

Functional vs OO programming

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# History

* **Functional languages**

**Functional programming is a programming paradigm where a computation is treated as an evaluation of a mathematical function. Thus, building software becomes a process of composing pure functions, avoiding shared state, side-effects and mutable data, as opposed to OOP where the state is usually shared ( done so by methods which access mutable data ).**

**Code written in a functional matter tends to be more precise, expressive, predictable and shorted than the imperative or OO code – however, it’s a common pitfall, as it can become cryptic at times if the developer chooses not to pay attention to more self-explanatory options.**

**One common example in Scala would be the use of for comprehensions instead of multiple map/flatMap operations on data.**





**Despite being a simple example, the first example speaks for itself – one read and it should be clear what it does, while in the second example some deciphering and a more thorough read might be required – despite the same amount of rows. This boils down to the programmer’s desire of wanting to improve readability and scalability.**

**Talking about the history of functional languages, one of the most impressive aspects of the paradigm is that all of them are based on Lambda Calculus.**

**First introduced in the 1930s by the mathematician Alonzo Church, lambda calculus consists of constructing terms and performing operations on them. More than that, there are only 3 rules that are used to build terms:**



**Reductions consist of the following operations:**



**The history of the appearance of the first functional programming languages is as followed.**

**LISP**

**The first functional programming language ever that appeared in the late 1950’s and it was a smashing success as it is used almost 70 years later. It is seen by many as one of the simplest, yet most beautiful languages.**

**A few of the more notable characteristics of lisp include:**

* **garbage collection as a method of dealing with unused memory cells**
* **closures – for static scoping**
* **conditional expressions and use for writing recursive functions ( first ever language to do that )**
* **higher order operations on lists**

**FP (Function Programming)**

**It was introduced by John Backus in his 1977 lecture, "Can Programming Be Liberated from the von Neumann Style?" (!!!!), however the language wasn’t much successful outside of academia.**

**ML**

**In the mid 1970’s, researchers at the University of Edinburgh needed a language to describe proof search strategies while working on a system which would automate theorem proving. So, they came up with ML (meta language) and later figured out they could use it as a general purpose language.**

**Two of the most important features of the language include pattern matching and user-defined algebraic datatypes. Both features are strongly related and have played a fundamental role in defining modern programming languages.**

**Miranda**

**Designed by David turned and making its first apparition in 1985, the core feature is represented by lazy evaluation, which in turned later pretty much defined Haskell.**

**Later on, other functional programming languages emerged like:**

* **Haskell – 1987 – the de facto functional programming language**
* **Mathematica**
* **Scheme**
* **Erlang**
* **Elixir – runs on the Erlang Virtual Machine (BEAM)**
* **F#**

**Scala**

**Scala first appeared in 2004, being designed by Martin Odersky as part of a project of École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne.**

**It is developed on the JVM platform, so there are limitations caused by that.**

**Regarding the paradigms used, Scala sits in a bit of a weird spot - initially, it appeared as a desire to be a better Java, with a much cleaner syntax and less boilerplate code, all while adding some functional elements. As it evolved, it started introducing more FP elements - has all elements apart from laziness by default, while still being a pure OOP language. It's one of a kind language, and it does still have its quirks. As the developers' desire to go more functional increased, a number of libraries emerged to close the gap between the functional and OOP paradigms, creating an environment for Scala to be indeed fully Functional.**

* **Object Oriented languages**
* **Current state of the industry**

**Ever since Java has emerged as a programming language, the industry has been ruled by the OOP paradigm.**

**However, with the development of multi-core processors, there has been a shift to working more with threads and parallel processes - as OOP is largely based on mutating the state of the objects, OOP's domination declined a bit as it is increasingly difficult to keep track of changes while multiple threads work on the same data. And as this became a critical part of software development, a need for languages who work on immutable data emerged - and what better than FP, whose core is based on immutability?**

**As the need for immutability and threads increased, most OOP languages adopted some functional elements - .Net's Linq is a wonderful example of this, while Spring 5.0 introduced a whole bunch of functional elements.**

* **Functional programming elements**
* **Immutability**

**An immutable object represents an object whose state cannot be modified by any means - one created, it remains the same throughout its life-span, without any possibility of changing it's internal state.**

**When it comes to representative traits of the FP paradigm,**

**immutability is what sits at the very core of all of them. Without immutability, the paradigm wouldn't exist. As opposed to the OOP paradigm, most relations are described by applying functions over data - thus, most of those functions usually have some laws associated to them to ensure corectness.**

**One of the most common laws associated with these functions is indeed immutability - the insurance that the object will not be tainted after the function has been applied.**

**For example, one of the laws associated with a functor is represented by composition - mapping 2 functions f and g is the same as mapping f and then mapping g, which means that the following property MUST hold:**

**fa.map(g(f(\_))) == fa.map(f).map(g)**

**If fa ( the object mapping over ) is not immutable, then the property simply wouldn't hold for at least some cases - thus, it makes the modelling of the data unpredictable, non-deterministic.**

**Also, one might argue that having immutable data eases the creation of recursive functions, as it's easier to not think about what happens to your data as the recursion goes deeper and deeper, worrying only about what is the goal.**

**It has also become a trend in the industry to opt over immutable entities and data over mutable ones even in OOP languages - numerous articles have emerged favoring the principle, and it has become increasingly popular in Java/C#, having Builders to actually create your immutable data.**

* **Functions**
* **Higher order functions**
* **Recursive functions**
* **Purity and side effects**
* **Referential transparency**
* **Benefits/disadvantages**