# 6.037 Lecture 4
Interpretation

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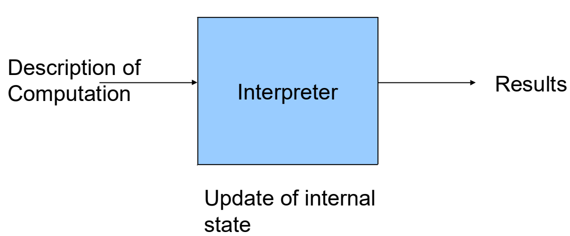
## Interpretation

- Parts of an interpreter
- Arithmetic calculator
- Meta-circular Evaluator (Scheme-in-scheme!)
- A slight variation: dynamic scoping



## What is an interpreter?



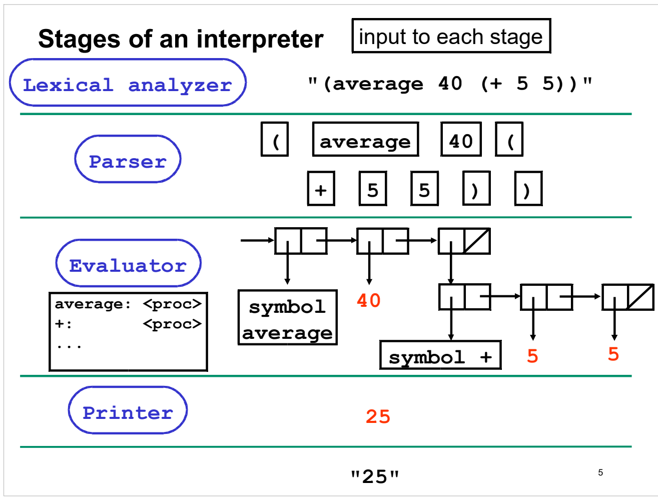



## Why do we need an interpreter?

- Abstractions let us bury details and focus on use of modules to solve large systems
- We need a process to unwind abstractions at execution time to deduce meaning
- We have already seen such a process – the Environment Model
- Now want to describe that process as a procedure



## Stages of an interpreter






## Role of each part of the interpreter

- Lexical analyzer
  - break up input string into "words" called tokens
- Parser
  - convert linear sequence of tokens to a tree
  - like diagramming sentences in elementary school
  - also convert self-evaluating tokens to their internal values
    - e.g., `#f` is converted to the internal false value
- Evaluator
  - follow language rules to convert parse tree to a value
  - read and modify the environment as needed
- Printer
  - convert value to human-readable output string

## Our interpreters

- Only write evaluator and environment
  - Use Scheme's reader for lexical analysis and parsing
  - Use Scheme's printer for output
  - To do this, our language must resemble Scheme
- Start with interpreter for simple arithmetic expressions



## Arithmetic calculator

Want to evaluate arithmetic expressions of two arguments, like:

```
(plus* 24 (plus* 5 6))
```

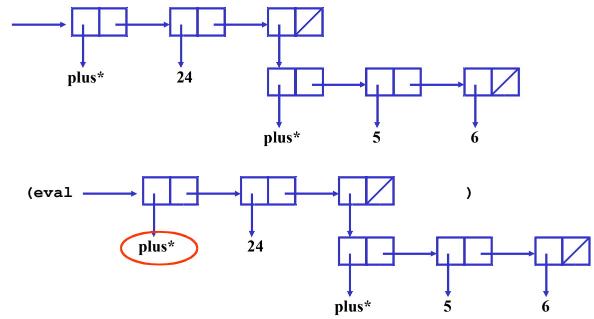


## Arithmetic calculator

```
(define (tag-check e sym) (and (pair? e) (eq? (car e) sym)))
(define (sum? e) (tag-check e 'plus*))

(define (eval exp)
  (cond
   ((number? exp) exp)
   ((sum? exp)     (eval-sum exp))
   (else
    (error "unknown expression " exp))))

(define (eval-sum exp)
   (+ (eval (cadr exp)) (eval (caddr exp))))


(eval '(plus* 24 (plus* 5 6)))
```



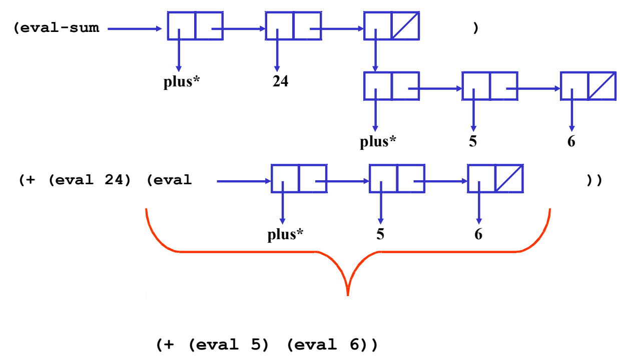
## We are just walking through a tree …




sum? checks the tag



## We are just walking through a tree …






## Arithmetic calculator

```
(plus* 24 (plus* 5 6))
```

- What are the argument and return values of **`eval`** each time it is called in the evaluation of this expression?

```
                        (eval 5)  5   (eval 6)  6
                        (eval-sum '(plus* 5 6))  11
(eval 24)  24           (eval '(plus* 5 6))      11
(eval-sum '(plus* 24 (plus* 5 6)))               35
(eval '(plus* 24 (plus* 5 6)))                   35
```

## Things to observe

- **`cond`** determines the expression type
- No work to do on numbers
  - Scheme's reader has already done the work
  - It converts a sequence of characters like "24" to an internal binary representation of the number 24
  - …self-evaluating!
- **`eval-sum`** recursively calls **`eval`** on both argument expressions



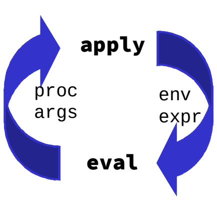
## The Metacircular Evaluator

- And now a complete Scheme interpreter written in Scheme
- Why?
  - An interpreter makes things explicit
    - e.g., procedures and procedure application in the environment model
  - Provides a precise definition for what the Scheme language means
  - Describing a process in a computer language forces precision and completeness
  - Sets the foundation for exploring variants of Scheme
    - Today: lexical vs. dynamic scoping



## The Core Evaluator

1. eval/apply core




```
(define (square x)
  (* x x))

(square 4)

x = 4

(* x x)
```

- Core evaluator
  - eval: evaluate expression by dispatching on type
  - apply: apply procedure to argument values by evaluating procedure body



## Metacircular evaluator (Scheme implemented in Scheme)

primitives

special forms

application

```
(define (m-eval exp env)
  (cond ((self-evaluating? exp) exp)
        ((variable? exp) (lookup-variable-value exp env))
        ((quoted? exp) (text-of-quotation exp))
        ((assignment? exp) (eval-assignment exp env))
        ((definition? exp) (eval-definition exp env))
        ((if? exp) (eval-if exp env))
        ((lambda? exp)
         (make-procedure (lambda-parameters exp)
                         (lambda-body exp)
                         env))
        ((begin? exp) (eval-sequence (begin-actions exp) env))
        ((cond? exp) (m-eval (cond->if exp) env))
        ((application? exp)
         (m-apply (m-eval (operator exp) env)
                  (list-of-values (operands exp) env)))
        (else (error "Unknown expression type -- EVAL" exp))))
```



## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (m-eval exp env)
  (cond ((self-evaluating? exp) exp)
        ((variable? exp) (lookup-variable-value exp env))
        ((quoted? exp) (text-of-quotation exp))
        ((assignment? exp) (eval-assignment exp env))
        ((definition? exp) (eval-definition exp env))
        ((if? exp) (eval-if exp env))
        ((lambda? exp)
         (make-procedure (lambda-parameters exp)
                         (lambda-body exp)
                         env))
        ((begin? exp) (eval-sequence (begin-actions exp) env))
        ((cond? exp) (eval (cond->if exp) env))
        ((application? exp)
         (m-apply (m-eval (operator exp) env)
                  (list-of-values (operands exp) env)))
        (else (error "Unknown expression type -- EVAL" exp))))
```



## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (list-of-values exps env)
  (map (lambda (exp) (m-eval exp env)) exps))
```

## m-apply

```
(define (m-apply procedure arguments)
  (cond ((primitive-procedure? procedure)
         (apply-primitive-procedure procedure arguments))
        ((compound-procedure? procedure)
         (eval-sequence
           (procedure-body procedure)
           (extend-environment (procedure-parameters procedure)
                               arguments
                               (procedure-environment procedure))))
        (else (error "Unknown procedure type -- APPLY"
                     procedure))))
```



## Side comment – procedure body

- The procedure body is a *sequence* of one or more expressions:

```
(define (foo x)
  (do-something (+ x 1))
  (* x 5))
```

- In **`m-apply`**, we **`eval-sequence`** the procedure body.



## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (eval-sequence exps env)
   (cond ((last-exp? exps) (m-eval (first-exp exps) env))
         (else (m-eval (first-exp exps) env)
               (eval-sequence (rest-exps exps) env))))
```



## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (m-eval exp env)
  (cond ((self-evaluating? exp) exp)
        ((variable? exp) (lookup-variable-value exp env))
        ((quoted? exp) (text-of-quotation exp))
        ((assignment? exp) (eval-assignment exp env))
        ((definition? exp) (eval-definition exp env))
        ((if? exp) (eval-if exp env))
        ((lambda? exp)
         (make-procedure (lambda-parameters exp)
                         (lambda-body exp)
                         env))
        ((begin? exp) (eval-sequence (begin-actions exp) env))
        ((cond? exp) (eval (cond->if exp) env))
        ((application? exp)
         (m-apply (m-eval (operator exp) env)
                  (list-of-values (operands exp) env)))
        (else (error "Unknown expression type -- EVAL" exp))))
```



## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (eval-assignment exp env)
  (set-variable-value! (assignment-variable exp)
                       (m-eval (assignment-value exp) exp)
                       env))

(define (eval-definition exp env)
  (define-variable! (definition-variable exp)
                    (m-eval (definition-value exp) env)
                    env))
```



## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (m-eval exp env)
  (cond ((self-evaluating? exp) exp)
        ((variable? exp) (lookup-variable-value exp env))
        ((quoted? exp) (text-of-quotation exp))
        ((assignment? exp) (eval-assignment exp env))
        ((definition? exp) (eval-definition exp env))
        ((if? exp) (eval-if exp env))
        ((lambda? exp)
         (make-procedure (lambda-parameters exp)
                         (lambda-body exp)
                         env))
        ((begin? exp) (eval-sequence (begin-actions exp) env))
        ((cond? exp) (eval (cond->if exp) env))
        ((application? exp)
         (m-apply (m-eval (operator exp) env)
                  (list-of-values (operands exp) env)))
        (else (error "Unknown expression type -- EVAL" exp))))
```

## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (eval-if exp env)
   (if (m-eval (if-predicate exp) env)
       (m-eval (if-consequent exp) env)
       (m-eval (if-alternative exp) env)))
```



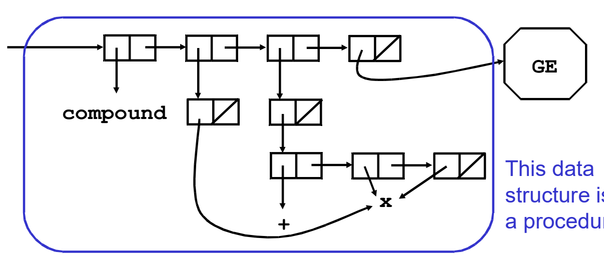
## Pieces of Eval&Apply

```
(define (m-eval exp env)
 (cond ((self-evaluating? exp) exp)
       ((variable? exp) (lookup-variable-value exp env))
       ((quoted? exp) (text-of-quotation exp))
       ((assignment? exp) (eval-assignment exp env))
       ((definition? exp) (eval-definition exp env))
       ((if? exp) (eval-if exp env))
       ((lambda? exp)
        (make-procedure (lambda-parameters exp)
                        (lambda-body exp)
                        env))
       ((begin? exp) (eval-sequence (begin-actions exp) env))
       ((cond? exp) (eval (cond->if exp) env))
       ((application? exp)
        (m-apply (m-eval (operator exp) env)
                 (list-of-values (operands exp) env)))
       (else (error "Unknown expression type -- EVAL" exp))))
```



## Implementation of `lambda`

```
(eval '(lambda (x) (+ x x)) GE)
(make-procedure '(x) '((+ x x)) GE)
(list 'compound '(x) '((+ x x)) GE)
```



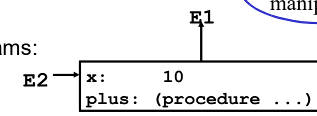

This data structure is a procedure!



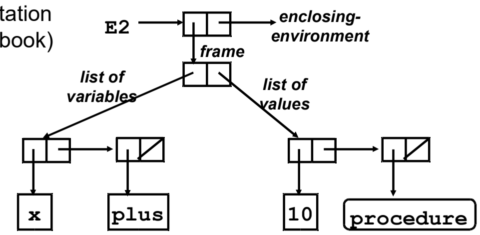
## How the Environment Works

3. environment manipulation

- *Abstractly* – in our environment diagrams:




- *Concretely* – our implementation (as in textbook)

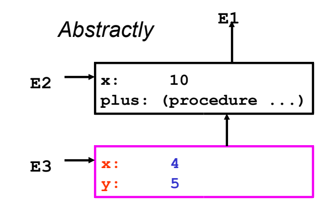




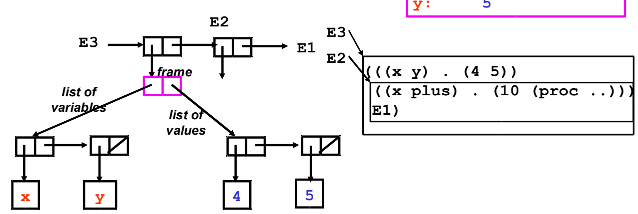

## Extending the Environment

- `(extend-environment '(x y) '(4 5) E2)`

*Abstractly*




*Concretely*






## "Scanning" the environment

- Look for a variable in the environment...
  - Look for a variable in a frame...
    - loop through the list of vars and list of vals in parallel
    - detect if the variable is found in the frame
  - If not found in frame (i.e. we reached end of list of vars), look in enclosing environment

## Scanning the environment (details)

```
(define (lookup-variable-value var env)
  (define (env-loop env)
    (define (scan vars vals)
      (cond ((null? vars) (env-loop (enclosing-environment env)))
            ((eq? var (car vars)) (car vals))
            (else (scan (cdr vars) (cdr vals)))))
    (if (eq? env the-empty-environment)
        (error "Unbound variable -- LOOKUP" var)
        (let ((frame (first-frame env)))
          (scan (frame-variables frame) (frame-values frame)))))
  (env-loop env))
```



## The Initial (Global) Environment

4. primitives and initial env.

- setup-environment

```
(define (setup-environment)
  (let ((initial-env (extend-environment
                      (primitive-procedure-names)
                      (primitive-procedure-objects)
                      the-empty-environment)))
    (define-variable! 'true #T initial-env)
    (define-variable! 'false #F initial-env)
    initial-env))
```

- define initial variables we always want
- bind explicit set of "primitive procedures"
  - here: use underlying Scheme procedures
  - in other interpreters: assembly code, hardware, ....



## Syntactic Abstraction

2. syntax procedures

- Semantics
  - What the language ***means***
  - Model of computation
- Syntax
  - Particulars of writing expressions
  - E.g. how to signal different expressions
- Separation of syntax and semantics: allows one to easily alter syntax

eval/apply ⟺ syntax procedures



## Basic Syntax

```
(define (tagged-list? exp tag)
  (and (pair? exp) (eq? (car exp) tag)))
```

- Routines to detect expressions

```
(define (if? exp) (tagged-list? exp 'if))
(define (lambda? exp) (tagged-list? exp 'lambda))
(define (application? exp) (pair? exp))
```

- Routines to get information out of expressions

```
(define (operator app) (car app))
(define (operands app) (cdr app))
```

- Routines to manipulate expressions

```
(define (no-operands? args) (null? args))
(define (first-operand args) (car args))
(define (rest-operands args) (cdr args))
```



## Example – Changing Syntax

- Suppose you wanted a "verbose" application syntax, i.e., instead of

```
(<proc> <arg1> <arg2> . . .)
```

use

```
(CALL <proc> ARGS <arg1> <arg2> ...)
```

- Changes – only in the syntax routines!

```
(define (application? exp) (tagged-list? exp 'CALL))
(define (operator app) (cadr app))
(define (operands app) (cdddr app))
```



## Implementing "Syntactic Sugar"

- Idea:
  - Easy way to add alternative/convenient syntax
  - Allows us to implement a simpler "core" in the evaluator, and support the alternative syntax by translating it into core syntax
- "let" as sugared procedure application:

```
(let ((<name1> <val1>)
      (<name2> <val2>))
  <body>)
```

```
((lambda (<name1> <name2>)  <body>)
 <val1> <val2>)
```

## Detect and Transform the Alternative Syntax

```
(define (m-eval exp env)
  (cond ((self-evaluating? exp) exp)
        ((variable? exp)
         (lookup-variable-value exp env))
        ((quoted? exp)
         (text-of-quotation exp))
        ...
        ((let? exp)
         (m-eval (let->combination exp) env))
        ((application? exp)
         (m-apply (m-eval (operator exp) env)
                  (list-of-values (operands exp) env)))
        (else (error "Unknown expression" exp))))
```



## Let Syntax Transformation

FROM

```
(let ((x 23)
      (y 15))
   (dosomething x y))
```

TO

```
( (lambda (x y) (dosomething x y))
  23 15 )
```



## Let Syntax Transformation

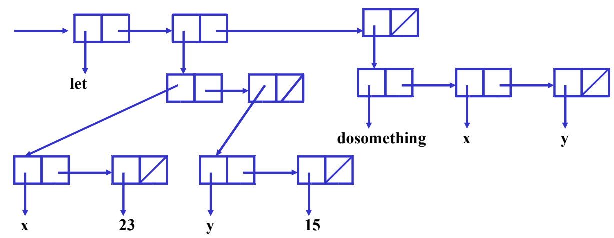
```
(define (let? exp) (tagged-list? exp 'let))

(define (let-bound-variables let-exp)
  (map car (cadr let-exp)))

(define (let-values let-exp)
  (map cadr (cadr let-exp)))

(define (let-body let-exp)
  (cddr let-exp))

(define (let->combination let-exp)
  (let ((names (let-bound-variables let-exp))
        (values (let-values let-exp))
        (body (let-body let-exp)))
    (cons (make-lambda names body)
          values)))
```

**NOTE:** only manipulates list structure, returning new list structure that acts as an expression



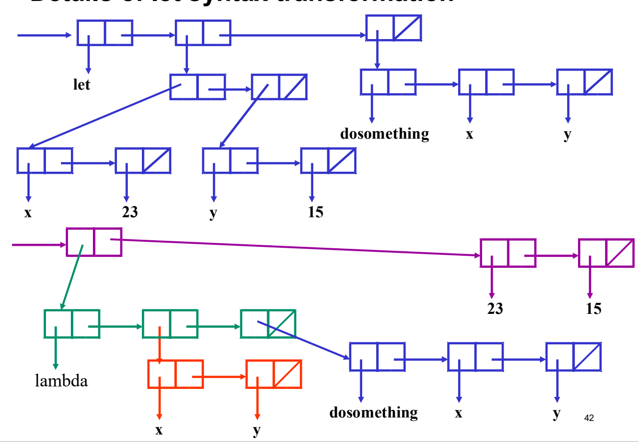
## Details of let syntax transformation

```
(let ((x 23)
      (y 15))
   (dosomething x y))
```






## Details of let syntax transformation






## Defining Procedures

```
(define foo (lambda (x) <body>))
(define (foo x) <body>)
```

- Semantic implementation – just another define:

```
(define (eval-definition exp env)
  (define-variable! (definition-variable exp)
                    (m-eval (definition-value exp) env)
                    env))
```

- Syntactic transformation:

```
(define (definition-value exp)
  (if (symbol? (cadr exp))
      (caddr exp)
      (make-lambda (cdadr exp)     ;formal params
                   (cddr exp))))   ;body
```

## Read-Eval-Print Loop

5. read-eval-print loop

```
(define (driver-loop)
  (prompt-for-input input-prompt)
  (let ((input (read)))
    (let ((output (m-eval input the-global-env)))
      (announce-output output-prompt)
      (display output)))
  (driver-loop))
```



## Variations on a Scheme

- More (not-so) stupid syntactic tricks
  - Let with sequencing
    `(let* ((x 4)`
    `       (y (+ x 1))) . . . )`
  - Infix notation
    `((4 * 3) + 7)` instead of `(+ (* 4 3) 7)`
- Semantic variations
  - *Lexical* vs *dynamic* scoping
    - Lexical: defined by the program text
    - Dynamic: defined by the runtime behavior



## Diving in Deeper: Lexical Scope

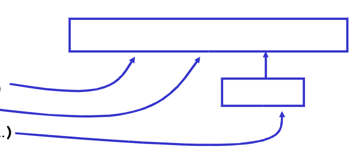
- Scoping is about how **free variables** are looked up (as opposed to bound parameters)

  `(lambda (x) (* x x))`

  `*` is free  `x` is bound

- How does our evaluator achieve lexical scoping?
  - environment chaining
  - procedures capture their enclosing **lexical** environment

```
(define (foo x y) …)
(define (bar l)
   (define (baz m) …)
…)
```

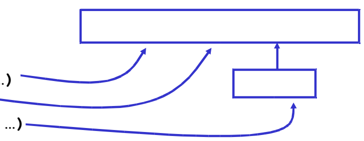




## Diving in Deeper: Lexical Scope

- Why is our language lexically scoped? Because of the semantic rules we use for procedure application:
  - "Drop a new frame"
  - "Bind parameters to actual args in the new frame"
  - "Link frame to the **environment in which the procedure was defined**" (i.e., the environment surrounding the procedure in the program text)
  - "Evaluate body in this new environment"

```
(define (foo x y) …)
(define (bar l)
   (define (baz m) …)
…)
```

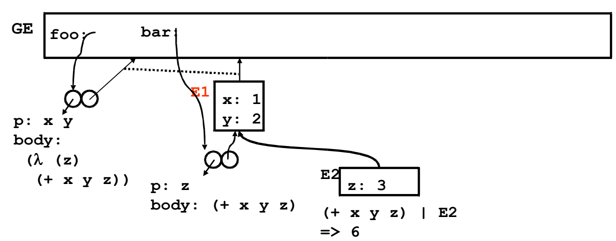




## Lexical Scope & Environment Diagram

```
(define (foo x y)
  (lambda (z) (+ x y z)))

(define bar (foo 1 2))

(bar 3)
```

Will always evaluate `(+ x y z)` in a new environment inside the surrounding lexical environment.



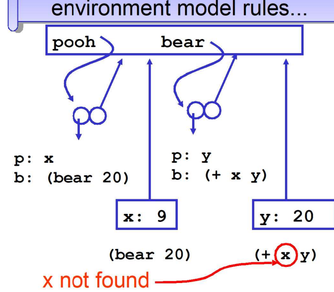



## Alternative Model: Dynamic Scoping

- Dynamic scope:
  - Look up free variables in the caller's environment rather than the surrounding lexical environment
- Example:

Suppose we use our usual environment model rules...

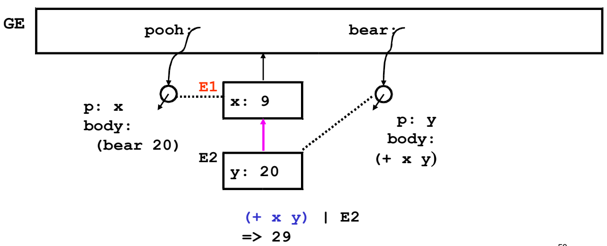
```
(define (pooh x)
  (bear 20))
(define (bear y)
  (+ x y))
(pooh 9)
```



## Dynamic Scope & Environment Diagram

```
(define (pooh x)
  (bear 20))

(define (bear y)
  (+ x y))

(pooh 9)
```

Will evaluate `(+ x y)` in an environment that extends the caller's environment.






## A "Dynamic" Scheme

```
(define (m-eval exp env)
 (cond
   ((self-evaluating? exp) exp)
   ((variable? exp) (lookup-variable-value exp env))
   ...
   ((lambda? exp)
    (make-procedure (lambda-parameters exp)
                    (lambda-body exp)
                    '*no-environment*)) ;CHANGE: no env
   ...
   ((application? exp)
    (d-apply (m-eval (operator exp) env)
             (list-of-values (operands exp) env)
             env)) ;CHANGE: add env
   (else (error "Unknown expression -- M-EVAL" exp))))
```



## A "Dynamic" Scheme – d-apply

```
(define (d-apply procedure arguments calling-env)
  (cond ((primitive-procedure? procedure)
         (apply-primitive-procedure procedure
                                    arguments))
        ((compound-procedure? procedure)
         (eval-sequence
          (procedure-body procedure)
          (extend-environment
            (procedure-parameters procedure)
            arguments
            calling-env))) ;CHANGE: use calling env
       (else (error "Unknown procedure" procedure))))
```



## Evaluator Summary

- Scheme Evaluator – Know it Inside & Out
- Techniques for language design:
  - Interpretation: eval/apply
  - Semantics vs. syntax
  - Syntactic transformations
- Able to design new language variants!
  - Lexical scoping vs. Dynamic scoping