sol) => sol + (k -> Some(rty))
    case (lty, VarT(k)) if !occurs(k, lty, sol) => sol + (k -> Some(lty))
    case _ => error(s"Cannot unify ${lty.str} and ${rty.str}")
```

$$\text{unify}(\tau_1, \tau_2, \psi) = \begin{cases} \psi & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \text{num} \wedge \tau'_2 = \text{num} \\ \psi & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \text{bool} \wedge \tau'_2 = \text{bool} \\ \text{unify}(\tau_{1,r}, \tau_{2,r}, \text{unify}(\tau_{1,p}, \tau_{2,p}, \psi)) & \text{if } \tau'_1 = (\tau_{1,p} \rightarrow \tau_{1,r}) \wedge \tau'_2 = (\tau_{2,p} \rightarrow \tau_{2,r}) \\ \psi & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \alpha = \tau'_2 \\ \psi[\alpha \mapsto \tau'_2] & \text{if } \tau'_1 = \alpha \wedge \neg \text{occur}(\alpha, \tau'_2) \\ \psi[\alpha \mapsto \tau'_1] & \text{if } \tau'_2 = \alpha \wedge \neg \text{occur}(\alpha, \tau'_1) \end{cases}$$

where  $\tau'_1 = \text{resolve}(\tau_1, \psi)$  and  $\tau'_2 = \text{resolve}(\tau_2, \psi)$ .

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## Type Environment

$X$	$T$
id	$[T1] \{ T1 \Rightarrow T1 \}$

## Solution

$X_\alpha$	$T$
T1	-

Let's **generalize** the type  $T1 \Rightarrow T1$  into a **polymorphic type** for `id` with **type variable**  $T1$  as a **type parameter**.

We call this **let-polymorphism** because it only introduces polymorphism for the let-binding (e.g., `val`).

We can define the **type generalization** function  $\text{gen}$  as follows:

$$\boxed{\text{gen} : (\mathbb{T} \times \Gamma \times \Psi) \rightarrow \mathbb{T}^\forall}$$

$$\text{gen}(\tau, \Gamma, \psi) = \forall \alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_m. \tau \quad \text{where} \quad \text{free}_\tau(\tau, \psi) \setminus \text{free}_\Gamma(\Gamma, \psi) = \{\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_m\}$$

and the **free type variables** in each component as follows:

$$\boxed{\text{free}_\tau : (\mathbb{T} \times \Psi) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(\mathbb{X}_\alpha)}$$

$$\text{free}_\tau(\tau, \psi) = \begin{cases} \text{free}_{\tau'}(\tau', \psi) & \text{if } \tau = \alpha \wedge \psi(\alpha) = \tau' \\ \{\alpha\} & \text{if } \tau = \alpha \wedge \psi(\alpha) = \perp \\ \text{free}_{\tau_p}(\tau_p, \psi) \cup \text{free}_{\tau_r}(\tau_r, \psi) & \text{if } \tau = (\tau_p \rightarrow \tau_r) \\ \emptyset & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

$$\boxed{\text{free}_{\tau^\forall} : (\mathbb{T}^\forall \times \Psi) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(\mathbb{X}_\alpha)}$$

$$\text{free}_{\tau^\forall}(\forall \alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_m. \tau, \psi) = \text{free}_\tau(\tau, \psi) \setminus \{\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_m\}$$

$$\boxed{\text{free}_\Gamma : (\Gamma \times \Psi) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(\mathbb{X}_\alpha)}$$

$$\text{free}_\Gamma([x_1 : \tau_1^\forall, \dots, x_n : \tau_n^\forall], \psi) = \text{free}_{\tau_1^\forall}(\tau_1^\forall, \psi) \cup \dots \cup \text{free}_{\tau_n^\forall}(\tau_n^\forall, \psi)$$

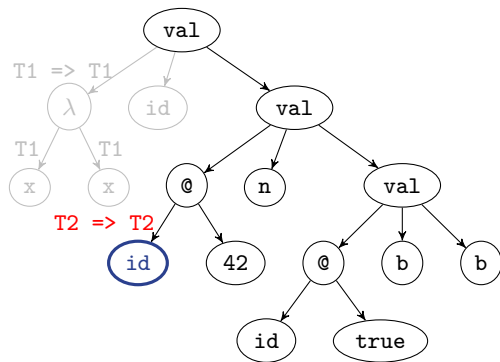


```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
  ...

case Val(x, e, b) =>
  val (ety, sol1) = typeCheck(e, tenv, sol)
  val polyty = gen(ety, tenv, sol1)
  typeCheck(b, tenv + (x -> polyty), sol1)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-Val} \frac{\Gamma, \psi_0 \vdash e_1 : \tau_1, \psi_1 \quad \text{gen}(\tau_1, \Gamma, \psi_1) = \tau_1^\forall \quad \Gamma[x : \tau_1^\forall] \vdash e_2 : \tau_2, \psi_2}{\Gamma, \psi_0 \vdash \text{val } x = e_1; e_2 : \tau_2, \psi_2}$$



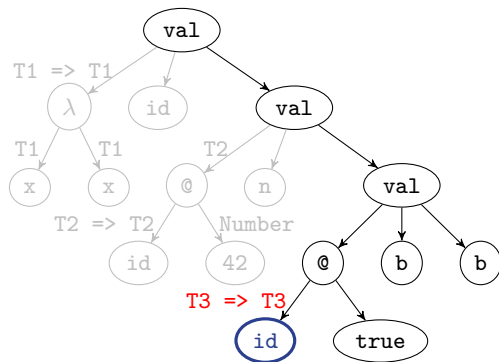
## Type Environment

$X$	$T$
id	$[T1] \{ T1 \Rightarrow T1 \}$

## Solution

$X_\alpha$	$T$
T1	-
<b>T2</b>	-

Let's define a new **type variable T2** to **instantiate** the **type variable T1**.  
And, **substitute T1** with **T2**.



## Type Environment

$X$	$T$
<b>id</b>	$[T1] \{ T1 \Rightarrow T1 \}$
<b>n</b>	$T2$

## Solution

$X_\alpha$	$T$
<b>T1</b>	-
<b>T2</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>T3</b>	-

Let's define a new **type variable T3** to **instantiate** the **type variable T1**.  
And, **substitute T1** with **T3**.

We can define the **type instantiation** function `inst` as follows:

$$\text{inst} : (\mathbb{T}^\forall \times \Psi) \rightarrow (\mathbb{T} \times \Psi)$$

$$\text{inst}(\forall \alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_m. \tau, \psi) = ( \\ \text{subst}(\tau, \psi[\alpha_1 \mapsto \alpha'_1, \dots, \alpha_m \mapsto \alpha'_m]), \\ \psi[\alpha'_1 \mapsto \perp, \dots, \alpha'_m \mapsto \perp] \\ )$$

$$\text{where} \quad \alpha'_1, \dots, \alpha'_m \notin \psi \wedge \forall 1 \leq i < j \leq m. \alpha'_i \neq \alpha'_j$$

and the **type substitution** function `subst` as follows:

$$\text{subst} : (\mathbb{T} \times \Psi) \rightarrow \mathbb{T}$$

$$\text{subst}(\tau, \psi) = \begin{cases} \text{subst}(\tau', \psi) & \text{if } \tau = \alpha \wedge \psi(\alpha) = \tau' \\ \text{subst}(\tau_p, \psi) \rightarrow \text{subst}(\tau_r, \psi) & \text{if } \tau = (\tau_p \rightarrow \tau_r) \\ \tau & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

```
def typeCheck(e: Expr, tenv: TypeEnv, sol: Solution): (Type, Solution) = e match
  ...

case Id(x) =>
  val ty = tenv.getOrElse(x, error(s"free identifier: $x"))
  inst(ty, sol)
```

$$\boxed{\Gamma, \psi \vdash e : \tau, \psi}$$

$$\tau\text{-Id} \frac{\Gamma(x) = \tau^{\forall} \quad \text{inst}(\tau^{\forall}, \psi) = (\tau, \psi')}{\Gamma, \psi \vdash x : \tau, \psi'}$$

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- Please see this document<sup>1</sup> on GitHub.
  - Implement `typeCheck` function.
  - Implement `interp` function.
- It is just an exercise, and you **don't need to submit** anything.
- However, some exam questions might be related to this exercise.

---

<sup>1</sup><https://github.com/ku-plrg-classroom/docs/tree/main/cose212/tifae>.

- Course Review

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<https://plrg.korea.ac.kr>