Overview

• Last time
  – Recursion in Prolog; infinite loops; structures; declarative vs
    procedural meaning.

• Today:
  – Lists: syntax of lists and writing procedures using lists;
  – Carrying out simple debugging

• Learning outcome covered today:
  Understand and write Prolog code to solve simple knowledge-based problems.

Last Week

• Recursion is a powerful construct essential to Prolog
• Take care with recursive rules to avoid an infinite sequence of
  recursive calls
• The order of clauses and goals does matter
• Declarative meaning vs. procedural meaning
• Structures

Recap: Structures

• Structures are a useful data structure in Prolog
• They are objects that have several components (terms) and a
  name (functor) that associates them together
  – date(5, february, 2002)
  – location(depot1, manchester)
  – id_no(rajeev, gore, 02571)
  – state(ontable, onblock)
Structures

- Both location(depot1, manchester) and manchester are known as terms
- Components of structured objects can themselves be structured
  id_no(name(rajeev, gore),02571)
- Structures can contain variables
  location(X, manchester) could be used in a program to mean any depot in Manchester – this is taken to mean ‘find values for X that are in Manchester’

Lists

- Lists are commonly used in Prolog
  [clare, sean, richard, paula]
- The first item in a list is the head of the list
- The remaining part is the tail of the list
- The tail is a list and head is an element of a list
  – In the above list clare is the head
  – whereas [sean, richard, paula] is the tail
- We can also represent the list with a pipe
  – [clare | [sean, richard, paula]]
  – which would match with [Head | Tail]

Some Queries on List Patterns

Suppose a program exists with:

spectrum([red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet]).

?- spectrum(X).
X = [red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet].

?- spectrum([[X] | Y]).
The variable following pipe binds to a list
X = red,
Y = [orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet].

?- spectrum([X | Y]).
The first term is not a list
false.

?- spectrum([X,Y,Z | T]).
Asks for the first three terms in a list and then the rest of the tail.
Succeeds if the list contains at least three terms.
false.

X = red,
Y = orange,
Z = yellow,
T = [green, blue, indigo, violet].
Member Succeeding

tmember(H, [H|Tail]).
tmember(X, [H|Tail]) :-
  tmember(X, Tail).

Base: H is a member of a list if it is the 1st term

Recursive: X is a member of a list if it is on the tail

The query

?- tmember(richard, [clare, sean, richard, paula]).

doesn't match with the first clause but does with the second, where:

X = richard, H = clare, Tail = [sean, richard, paula].

Creates the new subgoal:

  tmember(richard, [sean, richard, paula]).

Matches the second clause again:

X = richard, H = sean, Tail = [richard, paula].

Creates the new subgoal:

  tmember(richard, [richard, paula]).

Matches the base case and succeeds - richard is a member of the list – returns 'true'

NB: Prolog has a built in 'member' functor; we write our own for study by including the prefix 't'

Member Failing

• The query

?- tmember(john, [clare, sean, richard, paula]).

keeps recursively calling tmember as follows

  tmember(john, [sean, richard, paula]).
  tmember(john, [richard, paula]).
  tmember(john, [paula]).
  tmember(john, []).

• There is no rule to apply to the empty list so tmember(john, [])
  fails

• tmember(X, [X|T]) needs at least one element to match the X

Exercise

Debugging Prolog Programs

• The debugging tool called tracing is invoked by typing trace at the prompt

  ?- trace.

• You can also enter trace mode by typing

  ?- trace, whatever-your-query-is.

• This allows you to follow step-by-step how Prolog is evaluating the query in trying to satisfy the goal.
  – Pressing return will give the new goal or whether the current goal has succeeded or failed.
  • To turn trace off you can type nodbug.

• Advice for debugging:
  – Test smaller units e.g. individual procedures
  – Look out for infinite recursions

• This is using trace in Unix. In Windows, there are some variations.
Tracing a Successful Goal

?- trace, tmember(richard,[clare,sean,richard,paula]).
Call: (7) tmember(richard, [clare, sean, richard, paula]) ? creep
Call: (8) tmember(richard, [sean, richard, paula]) ? creep
Call: (9) tmember(richard, [richard, paula]) ? creep
Exit: (9) tmember(richard, [richard, paula]) ? creep
Exit: (8) tmember(richard, [sean, richard, paula]) ? creep
Exit: (7) tmember(richard, [clare, sean, richard, paula]) ? creep
ture .

Does not tell you which clause is called; goes down to what succeeds (if any); passes success back up to the topmost goal.

Note: following trace instructions for Unix/Linux.

Tracing a Failing Goal

?- trace, tmember(john,[clare,sean,richard,paula]).
Call: (7) tmember(john, [clare, sean, richard, paula]) ? creep
Call: (8) tmember(john, [sean, richard, paula]) ? creep
Call: (9) tmember(john, [richard, paula]) ? creep
Call: (10) tmember(john, [paula]) ? creep
Call: (11) tmember(john, []) ? creep
Fail: (11) tmember(john, []) ? creep
Fail: (10) tmember(john, [paula]) ? creep
Fail: (9) tmember(john, [richard, paula]) ? creep
Fail: (8) tmember(john, [sean, richard, paula]) ? creep
Fail: (7) tmember(john, [clare, sean, richard, paula]) ? Creep
false.

Goes down to where it fails; passes failure back up to topmost goal (unless there are other branches to explore).

Append

- tappend is a useful example of list processing

% tappend(L1,L2,L3)
% takes two lists L1 and L2 and returns a % list L3 which is the result of appending % L2 to L1
% /***************************/
tappend([],L2,L2).

tappend([H1|L1],L2,[H1|L3]) :-
tappend(L1,L2,L3).

Base clause
instantiates L3 to L2. Then they differ.

Every recursive call to
tappend(L1,L2,L3)
takes off one more element from L1 until the base clause can be satisfied, making L3 the same list as L2. Then it backtracks through the calls, instantiates the variables, so recursively adds the head of L1 to the head of L3.

Find a value for E that makes the query true.

Append in Action

?- trace, tappend([a,b],[c,d],E).
Call: (7) tappend([a, b], [c, d], _G2168) ? creep
Call: (8) tappend([b], [c, d], _G2285) ? creep
Call: (9) tappend([], [c, d], _G2288) ? creep
Exit: (9) tappend([], [c, d], [c, d]) ? creep
Exit: (8) tappend([b], [c, d], [b, c, d]) ? creep
Exit: (7) tappend([a, b], [c, d], [a, b, c, d]) ? creep
E = [a, b, c, d].

The third argument must be a variable
(or equal to L2 ) so it matches L2.
Exercise

Append Again (decomposing a list)

?- trace,tappend(A,B,[a,b,c]).
   Call:   (7) tappend(_G2163, _G2164, [a, b, c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (7) tappend([], [a, b, c], [a, b, c]) ? creep
   A = [],
   B = [a, b, c];

   Redo: (7) tappend(_G2163, _G2164, [a, b, c]) ? creep
   Call:   (8) tappend(_G2291, _G2164, [b, c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (8) tappend([], [b, c], [b, c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (7) tappend([a], [b, c], [a, b, c]) ? creep
   A = [a],
   B = [b, c];

   Redo: (8) tappend(_G2291, _G2164, [b, c]) ? creep
   Call:   (9) tappend(_G2294, _G2164, [c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (9) tappend([], [c], [c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (8) tappend([b], [c], [b, c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (7) tappend([a, b], [c], [a, b, c]) ? creep
   A = [a, b],
   B = [c];

   Redo: (9) tappend(_G2294, _G2164, [c]) ? creep
   Call:   (10) tappend(_G2297, _G2164, []) ? creep
   Exit:   (10) tappend([], [], []) ? creep
   Exit:   (9) tappend(_G2294, [], [], [c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (8) tappend(_G2291, [], [b, c]) ? creep
   Exit:   (7) tappend(_G2163, [a, b, c], [a, b, c]) ? creep
   A = [a, b, c],
   B = [];

   Redo: (10) tappend(_G2297, _G2164, []) ? creep
   Fail:    (10) tappend(_G2297, _G2164, []) ? creep
   Fail:    (9) tappend(_G2294, [c], [], [c]) ? creep
   Fail:    (8) tappend(_G2291, [b, c], [], [b, c]) ? creep
   Fail:    (7) tappend(_G2163, [a, b, c], [a, b, c]) ? creep
   false.

In the redos, different possible solutions are considered though the goal is the same.

Summary

• Lists are common data structures in Prolog
• Procedures related to lists are often recursive
  – Do it to the head, then do it to the rest
• Tracing a procedure can help you see what your program is doing

• Next time
  – Search in complex environments