Interfaces & Types

Lecture 9

CS211 – Summer 2007

Interfaces

- So far, we have talked about *interfaces* informally, in the English sense of the word
  - an interface describes how a client interacts with a class
  - method names, argument/return types, fields
- Java has a construct called `interface` which can be used formally for this purpose

Java `interface`

```
interface IPuzzle {
   void scramble();
   int tile(int r, int c);
   boolean move(char d);
}
```

```
class IntPuzzle implements IPuzzle {
  public void scramble() {...}
  public int tile(int r, int c) {...}
  public boolean move(char d) {...}
}
```

- name of interface: `IPuzzle`
- a class implements this interface by implementing public instance methods as specified in the interface
- the class may implement other methods

Notes

- An interface is not a class!
  - cannot be instantiated
  - incomplete specification
- class header must assert `implements I` for Java to recognize that the class implements interface `I`
- A class may implement several interfaces:
  `class X implements IPuzzle, IPod {...}`

Why an `interface` construct?

- good software engineering
  - specify and enforce boundaries between different parts of a team project
- can use interface as a type
  - allows more generic code
  - reduces code duplication

Example of code duplication

- Suppose we have two implementations of puzzles:
  - class `IntPuzzle` uses an `int` to hold state
  - class `ArrayPuzzle` uses an array to hold state
- Assume client wants to use both implementations
  - perhaps for benchmarking both implementations to pick the best one
  - client code has a `display` method to print out puzzles
- What would the `display` method look like?

```
Class Client{
  IntPuzzle p1 = new IntPuzzle();
  ArrayPuzzle p2 = new ArrayPuzzle();
    ...display(p1)...display(p2)...

  public static void display(IntPuzzle p){
    for (int r = 0; r < 3; r++)
      for (int c = 0; c < 3; c++)
        System.out.println(p.tile(r,c));
  }

  public static void display(ArrayPuzzle p){
    for (int r = 0; r < 3; r++)
      for (int c = 0; c < 3; c++)
        System.out.println(p.tile(r,c));
  }
}
```

Code duplicated because `IntPuzzle` and `ArrayPuzzle` are different

Observation

- Two display methods are needed because `IntPuzzle` and `ArrayPuzzle` are different types, and parameter `p` must be one or the other
- but the code inside the two methods is identical!
  - code relies only on the assumption that the object `p` has an instance method `tile(int,int)`
- Is there a way to avoid this code duplication?

One Solution — Abstract Classes

Puzzle code

```
abstract class Puzzle {
  abstract int tile(int r, int c);
  ...
}
class IntPuzzle extends Puzzle {
  public int tile(int r, int c) {...}
  ...
}
class ArrayPuzzle extends Puzzle {
  public int tile(int r, int c) {...}
  ...
}
```

Client code

```
public static void display(Puzzle p){
    for (int r = 0; r < 3; r++)
      for (int c = 0; c < 3; c++)
        System.out.println(p.tile(r,c));
}}
```

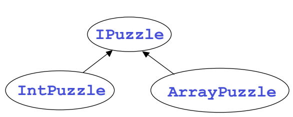

Another Solution — Interfaces

Puzzle code

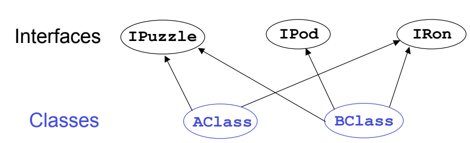
```
interface IPuzzle {
  int tile(int r, int c);
  ...
}
class IntPuzzle implements IPuzzle {
  public int tile(int r, int c) {...}
  ...
}
class ArrayPuzzle implements IPuzzle {
  public int tile(int r, int c) {...}
  ...
}
```

Client code

```
public static void display(IPuzzle p){
    for (int r = 0; r < 3; r++)
      for (int c = 0; c < 3; c++)
        System.out.println(p.tile(r,c));
}}
```

- interface names can be used in type declarations
  - `IPuzzle p1, p2;`
- a class that implements the interface is a subtype of the interface type
  - `IntPuzzle` and `ArrayPuzzle` are subtypes of `IPuzzle`
  - `IPuzzle` is a supertype of `IntPuzzle` and `ArrayPuzzle`



- Unlike classes, types do not form a tree!
  - a class may implement several interfaces
  - an interface may be implemented by several classes

Extending a Class vs Implementing an Interface

- A class can
  - implement many interfaces, but
  - extend only one class
- To share code between two classes
  - put shared code in a common superclass
  - interfaces cannot contain code

13

Static vs Dynamic Types

- Every variable (more generally, every expression that denotes some kind of data) has a static* or compile-time type
  - derived from declarations – you can see it
  - known at compile time, without running the program
  - does not change
- Every object has a dynamic or runtime type
  - obtained when the object is created using `new`
  - not known at compile time – you can't see it

* Warning! No relation to Java keyword `static`

14

Example

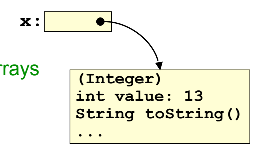
```
int i = 3, j = 4;
Integer x = new Integer(i+3*j-1);
System.out.println(x.toString());
```

- static type of the variables `i,j` and the expression `i+3*j-1` is `int`
- static type of the variable `x` and the expression `new Integer(i+3*j-1)` is `Integer`
- static type of the expression `x.toString()` is `String` (because `toString()` is declared in the class `Integer` to have return type `String`)
- dynamic type of the object created by the execution of `new Integer(i+3*j-1)` is `Integer`

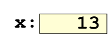
15

Reference vs Primitive Types

- Reference types
  - classes, interfaces, arrays
  - E.g.: `Integer`



- Primitive types
  - int, long, short, byte, boolean, char, float, double



16

Why Both `int` and `Integer`?

- Some data structures work only with reference types (`Hashtable, Vector, Stack, ...`)
- Primitive types are more efficient

```
for (int i = 0; i < n; i++) {...}
```

17

Upcasting and Downcasting

- Applies to reference types only
- Used to assign the value of an expression of one (static) type to a variable of another (static) type
  - upcasting: subtype → supertype
  - downcasting: supertype → subtype
- A crucial invariant:

If during execution, an expression *E* is ever evaluated and its value is an object *O*, then the dynamic type of *O* is a subtype of the static type of *E*.

18

Upcasting

- Example of upcasting:

```
Object x = new Integer(13);
```

  - static type of expression on rhs is `Integer`
  - static type of variable `x` on lhs is `Object`
  - `Integer` is a subtype of `Object`, so this is an upcast

- static type of expression on rhs must be a subtype of static type of variable on lhs – compiler checks this

- upcasting is always type correct – preserves the invariant automatically

Downcasting

- Example of downcasting:

```
Integer x = (Integer)y;
```

  - static type of `y` is `Object` (say)
  - static type of `x` is `Integer`
  - static type of expression `(Integer)y` is `Integer`
  - `Integer` is a subtype of `Object`, so this is a downcast
- In any downcast, dynamic type of object must be a subtype of static type of cast expression
- runtime check, `ClassCastException` if failure
- needed to maintain invariant (and only time it is needed)

Is the Runtime Check Necessary?

Yes, because dynamic type of object may not be known at compile time

```
void bar() {
  foo(new ~~Integer(13)~~);
}          String("x")

void foo(Object y) {
  int z = ((Integer)y).intValue();
  ...
}
```


Upcasting with Interfaces

- Java allows up-casting:

```
IPuzzle p1 = new ArrayPuzzle();
IPuzzle p2 = new IntPuzzle();
```

- Static types of right-hand side expressions are `ArrayPuzzle` and `IntPuzzle`, resp.

- Static type of left-hand side variables is `IPuzzle`

- Rhs static types are subtypes of lhs static type, so this is ok

Why Upcasting?

- Subtyping and upcasting can be used to avoid code duplication
- Puzzle example: you and client agree on interface `IPuzzle`

```
interface IPuzzle {
  void scramble();
  int tile(int r, int c);
  boolean move(char d);
}
```


Solution

Puzzle code

```
interface IPuzzle {
  int tile(int r, int c);
  ...
}
class IntPuzzle implements IPuzzle {
  public int tile(int r, int c) {...}
  ...
}
class ArrayPuzzle implements IPuzzle {
  public int tile(int r, int c) {...}
  ...
}
```

Client code

```
public static void display(IPuzzle p){
    for (int r = 0; r < 3; r++)
      for (int c = 0; c < 3; c++)
        System.out.println(p.tile(r,c));
}}
```

Method Dispatch

```
public static void display(IPuzzle p) {
  for (int row = 0; row < 3; row++)
    for (int col = 0; col < 3; col++)
      System.out.println(p.tile(row,col));
}}
```

- Which **tile** method is invoked?
  - depends on dynamic type of object **p** (**IntPuzzle** or **ArrayPuzzle**)
  - we don't know what it is, but whatever it is, we know it has a **tile** method (since any class that implements **IPuzzle** must have a **tile** method)

Method Dispatch

```
public static void display(IPuzzle p) {
  for (int row = 0; row < 3; row++)
    for (int col = 0; col < 3; col++)
      System.out.println(p.tile(row,col));
}}
```

- Compile-time check: does the static type of **p** (namely **IPuzzle**) have a **tile** method with the right type signature? No → error
- Runtime: go to object that is the value of **p**, find its dynamic type, look up its **tile** method
- The compile-time check guarantees that an appropriate **tile** method exists

Note on Casting

- Up- and downcasting do not change the object — they merely allow it to be viewed at compile time as a different static type

Another Use of Upcasting

Heterogeneous Data Structures

- Example:
```
IPuzzle[] pzls = new IPuzzle[9];
pzls[0] = new IntPuzzle();
pzls[1] = new ArrayPuzzle();
```
- expression **pzls[i]** is of type **IPuzzle**
- objects created on right hand sides are of subtypes of **IPuzzle**

Java instanceof

- Example:
  `if (p instanceof IntPuzzle) {...}`
- true if dynamic type of **p** is a subtype of **IntPuzzle**
- usually used to check if a downcast will succeed

Example

- suppose **twist** is a method implemented only in **IntPuzzle**

```
void twist(IPuzzle[] pzls) {
  for (int i = 0; i < pzls.length; i++) {
    if (pzls[i] instanceof IntPuzzle) {
      IntPuzzle p = (IntPuzzle)pzls[i];
      p.twist();
}}}
```

Avoid Useless Downcasting

bad

```
void moveAll(IPuzzle[] pzls) {
  for (int i = 0; i < pzls.length; i++) {
    if (pzls[i] instanceof IntPuzzle)
      ((IntPuzzle)pzls[i]).move("N");
    else ((ArrayPuzzle)pzls[i]).move("N");
}}
```

good

```
void moveAll(IPuzzle[] pzls) {
  for (int i = 0; i < pzls.length; i++)
    pzls[i].move("N");
}
```

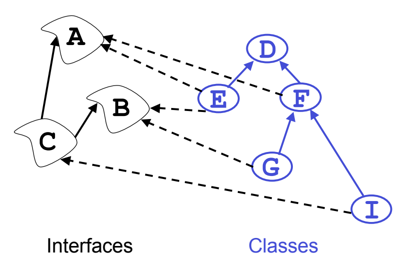

Subinterfaces

- Suppose you want to extend the interface to include more methods
  - `IPuzzle`: `scramble, move, tile`
  - `ImprovedPuzzle`: `scramble, move, tile, samLoyd`
- Two approaches
  - start from scratch and write an interface
  - extend the `IPuzzle` interface


```
interface IPuzzle {
   void scramble();
   int tile(int r, int c);
   boolean move(char d);
}

interface ImprovedPuzzle extends IPuzzle {
   void samLoyd();
}
```

- `IPuzzle` is a superinterface of `ImprovedPuzzle`
- `ImprovedPuzzle` is a subinterface of `IPuzzle`
- `ImprovedPuzzle` is a subtype of `IPuzzle`
- An interface can extend multiple superinterfaces
- A class that implements an interface must implement all methods declared in all superinterfaces




```
interface C extends A,B {...}
class F extends D implements A {...}
class E extends D implements A,B {...}
```


Conclusion

- Interfaces have two main uses
  - software engineering: good fences make good neighbors
  - subtyping
- Subtyping is a central idea in programming languages
  - inheritance and interfaces are two methods for creating subtype relationships