Erlang: An Overview in Four Parts

Part 1 – Sequential Erlang

Thanks to Richard Carlsson for the original version of many of the slides in this part

Erlang buzzwords

- Functional (strict)
- Single-assignment
- Dynamically typed
- Concurrent
- Distributed
- Message passing
- Soft real-time
- Fault tolerant
- Shared-nothing
- Automatic memory management (GC)
- Virtual Machine (BEAM)
- Native code (HiPE)
- Dynamic code loading
- Hot-swapping code
- Multiprocessor support
- OTP (Open Telecom Platform) libraries
- Open source

Background

- Developed by Ericsson, Sweden
  - Experiments 1982-1986 with existing languages
    - Higher productivity, fewer errors
    - Suitable for writing (large) telecom applications
    - Must handle concurrency and error recovery
  - No good match - decided to make their own
    - 1986-1987: First experiments with own language
    - Erlang (after Danish mathematician A. K. Erlang)
    - 1988-1989: Internal use
    - 1990-1998: Erlang sold as a product by Ericsson
  - Open Source (MPL-based license) since 1998
    - Development still done by Ericsson

Hello, World!

```
%% File: hello.erl
-module(hello).
-export([run/0]).

-spec run() -> 'ok'.
run() -> io:format("Hello, World!\n").
```

- '%' starts a comment
- '.' ends each declaration
- Every function must be in a module
  - One module per source file
  - Source file name is module name + “.erl”
- ':' used for calling functions in other modules

Running Erlang

```
$ erl
Erlang (BEAM) emulator version 5.10.3

Eshell V5.10.3 (abort with ^G)
1> 6*7.
42
2> halt().
$
```

- The Erlang VM emulator is called '`erl`'
- The interactive shell lets you write any Erlang expressions and run them (must end with '.')
- The “`1>`”, “`2>`”, etc. is the shell input prompt
- The “`halt()`” function call exits the emulator

Compiling a module

```
$ erl
Erlang (BEAM) emulator version 5.10.3

Eshell V5.10.3 (abort with ^G)
1> c(hello).
{ok,hello}
2>
```

- The "`c(Module)`" built-in shell function compiles a module and loads it into the system
  - If you change something and do "`c(Module)`" again, the new version of the module will replace the old
- There is also a standalone compiler called "`erlc`"
  - Running "`erlc hello.erl`" creates "`hello.beam`"
  - Can be used in a normal Makefile

Running a program

```
Eshell V5.10.3 (abort with ^G)
1> c(hello).
{ok,hello}
2> hello:run().
Hello, World!
ok
3>
```

- Compile all your modules
- Call the exported function that you want to run, using "`module:function(...).`"
- The final value is always printed in the shell
  - "`ok`" is the return value from `io:format(...)`

A recursive function

```
-module(factorial).
-export([fact/1]).

-spec fact(non_neg_integer()) -> pos_integer().
fact(N) when N > 0 ->
  N * fact(N-1);
fact(0) ->
  1.
```

- Variables start with upper-case characters!
- '`;`' separates function clauses; last clause ends with '`.`'
- Variables are local to the function clause
- Pattern matching and '**`when`**' guards to select clauses
- Run-time error if no clause matches (e.g., N < 0)
- Run-time error if N is not an integer

Tail recursion with accumulator

```
-module(factorial).
-export([fact/1]).

-spec fact(non_neg_integer()) -> pos_integer().
fact(N) -> fact(N, 1).

fact(N, Fact) when N > 0 ->
  fact(N-1, Fact*N);
fact(0, Fact) ->
  Fact.
```

- The *arity is part of the function name:* **`fact/1≠fact/2`**
- Non-exported functions are local to the module
- Function definitions cannot be nested (as in C)
- Last call optimization is performed: the stack does not grow if the result is the value of another function call

Recursion over lists

```
-module(list).
-export([last/1]).

-spec last([T]) -> T.
last([Element]) -> Element;
last([_|Rest]) -> last(Rest).
```

- Pattern matching selects components of the data
- "_" is a "don't care"-pattern (not a variable)
- "`[Head|Tail]`" is the syntax for a single list cell
- "`[]`" is the empty list (often called "nil")
- "`[X,Y,Z]`" is a list with exactly three elements
- "`[X,Y,Z|Tail]`" has three or more elements

List recursion with accumulator

```
-module(list).
-export([reverse/1]).

-spec reverse([T]) -> [T].
reverse(List) -> reverse(List, []).

reverse([Head|Tail], Acc) ->
  reverse(Tail, [Head|Acc]);
reverse([], Acc) ->
  Acc.
```

- The same syntax is used to *construct lists*
- Strings are simply lists of Unicode characters
  - `"Hello" = [$H, $e, $l, $l, $o] = [72,101,108,108,111]`
  - `"" = []`
- All list functions can be used on strings

Numbers

```
12345
-9876
16#ffff
2#010101
$A
0.0
3.1415926
6.023e+23
```

- Arbitrary-size integers (but usually just one word)
- #-notation for base-N integers
- $-notation for character codes (ISO-8859-1)
- Normal floating-point numbers (standard syntax)
  - cannot start with just a '.', as in e.g. C

Atoms

```
true                      % Boolean
false                     % Boolean
ok                        % used as "void" value
hello_world
doNotUseCamelCaseInAtoms
'This is also an atom'
'foo@bar.baz'
```

- Must start with lower-case character or be quoted
- Single-quotes are used to create arbitrary atoms
- Similar to hashed strings
  - Use only one word of data (just like a small integer)
  - Constant-time equality test (e.g., in pattern matching)
  - At run-time: `atom_to_list(Atom)`, `list_to_atom(List)`

Tuples

```
{}
{42}
{1,2,3,4}
{movie, "Yojimbo", 1961, "Kurosawa"}
{foo, {bar, X},
      {baz, Y},
      [1,2,3,4,5]}
```

- Tuples are the main data constructor in Erlang
- A tuple whose 1st element is an atom is called a *tagged tuple* - this is used like constructors in ML
  - Just a convention – but almost all code uses this
- The elements of a tuple can be any values
- At run-time: **`tuple_to_list(Tup), list_to_tuple(List)`**

Other data types

- Functions
  - Anonymous and other
- Bit streams
  - Sequences of bits
  - **`<<0,1,2,...,255>>`**
- Process identifiers
  - Usually called 'Pids'
- References
  - Unique "cookies"
  - **`R = make_ref()`**
- No separate Booleans
  - atoms **`true/false`**
- Erlang values in general are often called "terms"
- All terms are ordered and can be compared with <, >, ==, =:=, etc.

Type tests and conversions

```
is_integer(X)
is_float(X)
is_number(X)
is_atom(X)
is_tuple(X)
is_pid(X)
is_reference(X)
is_function(X)
is_list(X)   % [] or [_|_]

atom_to_list(A)
list_to_tuple(L)
binary_to_list(B)

term_to_binary(X)
binary_to_term(B)
```

- Note that `is_list` only looks at the first cell of the list, not the rest
- A list cell whose tail is not another list cell or an empty list is called an "improper list".
  - Avoid creating them!
- Some conversion functions are just for debugging: avoid!
  - `pid_to_list(Pid)`

Built-in functions (BIFs)

```
length(List)
tuple_size(Tuple)
element(N, Tuple)
setelement(N, Tuple, Val)

abs(N)
round(N)
trunc(N)

throw(Term)
halt()

time()
date()
now()

self()
spawn(Function)
exit(Term)
```

- Implemented in C
- All the type tests and conversions are BIFs
- Most BIFs (not all) are in the module "`erlang`"
- Many common BIFs are auto-imported (recognized without writing "`erlang:...`")
- Operators (+,-,*,/,...) are also really BIFs

Standard libraries

Application Libraries

- erts
  - erlang
- kernel
  - code
  - file, filelib
  - inet
  - os
- stdlib
  - lists
  - dict, ordict
  - sets, ordsets, gb_sets
  - gb_trees
  - ets, dets

- Written in Erlang
- “Applications” are groups of modules
  - Libraries
  - Application programs
    - Servers/daemons
    - Tools
    - GUI system (gs, wx)

Expressions

```
%% the usual operators
(X + Y) / -Z * 10 - 1

%% boolean
X and not Y or (Z xor W)
(X andalso Y) orelse Z

%% bitwise operators
((X bor Y) band 15) bsl 2

%% comparisons
X /= Y          % not !=
X =< Y          % not <=

%% list operators
List1 ++ List2
```

- Boolean and/or/xor are *strict* (always evaluate both arguments)
- Use **`andalso`**/**`orelse`** for short-circuit evaluation
- "`=:=`" for equality, not "`=`"
- We can always use parentheses when not absolutely certain about the precedence

Fun expressions

```
F1 = fun () -> 42 end
42 = F1()

F2 = fun (X) -> X + 1 end
42 = F2(41)

F3 = fun (X, Y) ->
       {X, Y, F1}
     end

F4 = fun ({foo, X}, Y) ->
           X + Y;
         ({bar, X}, Y) ->
           X - Y;
         (_, Y) ->
           Y
     end

F5 = fun f/3

F6 = fun mod:f/3
```

- Anonymous functions (lambda expressions)
  - Usually called “funs”
- Can have several arguments and clauses
- All variables in the patterns are *new*
  - *All variable bindings in the fun are local*
  - *Variables bound in the environment can be used in the fun-body*

Pattern matching with '='

```
Tuple = {foo, 42, "hello"},
{X, Y, Z} = Tuple,

List = [5, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1],
[A, A | Rest] = List,

Struct = {foo, [5,6,7,8], {17, 42}},
{foo, [A|Tail], {N, Y}} = Struct
```

- Successful matching binds the variables
  - But only if they are not already bound to a value!
  - A new variable can also be repeated in a pattern
  - Previously bound variables can be used in patterns
- Match failure causes runtime error (badmatch)

Case switches

```
case List of
  [X|Xs] when X >= 0 ->
    X + f(Xs);
  [_X|Xs] ->
    f(Xs);
  [] ->
    0;
  _ ->
    throw(error)
end

%% boolean switch:
case Bool of
  true  -> ... ;
  false -> ...
end
```

- Any number of clauses
- Patterns and guards, just as in functions
- ';' separates clauses
- Use "_" as catch-all
- Variables may also begin with underscore
  - Signals "I don't intend to use the value of this variable"
  - Compiler won't warn if this variable is not used
- OBS: Variables may be already bound in patterns!

If switches and guard details

```
if
   0 =< X, X < 256 ->
     X + f(Xs);
   true ->
     f(Xs)
end
```

The above construct is better written as

```
case 0 =< X and X < 256 of
  true  ->
    X + f(Xs);
  false ->
    f(Xs)
end
```

- Like a case switch without the patterns and the “`when`” keyword
- Need to use “`true`” as catch-all guard (Ugly!)
- Guards are special
  - Comma-separated list
  - Only specific built-in functions (and all operators)
  - No side effects

List comprehensions

```
%% map
[f(X) || X <- List]

%% filter
[X || X <- Xs, X > 0]
```

```
Eshell V5.10.3 (abort ...^G)
1> L = [1,2,3].
[1,2,3]
2> [X+1 || X <- L].
[2,3,4]
3> [2*X || X <- L, X < 3].
[2,4]
4> [X+Y || X <- L, Y <- L].
[2,3,4,3,4,5,4,5,6]
```

- Left of the "`||`" is an *expression template*
- "`Pattern <- List`" is a *generator*
  - Elements are picked from the list in order
- The other expressions are *Boolean filters*
- If there are multiple generators, you get all combinations of values

List comprehensions: examples

```
%% quicksort of a list
qsort([]) -> [];
qsort([P|Xs]) ->
  qsort([X || X <- Xs, X =< P])
  ++ [P]  % pivot element
  ++ qsort([X || X <- Xs, P < X]).
```

```
%% generate all permutations of a list
perms([]) -> [[]];
perms(L) ->
  [[X|T] || X <- L, T <- perms(L -- [X])].
```

- Using comprehensions we get very compact code

  ...which sometimes can take some effort to understand

Try writing the same code without comprehensions

Bit strings and comprehensions

- Bit string pattern matching:

```
case <<8:4, 42:6>> of
  <<A:7/integer, B/bits>> -> {A,B}
end
```

```
case <<8:4, 42:6>> of
  <<A:3/integer, B:A/bits, C/bits>> -> {A,B,C}
end
```

- Bit string comprehensions:

```
<< <<X:2>> || <<X:3>> <= Bits, X < 4 >>
```

- Of course, one can also write:

```
[ <<X:2>> || <<X:3>> <= Bits, X < 4 ]
```

Catching exceptions

```
try
  lookup(X)
catch
  not_found ->
    use_default(X);
  exit:Term ->
    handle_exit(Term)
end

%% with 'of' and 'after'
try lookup(X, File) of
  Y when Y > 0 -> f(Y);
  Y -> g(Y)
catch
  ...
after
  close_file(File)
end
```

- Three classes of exceptions
  - `throw`: user-defined
  - `error`: runtime errors
  - `exit`: end process
  - Only catch `throw` exceptions, normally (implicit if left out)
- Re-thrown if no catch-clause matches
- "`after`" part is always run (side effects only)

Old-style exception handling

```
Val = (catch lookup(X)),

case Val of
  not_found ->
    %% probably thrown
    use_default(X);
  {'EXIT', Term} ->
    handle_exit(Term);
  _ ->
    Val
end
```

- "`catch Expr`"
  - Value of "`Expr`" if no exception
  - Value `X` of "`throw(X)`" for a `throw`-exception
  - "`{'EXIT',Term}`" for other exceptions
- Hard to tell what happened (not safe)
- Mixes up errors/exits
- In lots of old code

Record syntax

```
-record(foo,
        {a = 0 :: integer(),
         b     :: integer()}).

{foo, 0, 1} = #foo{b = 1}

R = #foo{}
{foo, 0, undefined} = R

{foo, 0, 2} = R#foo{b=2}

{foo, 2, 1} = R#foo{b=1, a=2}

0 = R#foo.a
undefined = R#foo.b

f(#foo{b = undefined}) -> 1;
f(#foo{a = A, b = B})
  when B > 0 -> A + B;
f(#foo{}) -> 0.
```

- Records are just a syntax for working with tagged tuples
- You don't have to remember element order and tuple size
- Good for internal work within a module
- Not so good in public interfaces (users must have same definition!)

Preprocessor

```
-include("defs.hrl").


-ifndef(PI).
-define(PI, 3.1415926).
-endif.

area(R) -> ?PI * (R*R).


-define(foo(X), {foo,X+1}).

{foo,42} = ?foo(41)


%% pre-defined macros
?MODULE
?LINE
```

- C-style token-level preprocessor
  - Runs after tokenizing, but before parsing
- Record definitions often put in header files, to be included
- Use macros mainly for constants
- Use functions instead of macros if you can (compiler can inline)

Dialyzer: A defect detection tool

- A static analyzer that identifies discrepancies in Erlang code bases
  - code points where something is wrong
    - often a bug
    - or in any case something that needs fixing

- Fully automatic
- Extremely easy to use
- Fast and scalable
- Sound for defect detection
  - "Dialyzer is never wrong"

Dialyzer

- Part of the Erlang/OTP distribution since 2007
- Detects
  - Definite type errors
  - API violations
  - Unreachable and dead code
  - Opacity violations
  - Concurrency errors

    Data races (**`-Wrace_conditions`**)

- Experimental extensions with
  - Stronger type inference: type dependencies
  - Detection of message passing errors & deadlocks

How to use Dialyzer

- First build a PLT (needs to be done once)

```
> dialyzer --build_plt --apps erts kernel stdlib
```

- Once this finishes, analyze your application

```
> cd my_app
> erlc +debug_info -o ebin src/*.erl
> dialyzer ebin
```

- If there are unknown functions, you may need to add more Erlang/OTP applications to the PLT

```
> dialyzer --add_to_plt --apps mnesia inets
```

Part 4 – Testing Erlang Programs

A sorting program

```
%% my first sort program, inspired by QuickSort
-module(my_sort).
-export([sort/1]).

-spec sort([T]) -> [T].
sort([]) -> [];
sort([P|Xs]) ->
  sort([X || X <- Xs, X < P])
    ++ [P] ++ sort([X || X <- Xs, P < X]).
```

- How do we know that software works?
  - One popular method is to use testing
- Let's do manual testing of Erlang programs first
  - Relatively easy due to the interactive shell

Manual testing in the shell

```
Eshell V5.10.3 (abort with ^G)
1> c(my_sort).
{ok,my_sort}
2> my_sort:sort([]).
[]
3> my_sort:sort([17,42]).
[17,42]
4> my_sort:sort([42,17]).
[17,42]
5> my_sort:sort([3,1,2]).
[1,2,3]
```

- Seems to work!
- However, perhaps it's not a good idea to execute these tests repeatedly by hand
  - Let's put them in the file...
  - ... and exploit the power of pattern matching

A sorting program with unit tests

```
-module(my_sort).
-export([sort/1, sort_test/0]).

-spec sort([T]) -> [T].
sort([]) -> [];
sort([P|Xs]) ->
  sort([X || X <- Xs, X < P])
    ++ [P] ++ sort([X || X <- Xs, P < X]).

-spec sort_test() -> ok.
sort_test() ->
  [] = sort([]),
  [17,42] = sort([17,42]),
  [17,42] = sort([42,17]),
  [1,2,3] = sort([3,1,2]),
  ok.
```

Convention:
program code in this and the following slides use boldface for showing the parts of the program that were added or changed w.r.t. the previous code

- And now let's use EUnit to run them automatically

Running tests using EUnit

```
6> my_sort:sort_test().
ok
7> eunit:test(my_sort).
  Test passed.
ok
```

- EUnit in its simplest form is a test framework to automatically run all **`_test`** functions in a module
- Calling **`eunit:test(Module)`** was all that was needed here
- However, EUnit can do much more...
  - Let us, temporarily, change one test to:

    ```
    [1,3,2] = sort([3,1,2])
    ```

  - and see what happens

EUnit and failures

```
8> c(my_sort).
{ok,my_sort}
9> eunit:test(my_sort).
my_sort: sort_test (module 'my_sort')...*failed*
in function my_sort:sort_test/0 (my_sort.erl, line 13)
** error:{badmatch,[1,2,3]}

=======================================================
  Failed: 1.  Skipped: 0.  Passed: 0.
error
```

- Reports number of tests that failed and why
  - the report is pretty good, but it can get even better
  - using EUnit macros

A sorting program with EUnit tests

```
%% my first sort program, inspired by QuickSort
-module(my_sort).
-export([sort/1, sort_test/0]).

-include_lib("eunit/include/eunit.hrl").

-spec sort([T]) -> [T].
sort([]) -> [];
sort([P|Xs]) ->
  sort([X || X <- Xs, X < P])
    ++ [P] ++ sort([X || X <- Xs, P < X]).

-spec sort_test() -> ok.
sort_test() ->
  ?assertEqual([], sort([])),
  ?assertEqual([17,42], sort([17,42])),
  ?assertEqual([17,42], sort([42,17])),
  ?assertEqual([1,3,2], sort([3,1,2])),
  ok.
```

Unit testing using EUnit macros

```
10> c(my_sort).
my_sort.erl:2 Warning: function sort_test/0 already exported
{ok,my_sort}
11> eunit:test(my_sort).
my_sort: sort_test (module 'my_sort')...*failed*
in function my_sort:'-sort_test/0-fun...'/1 (my_sort.erl, line 15)
in call from my_sort:sort_test/0 (my_sort.erl, line 15)
** error:{assertEqual_failed,[{module,my_sort},
                              {line,15},
                              {expression,"sort ( [3,1,2] )"},
                              {expected,[1,3,2]},
                              {value,[1,2,3]}]}


=================================================================
  Failed: 1.  Skipped: 0.  Passed: 0.
error
```

- This report is much more detailed
- But, it considers the complete set of tests as one

EUnit test generators

```
-module(my_sort).
-export([sort/1]).

-include_lib("eunit/include/eunit.hrl").

sort([]) -> ...

sort_test_() ->    % notice trailing underscore
  [test_zero(), test_two(), test_three()].

test_zero() ->
  [?_assertEqual([], sort([]))]. % notice underscores
test_two() ->
  [?_assertEqual([17,42], sort([17,42])),
   ?_assertEqual([17,42], sort([42,17]))].
test_three() ->
  [?_assertEqual([1,3,2], sort([3,1,2]))].
```

EUnit test generators

```
12> c(my_sort).
{ok,my_sort}
13> eunit:test(my_sort).
my_sort:20 test_three...*failed*
in function my_sort:'-test_three/0-fun...'/1 (my_sort.erl, line 20)
** error:{assertEqual_failed,[{module,my_sort},
                              {line,20},
                              {expression,"sort ( [3,1,2] )"},
                              {expected,[1,3,2]},
                              {value,[1,2,3]}]}


==================================================================
  Failed: 1.  Skipped: 0.  Passed: 3.
error
```

- EUnit now reports accurate numbers of passed and failed test cases
- In fact, we can test EUnit generators individually

EUnit test generators

```
14> eunit:test({generator, fun my_sort:sort_test_/0}).
my_sort:20 test_three...*failed*
in function my_sort:'-test_three/0-fun...'/1 (my_sort.erl, line 20)
** error:{assertEqual_failed,[{module,my_sort},
                              {line,20},
                              {expression,"sort ( [3,1,2] )"},
                              {expected,[1,3,2]},
                              {value,[1,2,3]}]}


==================================================================
  Failed: 1.  Skipped: 0.  Passed: 3.
error
```

- This works only for test generator functions

  (not very impressive, as there is only one in this example)
- There are other forms that may come handy (RTFM)

  e.g. **`{dir,Path}`** to run all tests for the modules in **`Path`**

EUnit test generators

- Let us undo the error in the **`test_three`** test
- add one more EUnit generator

```
another_sort_test_() ->
  [test_four()].

test_four() ->
  [?_assertEqual([1,2,3,4], sort([1,3,2,4])),
   ?_assertEqual([1,2,3,4], sort([1,4,2,3]))].
```

- and run again: all tests and just the new ones

```
15> c(my_sort).
{ok,my_sort}
16> eunit:test(my_sort).
  All 6 tests passed
ok
17> eunit:test({generator, fun my_sort:another_sort_test_/0}).
  All 2 tests passed
ok
```

There is more to EUnit...

- More macros
  - Utility, assert, debugging, controlling compilation
- Support to run tests in parallel
- Lazy generators
- *Fixtures* for adding scaffolding around tests
  - Allow to define setup and teardown functions for the state that each of the tests may need
  - Useful for testing stateful systems

For more information consult the EUnit manual

Towards automated testing

- Testing accounts for a large part of software cost
- Writing (unit) tests by hand is
  - boring and tedious
  - difficult to be convinced that all cases were covered
- Why not automate the process?
  - Yes, but how?
- One approach is property-based testing
  - Instead of writing test cases, let’s write properties that we would like our software (functions) to satisfy
  - and use a tool that can automatically generate random inputs to test these properties

Property for the sorting program

```
-module(my_sort).
-export([sort/1]).

-include_lib("proper/include/proper.hrl").
-include_lib("eunit/include/eunit.hrl").

-spec sort([T]) -> [T].
sort([]) -> [];
sort([P|Xs]) ->
  sort([X || X <- Xs, X < P])
    ++ [P] ++ sort([X || X <- Xs, P < X]).

prop_ordered() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list(integer()), ordered(sort(L))).

ordered([]) -> true;
ordered([_]) -> true;
ordered([A,B|T]) -> A =< B andalso ordered([B|T]).
```

Testing the ordered property

```
$ erl -pa /path/to/proper/ebin
Erlang (BEAM) emulator version 5.10.3

Eshell V5.10.3 (abort with ^G)
1> c(my_sort).
{ok,my_sort}
2> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_ordered()).
.......... 100 dots ..........
OK: Passed 100 tests
true
3> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_ordered(), 10000).
.......... 10000 dots ..........
OK: Passed 10000 tests
true
```

- Runs any number of “random” tests we feel like
- If all tests satisfy the property, reports that all tests passed

Another property for sorting

```erlang
-module(my_sort).
-export([sort/1]).

-include_lib("proper/include/proper.hrl").
-include_lib("eunit/include/eunit.hrl").

-spec sort([T]) -> [T].
sort([]) -> [];
sort([P|Xs]) ->
  sort([X || X <- Xs, X < P])
    ++ [P] ++ sort([X || X <- Xs, P < X]).

prop_ordered() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list(integer()), ordered(sort(L))).

prop_same_length() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list(integer()),
           length(L) =:= length(sort(L))).

ordered([]) -> ...
```

Testing the same length property

```
4> c(my_sort).
{ok,my_sort}
5> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_same_length()).
.....!
Failed: After 6 test(s).
[0,0]

Shrinking (0 time(s))
[0,0]
false
6> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_same_length()).
.............!
Failed: After 13 test(s).
[2,-8,-3,1,1]

Shrinking .(1 time(s))
[1,1]
false
```

Properties with preconditions

- Let us suppose that we actually *wanted* that our program only sorts lists without duplicates
- How would we have to write the property then?

```
prop_same_length() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list(integer()),
          ?IMPLIES(no_duplicates(L),
                   length(L) =:= length(sort(L)))).

%% better implementations of no_duplicates/1 exist
no_duplicates([]) -> true;
no_duplicates([A|T]) ->
  not lists:member(A, T) andalso no_duplicates(T).
```

```
7> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_same_length()).
.........x.x..............x.xx..x...xx.xxxx....x....xx.xxx
........xx.x.x......x.x.x.x.x.....xxxxx.xxxxxx..x.x.x.x.x.
OK: Passed 100 tests
```

Custom generators

- An even better way is to try to generate lists without duplicates in the first place!

```
list_no_dupls(T) ->
  ?LET(L, list(T), remove_duplicates(L)).

%% better versions of remove_duplicates/1 exist
remove_duplicates([]) -> [];
remove_duplicates([A|T]) ->
  case lists:member(A, T) of
    true -> remove_duplicates(T);
    false -> [A|remove_duplicates(T)]
  end.
```

```
prop_same_length() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list_no_dupls(integer()),
          length(L) =:= length(sort(L))).
```

```
7> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_same_length()).
.......... 100 dots ..........
OK: Passed 100 tests
```

Testing for stronger properties

- Ok, but the properties we tested were quite weak
- How about ensuring that the list after sorting has the same elements as the original one?
- We can use some ‘obviously correct’ function as reference implementation and test equivalence

```
prop_equiv_usort() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list(integer()),
             sort(L) =:= lists:usort(L)).
```

```
8> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_equiv_usort()).
.......... 100 dots ..........
OK: Passed 100 tests
```

- **Note**: PropEr is ideally suited for easily checking equivalence of two functions and gradually refining or optimizing one of them!

Beyond monotypic testing

- But why were we testing for lists of integers?
- We do not have to! We can test for general lists!

```
prop_equiv_usort() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list(), sort(L) =:= lists:usort(L)).
```

```
9> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_equiv_usort()).
.......... 100 dots ..........
OK: Passed 100 tests
```

Shrinking general terms

- How does shrinking work in this case?
- Let’s modify the property to a false one and see

```
prop_equiv_sort() ->
  ?FORALL(L, list(), sort(L) =:= lists:sort(L)).
```

```
10> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_equiv_sort()).
..............!
Failed: After 14 test(s)
[[[],[<<54,17,42:7>>],4],{},-0.05423250622902363,{},{42,<<0:3>>}]

Shrinking ...(3 time(s))
[{},{}]
false
11> proper:quickcheck(my_sort:prop_equiv_sort()).
............................!
Failed: After 28 test(s)
[{},{[],6,'f%Co',{42},....   A REALLY BIG COMPLICATED TERM HERE
                                 CONTAINING TWO EMPTY LISTS
Shrinking ....(4 time(s))
[[],[]]
false
```

Testing frameworks

	Unit Testing	**Property-Based Testing**
Acquire a valid input	User-provided inputs	Generated semi-randomly from specification
Run the program	Automatic	Automatic
Decide if it passes	User-provided expected outputs	Partial correctness property