CS61B Lecture #24

Today: Java support for generic programming

Readings for today: A Java Reference, Chapter 10.

Readings for Monday: Data Structures, §6.4.
The Old Days

- Java library types such as List didn’t used to be parameterized. All Lists were lists of Objects.
- So you’d write things like this:
  
  ```java
  for (int i = 0; i < L.size (); i += 1)
  { String s = (String) L.get (i); ... }
  ```

- That is, must explicitly cast result of L.get (i) to let the compiler know what it is.
- Also, when calling L.add(x), was no check that you put only Strings into it.
- So, newest release attempts to alleviate these perceived problems by introducing parameterized types, like List<String>.
- Unfortunately, it is not as simple as one might think.
Basic Parameterization

• From the definitions of ArrayList and Map in java.util:

```java
public class ArrayList<Item> implements List<Item> {
    public Item get (int i) { ... }
    public boolean add (Item x) { ... }
    ...
}
public interface Map<Key, Value> {
    Value get (Key x);
    ...
}
```

• First occurrence of Item, Key, and Value introduce formal type parameters, whose “value” (a reference type) in effect gets substituted for all the other occurrences of Item, Key, or Value when ArrayList or Map is “called” (as in ArrayList<String>, or ArrayList<int[]>, or Map<String, List<Particle>>).

• Can also say that you don’t care what a type parameter is (wild-cards):

```java
/** Number of items in C that are equal to X. */
static int frequency (Collection<?> c, Object x) {...}
```
Parameters on Methods

- Functions (methods) may also be parameterized by type. Example of use from java.util.Collections:

  ```java
  /** A read-only list containing just ITEM. */
  static <T> List<T> singleton (T item) { ... }
  
  In this case, compiler figures out T without help when you call singleton(x) by looking at the type of x.
  ```

- Another example (from java.util.Collections):

  ```java
  /** An unmodifiable empty list. */
  static <T> List<T> emptyList () { ... }
  
  Here, a call to emptyList() would not contain enough information, so instead we write, e.g., Collections.<Particle>emptySet (), to tell the compiler that T is Particle.
  ```
Type Bounds

• Sometimes, your program needs to ensure that a particular type parameter is replaced only by a subtype (or supertype) of a particular type (sort of like specifying the “type of a type.”).

• For example,

```java
class NumericSet<T extends Number> extends HashSet<T> {
    /** My minimal element */
    T min () { ... }
    ...
}
```

Requires that all type parameters to NumericSet must be subtypes of Number (the “type bound”). T can either extend or implement the bound, as appropriate.

• Another example:

```java
/** Set all elements of L to X. */
static <T> void fill (List<? super T> L, T x) { ... }
```

means that L can be a List<Q> as long as T is a subtype of (extends or implements) Q.
Type Bounds (II)

And one more:

/** Search sorted list L for KEY, returning either its position (if present), or k-1, where k is where KEY should be inserted. */
static <T> int binarySearch(List<? extends Comparable<? super T>> L, T key)

Here, the items of L have to have a type that is comparable to T’s or some supertype of T. Does L have to be able to contain the value key? Why does this make sense?
Dirty Secrets Behind the Scenes

- Java's design for parameterized types was constrained by a desire for backward compatibility.

- Actually, when you write

```java
class Foo<T> {
    T x;
    T mogrify (T y) { ... }
}
```

Java gives really gives you

```java
class Foo {
    Object x;
    Object mogrify (Object y) { ... }
}
```

That is, it supplies the casts automatically, and also throws in some additional checks. If it can't guarantee that all those casts will work, gives you a warning about "unsafe" constructs.
Limitations

Because of Java’s design choices, are some limitations to generic programming:

- Since all kinds of Foo or List are really the same,
  - L instanceof List<String> will be true when L is a List<Integer>.
  - Inside, e.g., class Foo, you cannot write new T(), new T[], or x instanceof T.

- Primitive types are not allowed as type parameters.
  - Can’t have ArrayList<int>, just ArrayList<Integer>.
  - Fortunately, automatic boxing and unboxing makes this substitution easy:
    ```java
    int sum (ArrayList<Integer> L) {
        int N; N = 0;
        for (int x : L) { N += x; }
        return N;
    }
    ```
  - Unfortunately, boxing/unboxing have significant costs.