COSC252: Programming Languages: Intro

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Course Overview

- Tour class website for details …

http://jeremybolton.georgetown.domains/courses/pl/

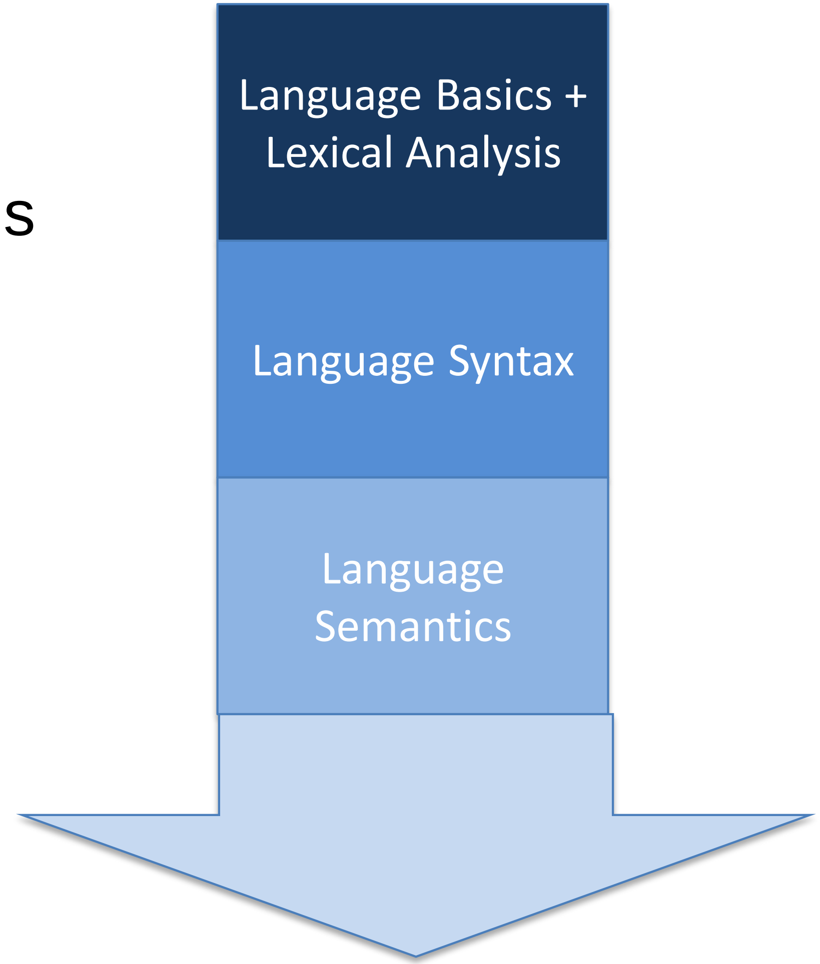
Course Timeline

I. Practical Perspective: Programming Language Design
   - Theory injected into discussions and readings
   - Deliverables of course project

II. Theoretical ReCap: Formal Languages

III. Programming Language Paradigms
   - History / Motivation
   - Functional, OOP, Logic, …
   - Practical Application via Project

IV. Formal Semantics



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Outline

I. Introduction
II. Programming Domains
III. Programming Categories
IV. Language Design Trade-offs
V. Programming Methods

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Why do we study PLs?

- What is the purpose of a language?

- Why do we study programming languages?
  - How do we use language?
  - How does language *work*?

Communication via PL

- How is communication with a machine possible / facilitated?
  - To better understand this we must investigate the computer

- Translation from human to machine

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Which PL to Use?

- Where are programming languages used?
  - Do application areas dictate the choice of PL? Why?

- What flavors or categories and subcategories of PLs are there?

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Assessing PLs

- What characteristics of PLs are distinguishing?
  - Evaluation criteria and tradeoffs

Appendix

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Topics

- Reasons for Studying Concepts of Programming Languages
- Programming Domains
- Language Evaluation Criteria
- Influences on Language Design
- Language Categories
- Language Design Trade-Offs
- Implementation Methods
- Programming Environments

Reasons for Studying Concepts of Programming Languages

- Increased ability to express ideas
- Improved background for choosing appropriate languages
- Increased ability to learn new languages
- Better understanding of significance of implementation
- Better use of languages that are already known
- Overall advancement of computing

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Programming Domains

- Scientific applications
  - Large numbers of floating point computations; use of arrays
  - Fortran
- Business applications
  - Produce reports, use decimal numbers and characters
  - COBOL
- Artificial intelligence
  - Symbols rather than numbers manipulated; use of linked lists
  - LISP
- Systems programming
  - Need efficiency because of continuous use
  - C
- Web Software
  - Eclectic collection of languages: markup (e.g., HTML), scripting (e.g., PHP), general-purpose (e.g., Java)

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Language Evaluation Criteria

- **Readability**: the ease with which programs can be read and understood
- **Writability**: the ease with which a language can be used to create programs
- **Reliability**: conformance to specifications (i.e., performs to its specifications)
- **Cost**: the ultimate total cost

Evaluation Criteria: Readability

- Overall simplicity
  - A manageable set of features and constructs
  - Minimal feature multiplicity
  - Minimal operator overloading
- Orthogonality
  - A relatively small set of primitive constructs can be combined in a relatively small number of ways
  - Every possible combination is legal
- Data types
  - Adequate predefined data types
- Syntax considerations
  - Identifier forms: flexible composition
  - Special words and methods of forming compound statements
  - Form and meaning: self-descriptive constructs, meaningful keywords

Evaluation Criteria: Writability

- Simplicity and orthogonality
  - Few constructs, a small number of primitives, a small set of rules for combining them
- Support for abstraction
  - The ability to define and use complex structures or operations in ways that allow details to be ignored
- Expressivity
  - A set of relatively convenient ways of specifying operations
  - Strength and number of operators and predefined functions

Evaluation Criteria: Reliability

- Type checking
  - Testing for type errors
- Exception handling
  - Intercept run-time errors and take corrective measures
- Aliasing
  - Presence of two or more distinct referencing methods for the same memory location
- Readability and writability
  - A language that does not support “natural” ways of expressing an algorithm will require the use of “unnatural” approaches, and hence reduced reliability

Evaluation Criteria: Others

- Portability
  - The ease with which programs can be moved from one implementation to another
- Generality
  - The applicability to a wide range of applications
- Well-definedness
  - The completeness and precision of the language’s official definition

Language Design Trade-Offs

- Reliability vs. cost of execution
  - Example: Java demands all references to array elements be checked for proper indexing, which leads to increased execution costs

- Readability vs. writability

  Example: APL provides many powerful operators (and a large number of new symbols), allowing complex computations to be written in a compact program but at the cost of poor readability

- Writability (flexibility) vs. reliability
  - Example: C++ pointers are powerful and very flexible but are unreliable

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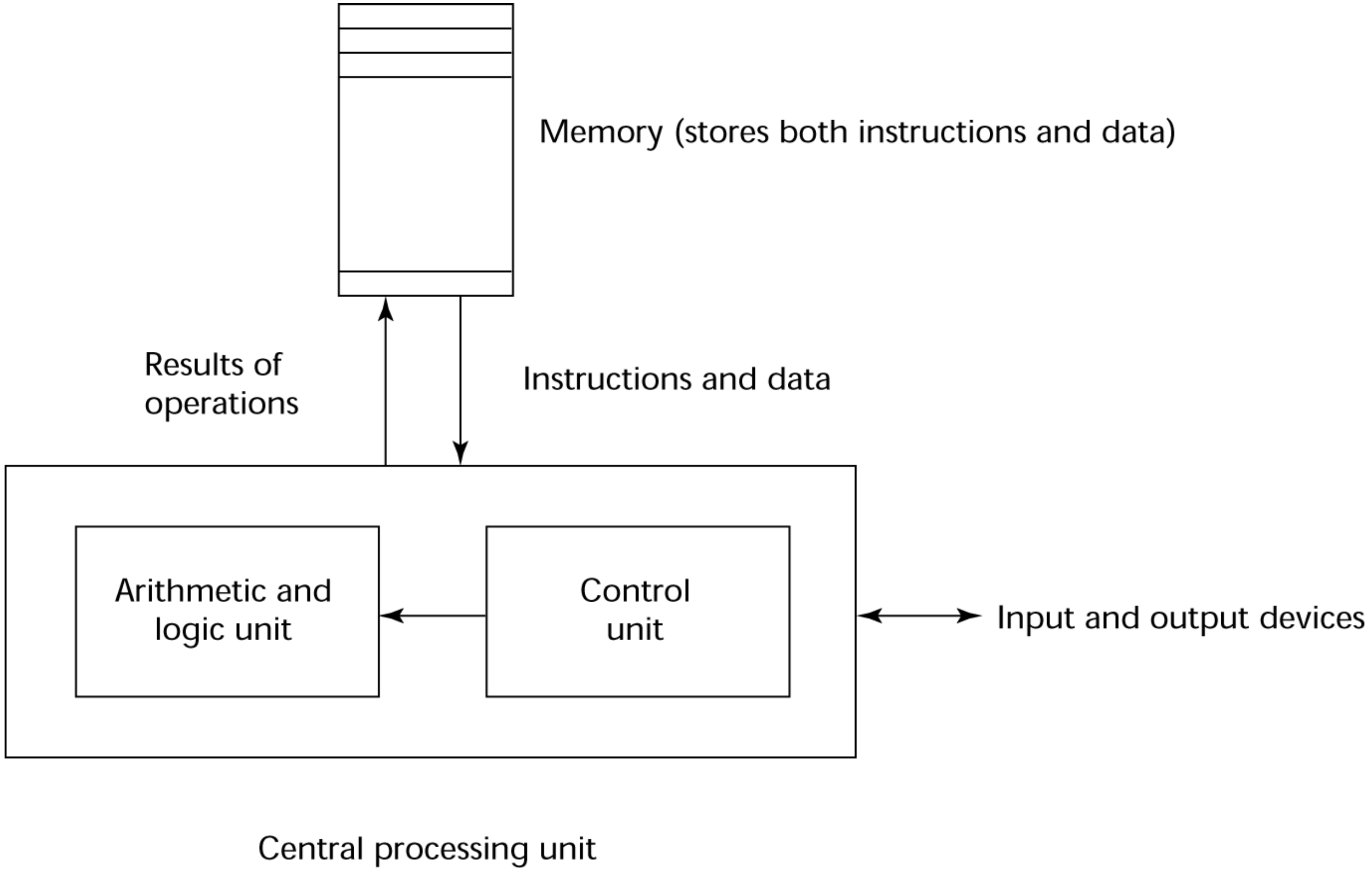
Influences on Language Design

- Computer Architecture
  - Languages are developed around the prevalent computer architecture, known as the *von Neumann* architecture
- Program Design Methodologies
  - New software development methodologies (e.g., object-oriented software development) led to new programming paradigms and by extension, new programming languages

Computer Architecture Influence

- Well-known computer architecture: Von Neumann
- Imperative languages, most dominant, because of von Neumann computers
  - Data and programs stored in memory
  - Memory is separate from CPU
  - Instructions and data are piped from memory to CPU
  - Basis for imperative languages
    - Variables model memory cells
    - Assignment statements model piping
    - Iteration is efficient

The von Neumann Architecture



The von Neumann Architecture

- Fetch-execute-cycle (on a von Neumann architecture computer)

```
initialize the program counter
repeat forever
  fetch the instruction pointed by the counter
  increment the counter
  decode the instruction
  execute the instruction
end repeat
```

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Programming Methodologies Influences

- 1950s and early 1960s: Simple applications; worry about machine efficiency
- Late 1960s: People efficiency became important; readability, better control structures
  - structured programming
  - top-down design and step-wise refinement
- Late 1970s: Process-oriented to data-oriented
  - data abstraction
- Middle 1980s: Object-oriented programming
  - Data abstraction + inheritance + polymorphism

Language Categories

- Imperative
  - Central features are variables, assignment statements, and iteration
  - Include languages that support object-oriented programming
  - Include scripting languages
  - Include the visual languages
  - Examples: C, Java, Perl, JavaScript, Visual BASIC .NET, C++
- Functional
  - Main means of making computations is by applying functions to given parameters
  - Examples: LISP, Scheme, ML, F#
- Logic
  - Rule-based (rules are specified in no particular order)
  - Example: Prolog
- Markup/programming hybrid
  - Markup languages extended to support some programming
  - Examples: JSTL, XSLT

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Implementation Methods

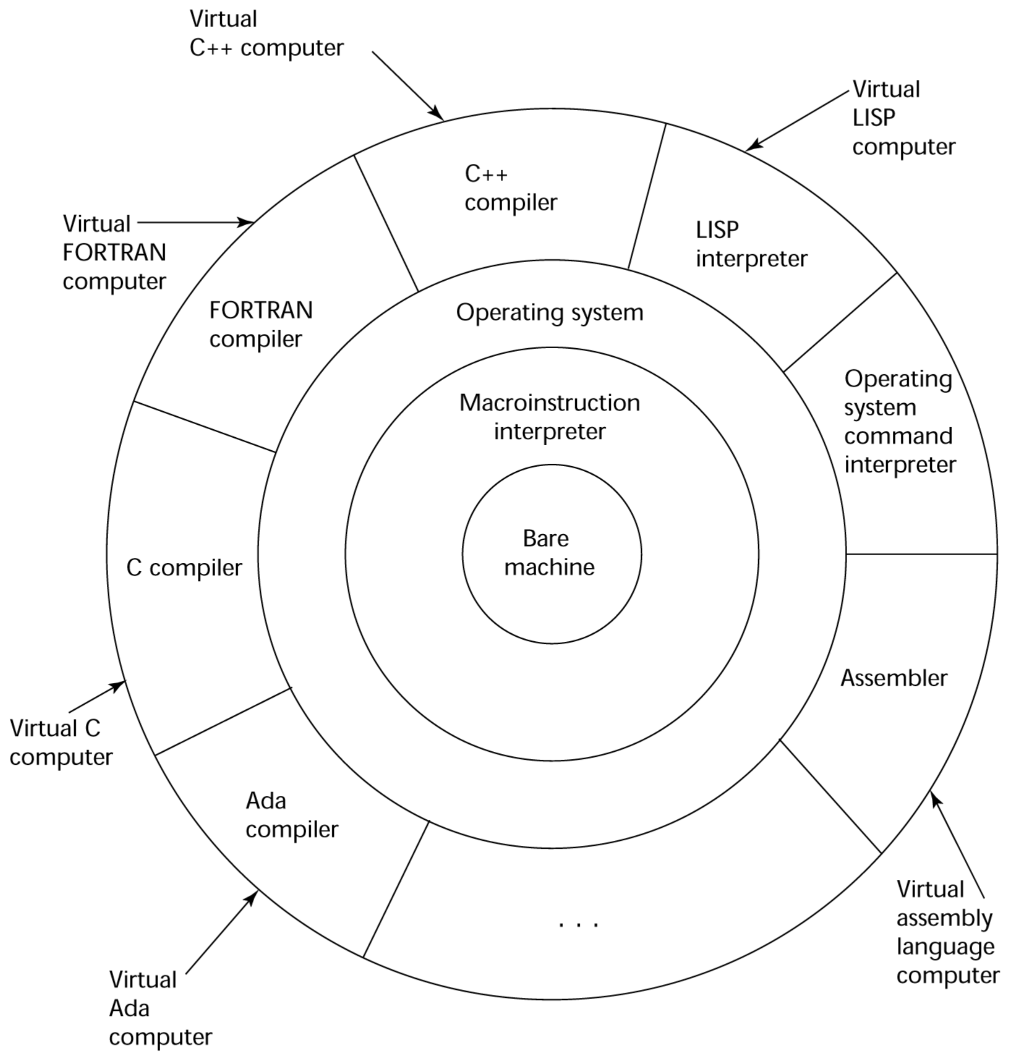
- Compilation
  - Programs are translated into machine language; includes JIT systems
  - Use: Large commercial applications

- Pure Interpretation
  - Programs are interpreted by another program known as an interpreter
  - Use: Small programs or when efficiency is not an issue

- Hybrid Implementation Systems
  - A compromise between compilers and pure interpreters
  - Use: Small and medium systems when efficiency is not the first concern

Layered View of Computer

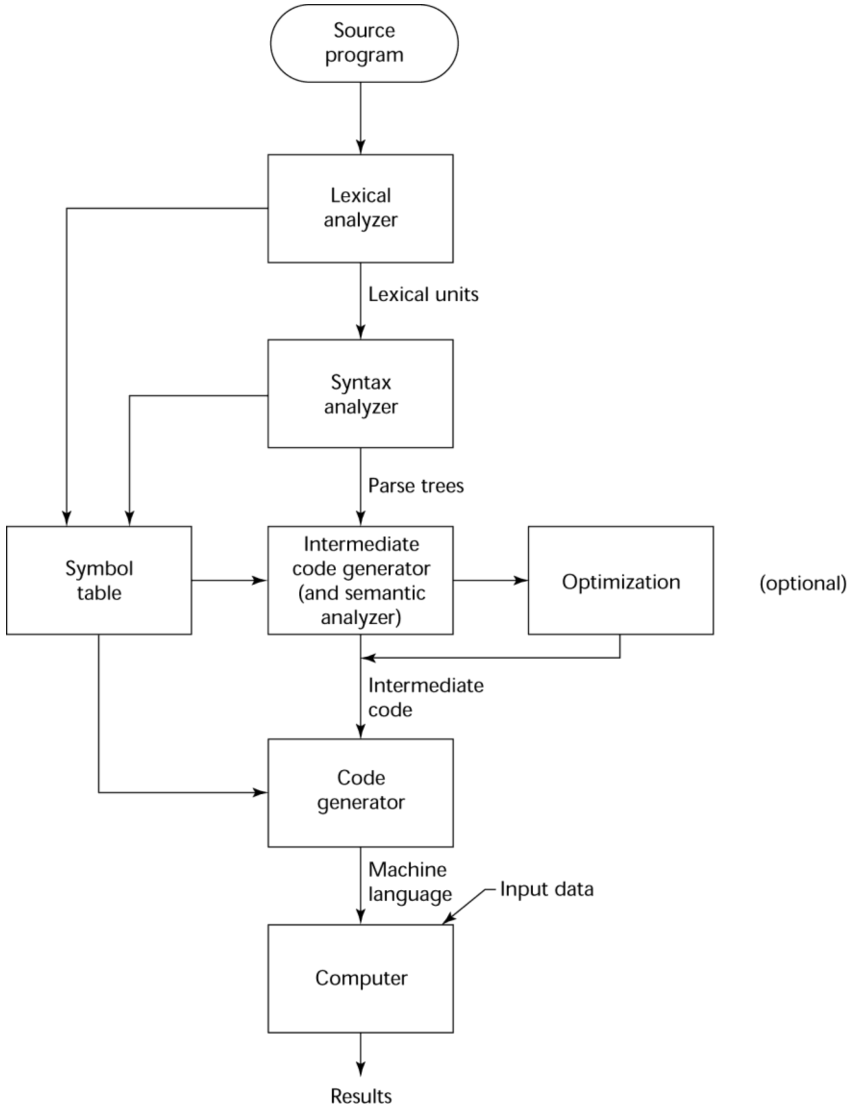
The operating system and language implementation are layered over machine interface of a computer



Compilation

- Translate high-level program (source language) into machine code (machine language)
- Slow translation, fast execution
- Compilation process has several phases:
  - lexical analysis: converts characters in the source program into lexical units
  - syntax analysis: transforms lexical units into *parse trees* which represent the syntactic structure of program
  - Semantics analysis: generate intermediate code
  - code generation: machine code is generated

The Compilation Process



```
while (y < z) {
    int x = a + b;
    y += x;
}
```

COMPILATION EXAMPLE

- Lexical Analysis
- Syntax Analysis
- Semantic Analysis
- IR Generation
- IR Optimization
- Code Generation
- Optimization

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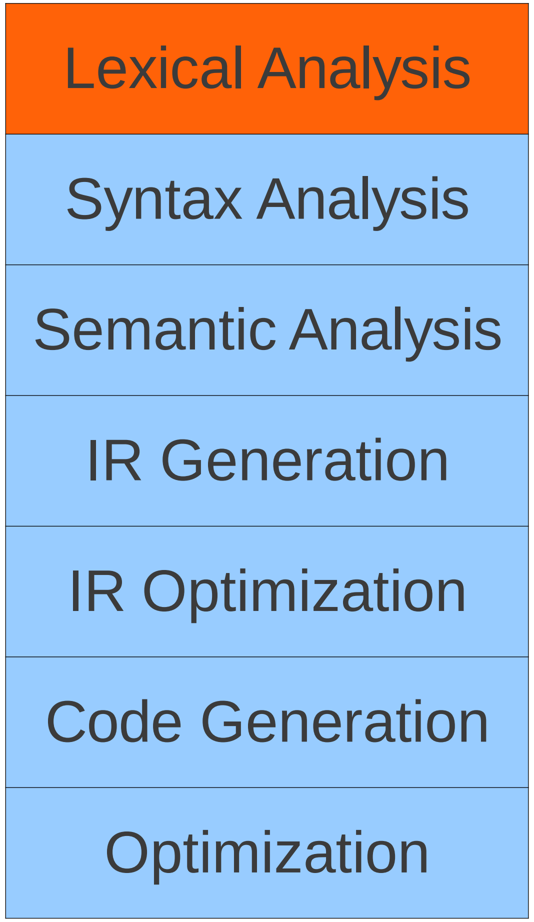

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    int x = a + b;
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```

```
T_While
T_LeftParen
T_Identifier y
T_Less
T_Identifier z
T_RightParen
T_OpenBrace
T_Int
T_Identifier x
T_Assign
T_Identifier a
T_Plus
T_Identifier b
T_Semicolon
T_Identifier y
T_PlusAssign
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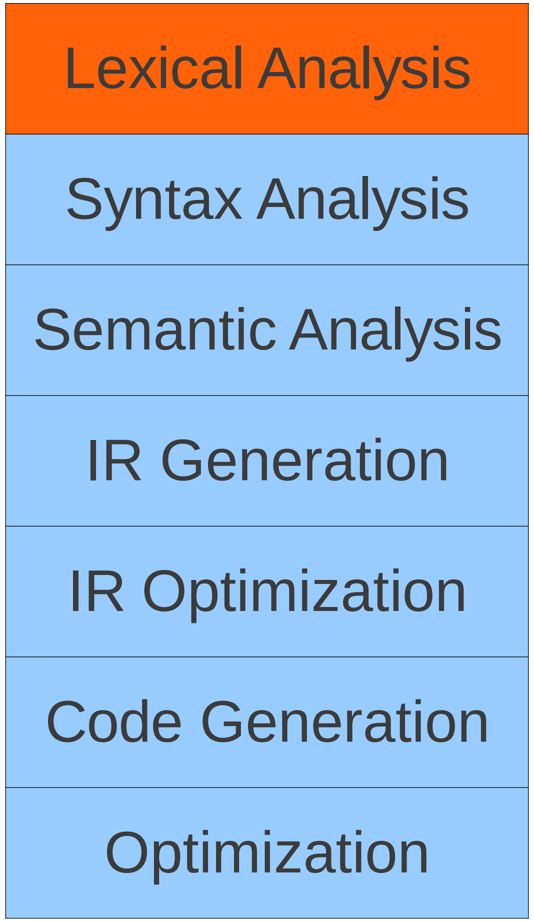

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- Lexical Analysis
- **Syntax Analysis**
- Semantic Analysis
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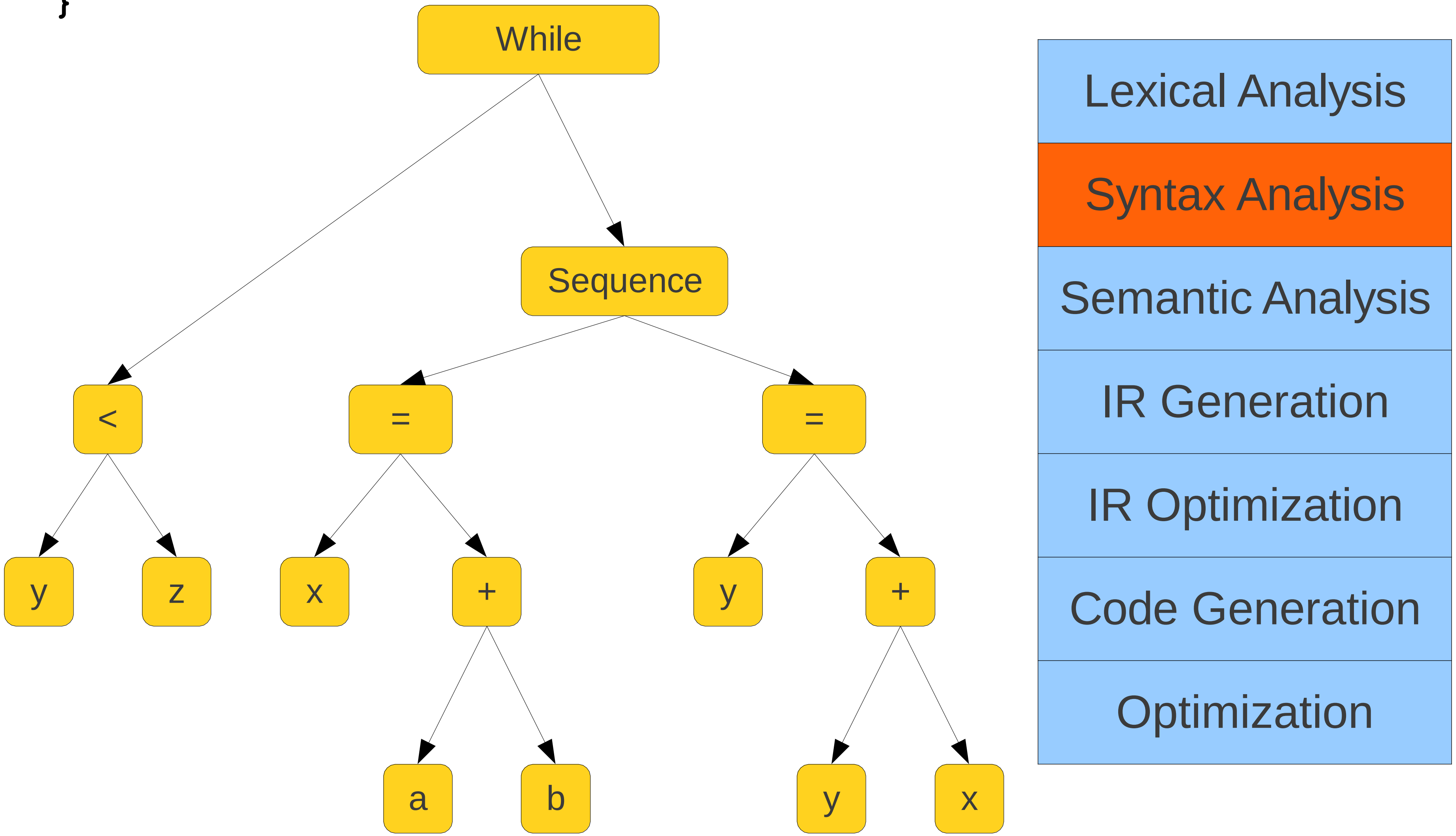

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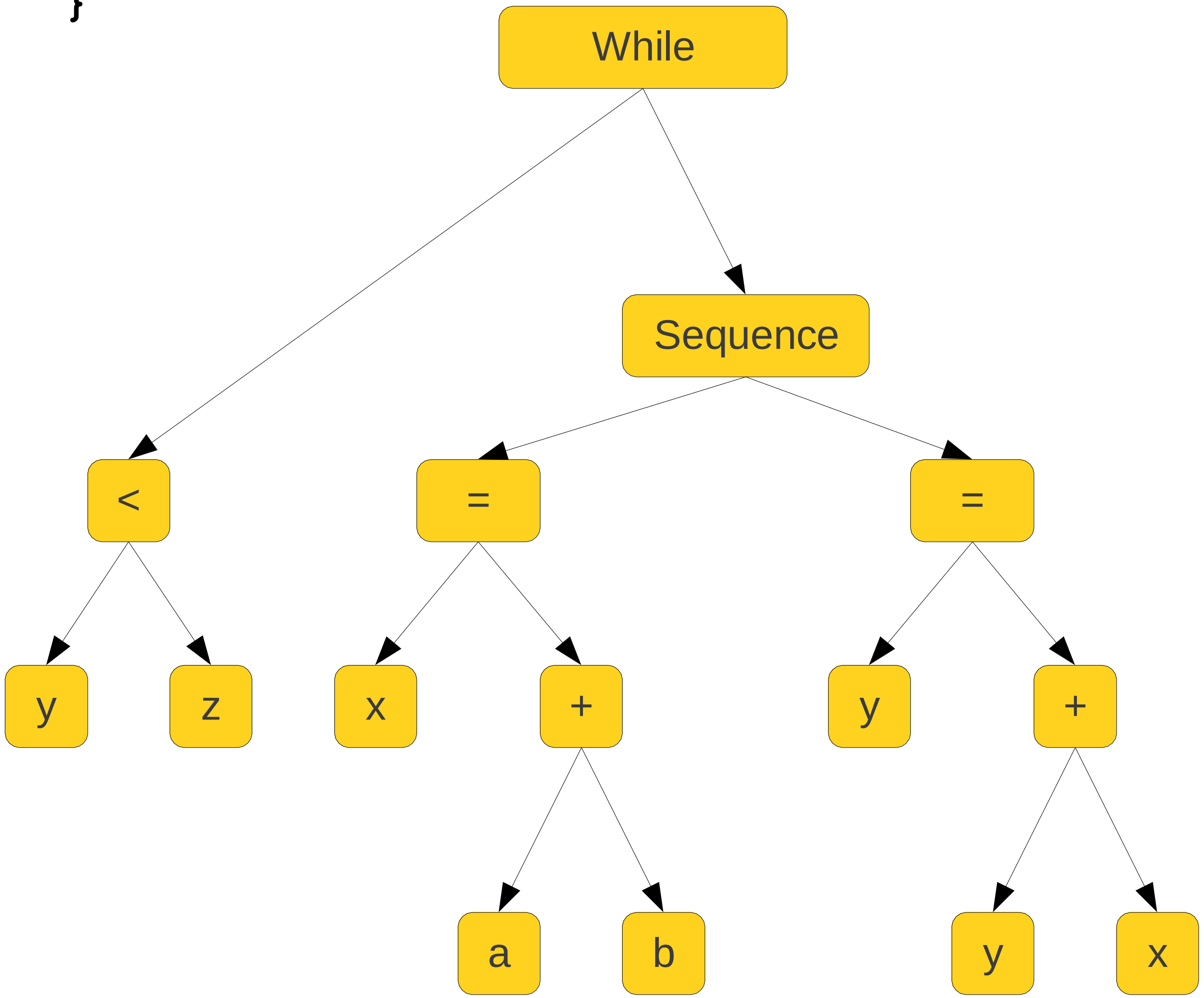

Lexical Analysis

Syntax Analysis

Semantic Analysis

IR Generation

IR Optimization

Code Generation

Optimization

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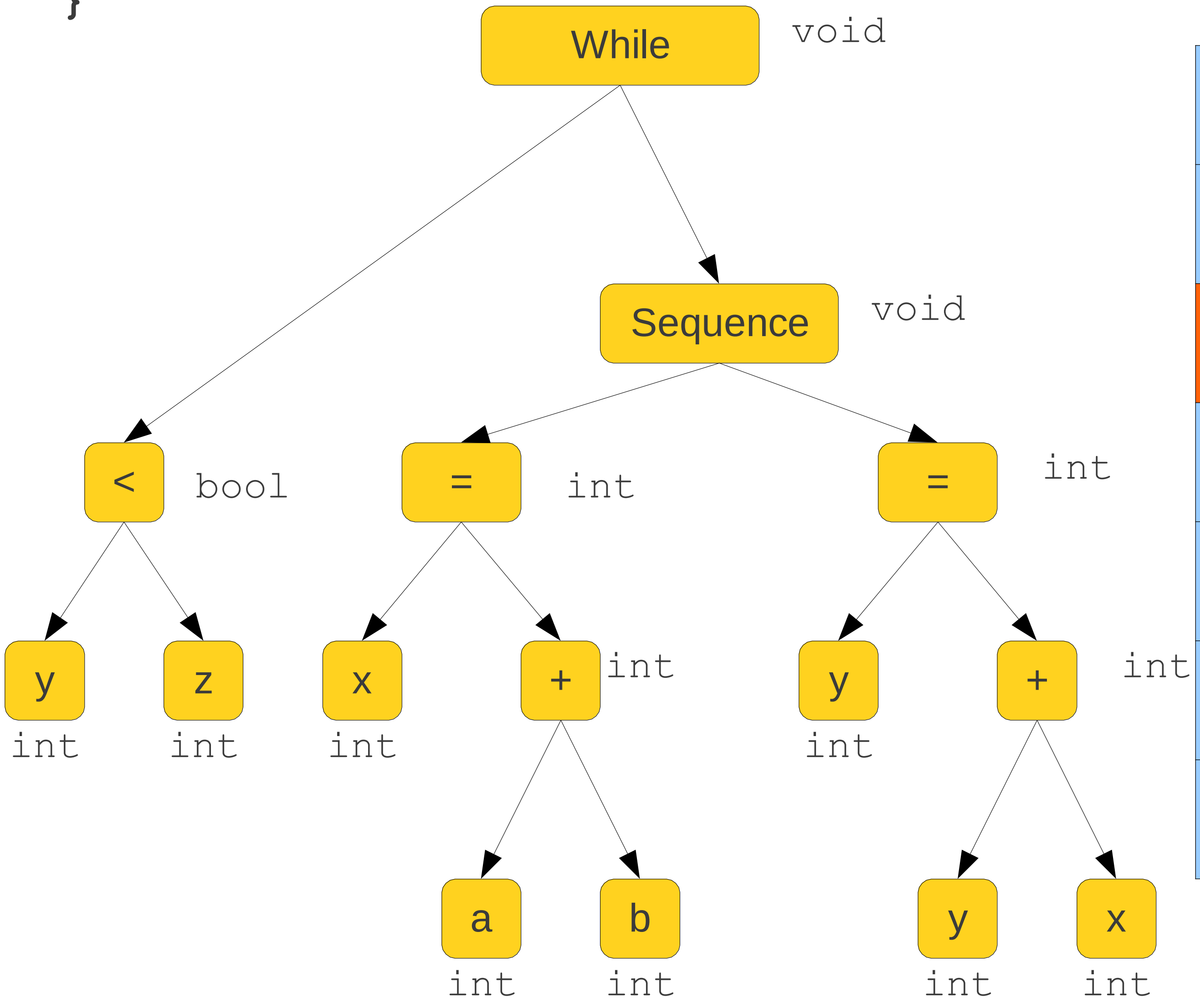

Lexical Analysis

Syntax Analysis

Semantic Analysis

IR Generation

IR Optimization

Code Generation

Optimization

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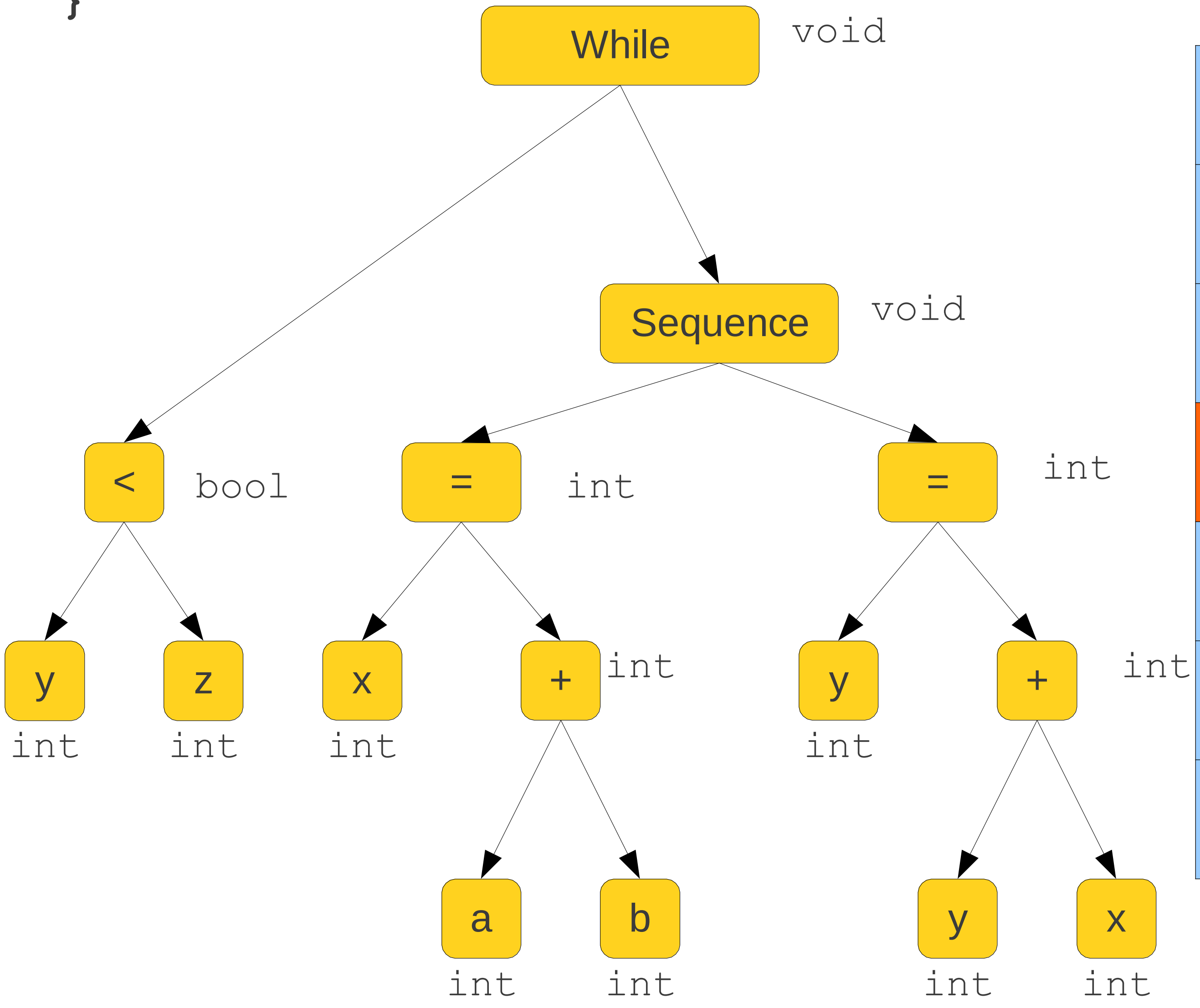

- Lexical Analysis
- Syntax Analysis
- Semantic Analysis
- IR Generation
- IR Optimization
- Code Generation
- Optimization

```
while (y < z) {
    int x = a + b;
    y += x;
}
```

```
Loop: x   = a + b
      y   = x + y
      _t1 = y < z
      if _t1 goto Loop
```

- Lexical Analysis
- Syntax Analysis
- Semantic Analysis
- IR Generation
- IR Optimization
- Code Generation
- Optimization

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- Lexical Analysis
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- **IR Optimization**
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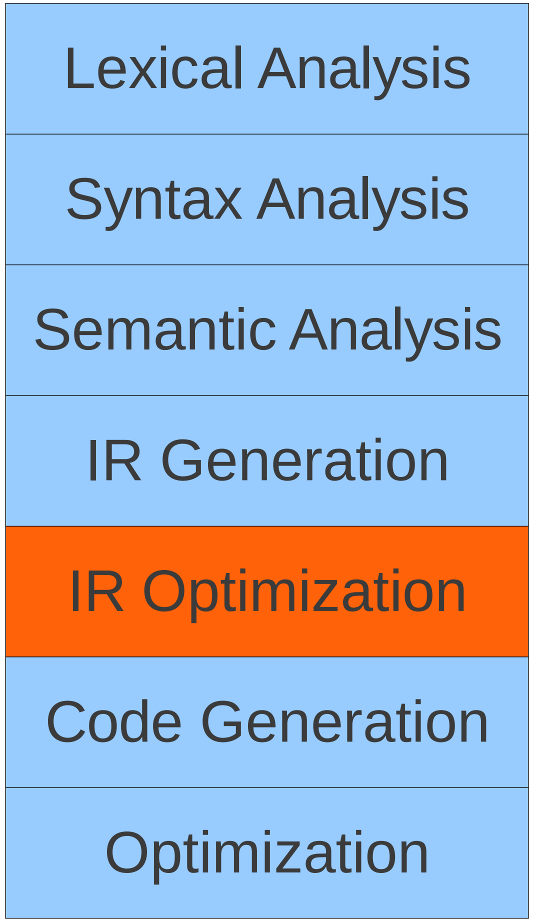

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while (y < z) {
    int x = a + b;
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```
       x   = a + b
Loop:  y   = x + y
       _t1 = y < z
       if _t1 goto Loop
```

```
while (y < z) {
    int x = a + b;
    y += x;
}
```

```
      add $1, $2, $3
Loop: add $4, $1, $4
      slt $6, $1, $5
      beq $6, loo
              p
```

```
while (y < z) {
    int x = a + b;
    y += x;
}
```

```
       add $1, $2, $3
Loop:  add $4, $1, $4
       slt $6, $1, $5
       beq $6, loo
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```

- Lexical Analysis
- Syntax Analysis
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- **Optimization**

```
while (y < z) {
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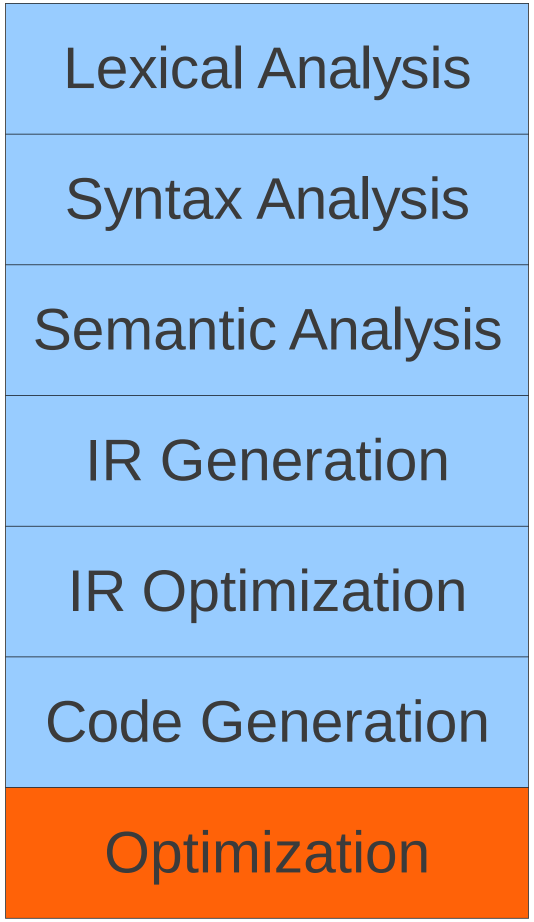
```
       add $1, $2, $3
Loop:  add $4, $1, $4
       blt $1, $5, loop
```



Additional Compilation Terminologies

- **Load module** (executable image): the user and system code together
- **Linking and loading**: the process of collecting system program units and linking them to a user program

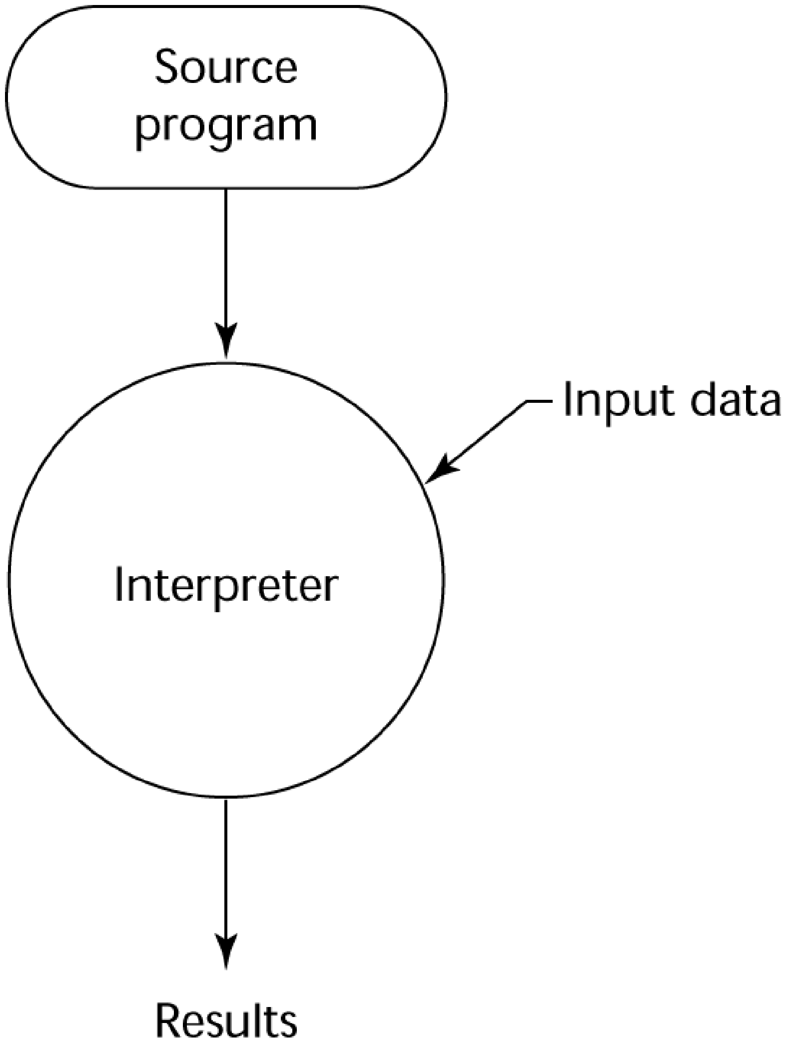
Von Neumann Bottleneck

- Connection speed between a computer's memory and its processor determines the speed of a computer
- Program instructions often can be executed much faster than the speed of the connection; the connection speed thus results in a *bottleneck*
- Known as the *von Neumann bottleneck*; it is the primary limiting factor in the speed of computers

Pure Interpretation

- No translation
- Easier implementation of programs (run-time errors can easily and immediately be displayed)
- Slower execution (10 to 100 times slower than compiled programs)
- Often requires more space
- Now rare for traditional high-level languages

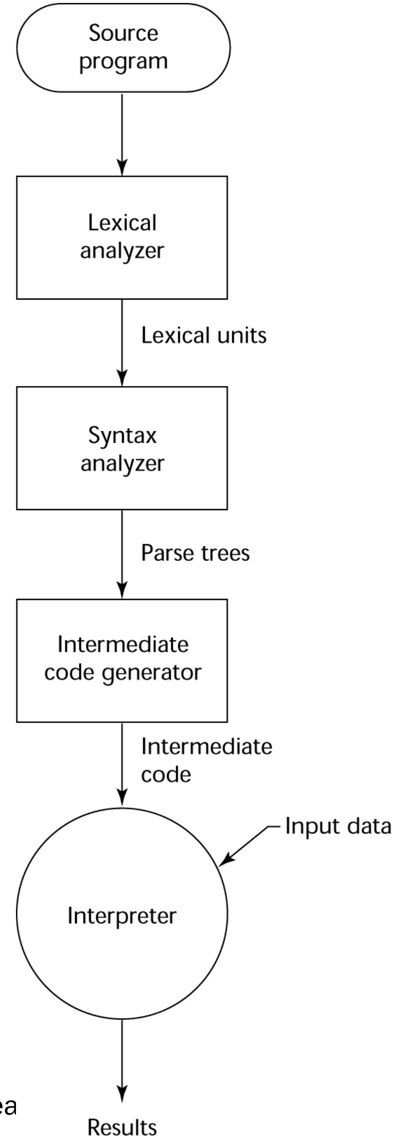
Pure Interpretation Process



Hybrid Implementation Systems

- A compromise between compilers and pure interpreters
- A high-level language program is translated to an intermediate language that allows easy interpretation
- Faster than pure interpretation
- Examples
  - Perl programs are partially compiled to detect errors before interpretation
  - Initial implementations of Java were hybrid; the intermediate form, *byte code*, provides portability to any machine that has a byte code interpreter and a run-time system (together, these are called *Java Virtual Machine*)

Hybrid Implementation Process



Just-in-Time Implementation Systems

- Initially translate programs to an intermediate language
- Then compile the intermediate language of the subprograms into machine code when they are called
- Machine code version is kept for subsequent calls
- JIT systems are widely used for Java programs
- .NET languages are implemented with a JIT system
- In essence, JIT systems are delayed compilers

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Preprocessors

- Preprocessor macros (instructions) are commonly used to specify that code from another file is to be included
- A preprocessor processes a program immediately before the program is compiled to expand embedded preprocessor macros
- A well-known example: C preprocessor
  - expands `#include, #define`, and similar macros

Programming Environments

- A collection of tools used in software development
- UNIX
  - An older operating system and tool collection
  - Nowadays often used through a GUI (e.g., CDE, KDE, or GNOME) that runs on top of UNIX
- Microsoft Visual Studio.NET
  - A large, complex visual environment
- Used to build Web applications and non-Web applications in any .NET language
- NetBeans
  - Related to Visual Studio .NET, except for applications in Java

Summary

- The study of programming languages is valuable for a number of reasons:
  - Increase our capacity to use different constructs
  - Enable us to choose languages more intelligently
  - Makes learning new languages easier
- Most important criteria for evaluating programming languages include:
  - Readability, writability, reliability, cost
- Major influences on language design have been machine architecture and software development methodologies
- The major methods of implementing programming languages are: compilation, pure interpretation, and hybrid implementation

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