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A SIMPLE NATURAL NOTATION FOR APPLICATIVE LANGUAGES(U)
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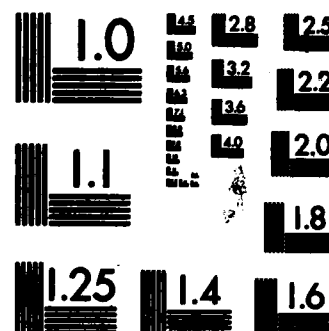
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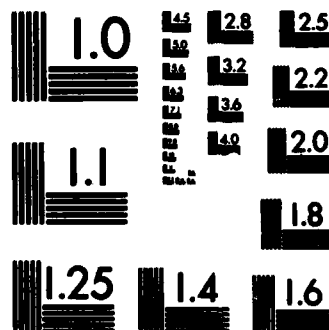
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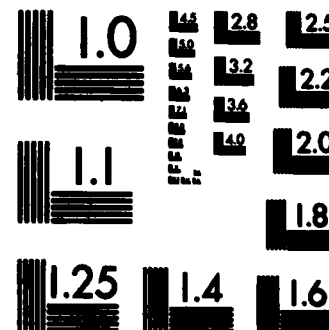
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Monterey, California



A SIMPLE, NATURAL NOTATION FOR APPLICATIVE LANGUAGES

Bruce J. MacLennan

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A SIMPLE, NATURAL NOTATION FOR APPLICATIVE LANGUAGES*

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1. Introduction

Many non-specialists are intimidated by the mathematical appearance of most applicative and very-high-level languages. Mathematical notations have distinct manipulative advantages, some of which I have discussed in MacLennan (1979). Unfortunately the widespread use of advanced languages may be limited by their excessive use of mathematical notations. This paper presents a simple notation that has an unintimidating, natural-language appearance and that can be adapted to a variety of languages.

I must stress that I am not suggesting that this notation constitutes natural language programming. This notation is very far indeed from being even a subset of English, or any other natural language. However, the reader will see that with a proper choice of vocabulary the notation can be quite readable.

I must also stress that this notation is not in itself a programming language. It is more accurate to describe it as a

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syntactic framework that can be adapted to a number of specific contexts by a proper choice of vocabulary. The figures in this paper demonstrate its use as an alternate syntax for LISP, logic programming, functional programming, relational programming, and relational database operations.

2. Syntax

A natural, readable notation results from combining non-symbolic operator names with a right-associative infix syntax, and comma and colon rules that suppress many parentheses. Of course, some of the manipulative advantages of a mathematical notation are lost.

Briefly, the syntax is as follows: All identifiers are divided into three classes: niladic (x, y, z , in the following examples), monadic (f, g), and dyadic (p, q, r). Monadic applications, whether functions or predicates, are written " $f\ x$ ", " $f\ g\ x$ ", etc. These associate to the right, hence " $f\ g\ x$ " means " $f(g\ x)$ ". Dyadic applications, whether functions or relations, are written with a right-associative, infix syntax. That is, " $x\ p\ y\ q\ z$ " means " $x\ p\ (y\ q\ z)$ ". Monadic applications are more binding than dyadic applications; hence, " $f\ x\ p\ g\ y$ " means " $(f\ x)\ p\ (g\ y)$ ". Operations that accept more than two operands are expressed by using a list building (or argument combining) operation. For example, if the operation " y with z " produces the pair (y, z) , then the triadic operation p can be applied by " $x\ p\ y$ with z ".

Commas and colons can be used to eliminate many parentheses. A comma is equivalent to a right parenthesis. The corresponding left parenthesis is at the nearest preceding colon, or at the beginning of the expression, if there is no preceding colon. Hence, "x p y, q z" means "(x p y) q z" and "x p: y q z, r w" means "x p (y q z) r w", which by right-associativity means "x p ((y q z) r w)".

Since the parsing of expressions is determined by the classification of identifiers into niladic, monadic, and dyadic, it is not possible to directly use a monadic or dyadic identifier as the argument to another application. To do this it is necessary to convert the monadic or dyadic identifier into a niladic identifier by quoting it. For example, the inverse of the dyadic identifier plus must be written

inverse 'plus'

The formal grammar for this notation is in the appendix.

Figure 1 shows the natural notation adapted to LISP. The particular vocabulary choices shown are typical. The following two figures show a program in conventional LISP notation and in the natural notation. The remaining figures compare other mathematical and symbolic notations to the natural notation.

3. References

- [1] MacLennan, B. J. Observations on the Differences Between

Formulas and Sentences and their Application to Programming
Language Design, SIGPLAN Notices 14, 7, (July 1979), pp.
51-61.

Appendix: Grammar for Natural Notation.

sentence	=	clause.
clause	=	term [predicate]
	+	phrase, predicate
predicate	=	infix term [predicate]
	+	infix: clause
phrase	=	simple-phrase
	+	phrase, infix simple-phrase
simple-phrase	=	term [infix simple-phrase]
term	=	nilad
	+	"(" clause ")"
	+	prefix term
	+	'monad'
	+	'dyad'
	+	constant
infix	=	dyad
	+	"{" clause "}"
	+	prefix infix
prefix	=	monad
	+	"[" clause "]"

Natural Notation	LISP
"X F Y with Z" means B	(defun F (X Y Z) B)
"X F Y" means B	(defun F (X Y) B)
"F X" means B	(defun F (X) B)
C if B, else D	(cond (B C) (T D))
"X" means Y, below B	(let ((X Y)) B)
first X	(car X)
rest X	(cdr X)
second X	(cadr X)
third X	(caddr X)
X with Y	(cons X Y)
X is Y	(eq X Y)
atom X	(atom X)
null X	(null X)
number X	(numberp X)
X append Y	(append X Y)
X search Y	(assoc X Y)

Figure 1. Comparison of Natural Notation and LISP

```

(defun eql (x y)
  (or (and (atom x) (atom y) (eq x y))
      (and (not (atom x)) (not (atom y))
            (eql (car x) (car y))
            (eql (cdr x) (cdr y)) )) )

```

Figure 2. Equal Function in LISP

"X equals Y" means:

atom X and atom Y and X is Y, or
 not atom X and not atom Y and:
 first X equals first Y, and
 rest X equals rest Y.

Figure 3. Equal Function in Natural Notation

Isa (John, human).
 Gives (John, book, Mary).
 Gives (John, book, x) ← Likes (John, x).
 Likes (w,x) ← Gives(w,y,x), Likes(w,y).

Figure 4. Logic Program in Usual Notation

John isa human.
 John gives book to Mary.
 John gives book to one, if John likes one.
 One likes another, if:
 one gives gift to another, and one likes gift.

Figure 5. Logic Program in Natural Notation

```

Def IP = (/+)'(∞ X)'trans.
Def MM = (∞ ∞ IP)'(∞ dist1)'[1, trans'2]

```

Figure 6. Functional Program in Backus Notation

Inner-product means

transpose then repeat times then reduce-by plus.

Matrix-multiply means:

first combine second then transpose,
then repeat distribute-left
then repeat repeat inner-product.

Figure 7. Functional Program in Natural Notation

```

f$R = f-1.R.f

rightsib = T-1$(Id||( +1))

next = move.total [while( non.dom rightsib, parent); rightsib]

prev = move.total
      [while( non.dom rightsib-1, parent); rightsib-1]

remove(L) = L := subtree N; excise
subtree(n) = (m | m X ints) → T
      where m = subnodes n
reach = (img T).(X ints)

excise = T := T <> non.subnodes N | (T-1N, N, NT N)

replace(L) = T := (T-1N : first L | L) / T

```

Figure 8. Part of Syntax Directed Editor in Relational Notation

"Function map structure" means

function then structure then inverse function.

"Right-sibling" means

inverse tree map identity parallel something plus 1.

"Move-next" means parent do-while non domain right-sibling,

then right-sibling, apply total then move.

"Move-previous" means

parent do-while non domain inverse right-sibling,

then inverse right-sibling, apply total then move.

"Remove-from buffer" means:

buffer becomes subtree of current-node, then excise.

"Subtree a-node" means:

tree if-in the-subnodes combine the-subnodes cross integers,

where the-subnodes means subnodes of a-node.

"Reac..." means: something cross integers, then image tree.

"Excise" means tree becomes

tree restrict non subnodes of current-node

combine: current-node apply inverse tree,

connect current-node connect non-term of current-node.

"Replace-from buffer" means tree becomes:

current-node apply inverse tree, maps-to first buffer,

combine buffer, extend tree.

Figure 9. Part of Syntax Directed Editor in Natural Notation

$\{(F.COMPANY): F \in FORESTS \wedge F.SIZE > 1000\}$

$\{(F.COMPANY, F.FOREST): F \in FORESTS \wedge F.LOC = 'CALIFORNIA'\}$

$\{(F.SIZE, F.LOC): F \in FORESTS \wedge$

$\exists T \in TREE (T.SPECIES = 'CEDAR' \wedge T.FOREST = F.FOREST)\}$

$\{(F.SIZE, T.TREENUM): F \in FORESTS \wedge T \in TREE \wedge$

$T.FOREST = F.FOREST \wedge T.SPECIES = 'CEDAR'\}$

Figure 10. Relational Database Retrievals in Conventional Notation

Company F whenever: F in forests, and size F > 1000.

Company F with forest F, whenever:

F in forests, and location F is "California".

Size F with location F, whenever: F in forests,

and: T in trees, exists:

species T is "cedar", and forest T is forest F.

Size F with tree-number F, whenever:

F in forests, and T in trees, and

forest T is forest F, and species T is "cedar".

Figure 11. Relational Database Retrievals in Natural Notation

```

(defun eval (e a)
  (cond
    ((and (atom e) (numberp e)) e)
    ((atom e) (assoc e a))
    ((eq (car e) 'quote) (cadr e))
    ((eq (car e) 'cond) (evcon (cdr e) a))
    (T (apply (car e) (evargs (cdr e) a) a) )) )

(defun evcon (L a)
  (cond
    ((eval (caar L) a) (eval (cadar L) a))
    (T (evcon (cdr L) a) )) )

(defun evargs (x a) (mapcar (bu (rev 'eval) a) x))

(defun apply (f x a)
  (cond
    ((eq f 'car) (car (car x)) )
    ((eq f 'cdr) (cdr (car x)) )
    ((eq f 'atom) (atom (car x)) )
    ((eq f 'null) (null (car x)) )
    ((eq f 'cons) (cons (car x) (cadr x)) )
    ((eq f 'eq) (eq (car x) (cadr x)) )
    (T (let ((L (eval f a) ))
          (let ((LE (mapcar 'list (cadr L) x) ))
            (eval (caddr L) (append LE a)) )) ) ) )

```

Figure 12. LISP Universal Function in LISP

"Names evaluate form" means:

form if (atom form and number form), else:

names search form if atom form, else:

second form if first form is "quote", else:

names do-conditional rest form, if first form is "cond", else

names apply first form with names evaluate-list rest form.

"Names do-conditional pairs" means:

names evaluate second first pairs,

if names evaluate first first pairs,

else names do-conditional rest pairs.

"Names evaluate-list forms" means:

nil if null forms, else:

names evaluate first forms,

with names evaluate-list rest forms.

Figure 13. LISP Universal Function in Natural Notation (Part 1)

"Names apply function with actuals" means:

first first actuals if function is "car", else:
rest first actuals if function is "cdr", else:
atom first actuals if function is "atom", else:
null first actuals if function is "null", else:
first actuals with second actuals, if function is "cons", else:
first actuals is second actuals, if function is "eq", else:
names apply-user function with actuals.

"Names apply-user function with actuals" means:

lambda-expression means names evaluate function, below:
bound-variables means second lambda-expression, below:
bound-variables pair-with actuals, append names,
evaluate third lambda-expression.

"Names pair-with values" means:

nil if null names, else:
first names with first values,
with rest names pair-with rest values.

Figure 14. LISP Universal Function in Natural Notation (Part 2)

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