

CSC 347 - Concepts of Programming Languages

Closures

Instructor: Stefan Mitsch



Learning Objectives

❓ What if functions have free variables?

- Identify when a function has free variables
- Identify nested (local) methods and functions
- Describe the effect of closures: how free variables are bound to variables of the environment



Local Variables and Functions

- Local variables: limit their scope
- ? Can we hide functions (e.g., easy user-facing API vs. expressive internal API)?

```
def fact(n: Int, result: Int=1)
```

```
1 def fact(n:Int) : Int =  
2   def loop(n:Int, result:Int) : Int =  
3     if n<=1 then result  
4     else loop(n-1, n*result)  
5   end loop  
6   loop(n, 1)  
7 end fact
```

```
1 int fact (int n) {  
2   int loop(int n, int result) {  
3     if (n <= 1) return result;  
4     else return loop(n-1, n*result);  
5   }  
6   return loop(n, 1);  
7 }
```

- Defined in Scala

```
1 $ gcc -c nested-fact.c  
2 $ gcc -pedantic -c nested-fact.c  
3 function.c: In function 'fact':  
4 function.c:2:3: warning: ISO C forbids nested functions [-pedantic]
```

- Allowed by GCC, but not C standard



Local Functions: Challenge

```
1 typedef void (*funcptr) (int);
2
3 // f returns pointer to local function g
4 funcptr f (int x) {
5     void g (int y) {
6         printf ("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);
7     }
8     return &g;
9 }
10
11 int main (void) {
12     funcptr h1 = f (10);
13     (*h) (2); // call g through h
14     f (20);
15     (*h) (3); // call g through h
16 }
```

Where is `x` ?

```
1 x = 10, y = 2 # (*h)(2): unsafe call h
2 x = 20, y = 3 # (*h)(3): unsafe call h
```



Local Functions: Java and Scala

- Closures: local functions in Scala and Java store environment on function definition

Scala

```
1 def f(x:Int) : Int=>Unit =
2   def g(y:Int) = println(s"x=$x, y=$y")
3   g // return function g, which accesses x
4 end f
5
6 val h1 = f(10)
7 h1(2)           // prints x=10, y=2
8 val h2 = f(20)
9 h1(3)           // prints x=10, y=3
10 h2(3)           // prints x=20, y=3
```

• Java

```
1 import java.util.function.Function;
2
3 public static Function<Integer,Void> f(int x) {
4     Function<Integer,Void> g = y -> {
5         System.out.format ("x=%d, y=%d\n", x, y);
6         return null;
7     }
8     return g;
9 }
10 public static void main (String[] args) {
11     Function<Integer,Void> h1 = f(10);
12     h1.accept(2);           // prints x=10, y=2
13     Function<Integer,Void> h2 = f(20);
14     h1.accept(3);           // prints x=10, y=3
15     h2.accept(3);           // prints x=20, y=3
16 }
```



Closures: Copy or Share

```
1 def outer(x:A) : B=>C =  
2   def inner(y:B) : C =  
3     // use x and y  
4     // free: x  
5     // bound: y  
6   end inner  
7   inner // return inner  
8 end outer
```

Closure contains

- Code for `inner`
- Copy of `x`



Closures: Copy or Share

```
1 def outer(x:A) : B=>C =  
2   var u:A = x  
3   def inner(y:B) : C =  
4     // use x, u, and y:  
5     // free: x, u  
6     // bound: y  
7   end inner  
8   u = u + 1  
9   inner // return inner  
10 end outer
```

Closure contains

- Code for `inner`
- Copy of `x`
- What to do with `u` ?
 - `inner` sees updated `u` ?
 - Scala
 - require `u` to be immutable?
 - Java



Closures: Scala

- `inner` has free `x`
- Needs closure

```
1 def outer(x:Int) : Boolean=>Int =  
2   def inner(y:Boolean) : Int =  
3     x + (if y then 0 else 1)  
4   end inner  
5   inner // return inner  
6 end outer
```

- Object-oriented implementation in Java

```
1 // def outer(x:Int) : Boolean=>Int  
2 public static Function1<Boolean, Integer> outer(int x) {  
3   return new Closure(x); // return inner  
4 }  
5  
6 public final class Closure  
7   extends AbstractFunction1<Boolean, Integer> {  
8  
9   private final int x;  
10  
11   // def inner(y: Boolean) : Int  
12   public final Integer apply(Boolean y) {  
13     return x + (y ? 0 : 1);  
14   }  
15  
16   public Closure(int x) { this.x = x; }  
17 }
```



Closures: Scala

- `inner` has free `x`, `u`
- Needs closure
- Object-oriented impl. stores mutable `u` on heap

```
1 def outer (x:Int) : Boolean=>Int =  
2   var u:Int = x  
3   def inner (y:Boolean) : Int =  
4     x + u + (if y then 0 else 1)  
5   end inner  
6   u = u+1  
7   inner // return inner  
8 end outer
```

```
1 public static Function1<Boolean, Integer> outer(int x) {  
2   IntRef u = new IntRef(x);  
3   var c = new Closure(x, u);  
4   u.elem = u.elem+1;  
5   return c;  
6 }  
7  
8 public final class Closure  
9   extends AbstractFunction1<Boolean, Integer> {  
10  private final int x;  
11  private final IntRef u;  
12  public final Integer apply(Boolean y) {  
13    return x + u.elem + (y ? 0 : 1);  
14  }  
15  public Closure(int x, IntRef u) {  
16    this.x = x;  
17    this.u = u;  
18  }  
19 }
```



Example: Use Closures

Data encapsulation in a "container" for data and functions

Object-oriented programming: classes

```
1 public class Incrementor {
2     private int i;
3     public Incrementor(int i) {
4         this.i = i;
5     }
6     public int increment(int x) {
7         return x+i;
8     }
9 }
10 // use object
11 Incrementor inc = new Incrementor(2);
12 inc.increment(4); // returns 6
13 inc.increment(5); // returns 7
```

? Functional programming

```
1 def incrementor(i:Int) : Int=>Int =
2     (x:Int) => x+i
3 end incrementor
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 // use closure
11 val inc = incrementor(2)
12 inc(4) // returns 6
13 inc(5) // returns 7
```

- Useful for languages without strong visibility modifiers (Python, JavaScript)



Example: Interpret Closures

- Closure for method

```
1 val f: ()=>Int =  
2   var x = -1  
3   def g() =  
4     x = x + 1  
5     x  
6   end g  
7   g
```

- Closure for function

```
1 val f: ()=>Int =  
2   var x = -1  
3   () => {  
4     x = x + 1  
5     x  
6   }
```

- Initializes:

- `x` to `-1` when initializing variable `f`

- Returns:

- incremented `x` on every call `f()`

```
1 scala> f()  
2 res0: Int = 0  
3 scala> f()  
4 res1: Int = 1
```



Example: Interpret Closures

- Closure for method

```
1 def g(y: Int) : ()=>Int =  
2   var z = y  
3   def h() =  
4     z = z + 1  
5     z  
6   end h  
7   h
```

- Closure for function

```
1 val g: Int=>()=>Int =  
2   y => {  
3     var z = y  
4     () => {  
5       z = z + 1  
6       z  
7     }  
8   }
```

- `g(i)` returns:

- function `()=>Int`, its own `z` set to `i`

```
1 scala> val h1=g(10)  
2 h1: () => Int = $$Lambda$1098/39661414@54d8c20d  
3 scala> val h2=g(20)  
4 h2: () => Int = $$Lambda$1098/39661414@5bc7e78e
```

- `h1()` and `h2()` return:

- their own incremented `z`

```
1 scala> h1()  
2 res3: Int = 11  
3 scala> h1()  
4 res4: Int = 12  
5 scala> h2()  
6 res5: Int = 21  
7 scala> h1()  
8 res6: Int = 13
```



Example: Use Closures for Partial Functions

>_ Implement a function that prints a greeting

Scala

```
1 val greet = greeter("Hello")
2 println(greet("Alice"))
3 println(greet("Bob"))
```

- Return a function for printing that accesses the outer greeting argument

```
1 def greeter(greeting: String) : String=>String =
2   (name: String) => s"$greeting $name!"
```

JavaScript

- Event handlers with preserved state

```
1 const button1 = document.getElementById("button1");
2 const button2 = document.getElementById("button2");
3
4 const greet = createGreeter("Hello");
5 button1.addEventListener("click", greet("Alice"));
6 button2.addEventListener("click", greet("Bob"));
```

```
1 function createGreeter(greeting) {
2   function greet(name) {
3     return function() {
4       console.log(greeting + " " + name + "!");
5     }
6   }
7   return greet;
8 }
```



Example: Use Closures for Stateful Functions

➤ Implement a function that collects numbers and computes their average:

```
1 val cavg = cumulativeAvg()  
2 cavg(2) // returns 2  
3 cavg(4) // returns 3  
4 cavg(6) // returns 4
```

- Initialize a list buffer, return a function that appends and then computes the average

```
1 def cumulativeAvg(): Int=>Int =  
2   var sum = 0  
3   var count = 0  
4   x =>  
5     sum += x  
6     count += 1  
7     sum / count  
8 end cumulativeAvg
```



Example: Use Closures for Decorators

➤ Implement a function to cache the results of another function:

Scala

```
1 def square(x: Int) =  
2   println(s"$x^2")  
3   x*x  
4 end square  
5 val cachedSquare = memoize(square)  
6 cachedSquare(5) // prints 5^2 and returns 25  
7 cachedSquare(5) // returns 25 without printing
```

- Initialize cache, return function that consults and updates cache

```
1 def memoize[X,Y](fn: X=>Y) : X=>Y =  
2   import scala.collection.mutable.Map  
3   val cache = Map.empty[X,Y]  
4   x => cache.getOrElseUpdate(x, fn(x))
```

Python

```
1 def memoize(function):  
2     cache = {}  
3     def closure(number):  
4         if number not in cache:  
5             cache[number] = function(number)  
6         return cache[number]  
7     return closure
```

- Use decorator

```
1 @memoize  
2 def square(x):  
3     print(f"{x}^2")  
4     return x*x
```



Example: Use Closures for Data Encapsulation

➤ Implement a map data structure from arrays and index access; wanted use:

```
1 val (get, put) = map(10)
2 put(3, "Hello")
3 put(6, "world!")
4 println(get(3))
```

- Return a tuple of functions that access a shared array

```
1 def map(size: Int) : (Int=>String, (Int, String)=>Unit) =
2   val elems: Array[String] = Array.ofDim(size)
3
4   def get(k: Int)           = elems(k)
5   def put(k: Int, v: String) = elems(k) = v
6
7   (get, put)
8 end map
```



Example: Debouncing and Throttling

- Debouncing: delayed execution of a function (e.g., search after typing finished)
- Throttling: limit the number of executions in a time interval

```
1 const searchInput =  
2   document.getElementById("searchInput");  
3  
4 // Delay by 500ms after last keystroke  
5 const debouncedSearch = debounce(  
6   function(searchTerm) {  
7     console.log("Search for:", searchTerm);  
8   },  
9   500  
10 );  
11  
12 searchInput.addEventListener(  
13   "keyup",  
14   function(event) {  
15     debouncedSearch(event.target.value);  
16   }  
17 );
```

```
1 function debounce(func, delay) {  
2   let timeout;  
3  
4   return function(...args) {  
5     clearTimeout(timeout);  
6     timeout = setTimeout(() => {  
7       func.apply(this, args);  
8     }, delay);  
9   };  
10 }
```



Summary

- Closures are necessary when functions have free variables
- Closures bind free variables of a function to variables from the environment
- Closures align the lifetime of functions and their accessed environment
- [Closures in Javascript](#)