

Extending the Syntax and Semantics of the Hybrid Functional-Object-Oriented Scripting Language FOBS with FEDELE

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Abstract—We describe the programming language FOBS-X (Extensible FOBS). FOBS-X is interpreted, and is intended as a universal scripting language. One of the more interesting features of FOBS-X is its ability to be extended, allowing it to be adopted to new scripting environments. FOBS-x is structured as a core language that is parsed by the interpreter, and an extended language that is translated to the core by macro expansion. The syntax of the language can easily be modified by writing new macros. The library for FOBS-X is reconfigurable, allowing the semantics of the language to be modified, and adapted to facilitate the interaction with interfaces to new scripting environments. This paper focuses on the tools used for the semantic extension of the language. A tool called FEDELE has been developed, allowing the user to add library modules to the FOBS-X library. In this way the semantics of the language can be enhanced, and the language can be adapted.

Index Terms—Functional, object-oriented, programming language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tools and techniques from both the object-oriented and the functional paradigms are valuable to the programmer. Techniques from the functional paradigm provide elegant solutions to many problems. Many other problems are best solved using the concept of communicating objects inherent in the object oriented paradigm. FOBS-X is a single language that offers the user the expressive power of both paradigms, allowing the user a choice of tools when analyzing a problem, but requiring only fluency in one language. The language FOBS-X is a version of the language FOBS, described by Gil de Lamadrid & Zimmerman ^[4]. The changes to FOBS involve simplification of the pointers used in scoping rules.

FOBS-X shares many characteristics with functional languages. In particular, it is characterized by the following features:

- A single data type called a FOB, that is a simple and elegant structure that functions as both a function and an object.
- Stateless programming. Mutable objects do not

exist in the FOBS-X runtime environment. Instead, mutation is simulated by creating new objects that incorporate the required changes.

- A simple form of inheritance. A sub-FOB can be built by combining a new FOB with a super-FOB. The sub-FOB inherits all attributes from the super-FOB in the process.
- Scoping rules that support attribute overriding in inheritance. This enables a sub-FOB to modify or replace behaviors and attributes of a super-FOB.
- The ability to modify syntax through a macro expansion capability.
- A tool for easily writing new library modules, allowing the semantics of FOBS-X to be modified to fit differing scripting requirements.

Many scripting languages are weakly typed. FOBS follows this trend. Often the justification for weak typing is that it relieves the programmer from the burden of strict type enforcement. However, it also results in a situation in which type errors are not detected until late. The justification for weak typing in FOBS-X is based on two points. The first is that FOBS-X only has one data type, making strong type checking, based on syntax, almost impossible. The second point is that with interpreted languages the distinction between parsing and execution is much more blurred than with compiled languages, and so type checking before execution becomes much less important.

Several researchers have built hybrid language systems, in an attempt to combine the functional and object-oriented paradigms, but have sacrificed referential transparency in the process. A language called PROOF, developed by Yau et al. ^[11] attempts to incorporate objects into the functional paradigm. However, the modifications do little to take into account the functional programming style. Alexandrescu ^[1] presents the language *D*, which is a rework of the language *C*, transforming it into a more natural scripting language that is similar to Javascript and Ruby.

Scala by Odersky et al. ^[12] is a language compiled to the Java Virtual Machine. The claim for Scala is that it implements a hybrid of the functional and object oriented paradigms, but, in fact, it tends toward the imperative language end of the spectrum. Scala is a class based language that is proposed as a tool to write web-servers.

It is implemented as a small core language, along with a library that implements many of its capabilities. The same structure in FOBS allows the capabilities of the language to be easily extended.

The two languages FLC by Beaven et al. [2], and FOOPS by Goguen and Meseguer [6] seek to preserve functional features. In FOOPS, functional features have been augmented by adding in support for ADTs. FLC, in our opinion, takes an approach that is conceptually simpler. In FLC, classes are represented as functions. FOBS is based on this same representation scheme. The class structure, however, has been removed from FOBS. The role of the class as a "factory" of individual objects, each with their own state, is not applicable in a stateless environment such as that in FOBS. A stateless system lends itself better to a prototype system, in which a single prototype object is copied with slight modifications to produce variants.

Another language that implements object-orientation while maintaining a mostly functional approach is OCAML^[8]. OCAML is built around ML, but has added elements enabling object-oriented and imperative programming. The creation of objects is supported by a record structure, and stateful programming is supported by mutable objects. The importance of mutation in object-orientation is discussed later in the paper. And, although important, we felt that mutation should be isolated and controlled. This helps preserve the overriding computation model of FOBS, which prominently features referential transparency. OCAML has a distinctly non-declarative nature, resulting from the tight integration of mutable objects into the computational model.

Scripting languages have tended to avoid the functional paradigm. Several object-oriented scripting languages such as Python^[3] are available. Python is mostly object-oriented, although its support for functional programming is decent, including LISP like characteristics such as dynamic typing and anonymous functions. However, Python lacks referential transparency. We view this as one of the more significant features of FOBS. We also felt, when designing FOBS, that a simpler data structure could be used to implement objects and the inheritance concept, than was used in this popular language. FOBS combines functional programming and object-orientation into a single elegant hybrid language, offering both tools to the user. This is not done by adding in features from both paradigms, as do languages like Python or FOOPS, but rather by incorporating a single structure that embodies both paradigms, and unifies them.

II. LANGUAGE DESCRIPTION

FOBS-X is built around a core language, core-FOBS-X. Core-FOBS-X has only one type of data: the FOB. A simple FOB is a quadruplet,

$$[m \ i \ \rightarrow \ e \ \hat{\rho}]$$

The FOB has two tasks. Its first task is to bind an identifier, i , to an expression, e . The e -expression is unevaluated until the identifier is accessed. Its second task is to supply a return value when invoked as a function. ρ (the ρ -expression) is an unevaluated expression that is evaluated and returned upon invocation.

The FOB also includes a modifier, m . This modifier indicates the visibility of the identifier. The possible values are: "+" indicating public access, "~" indicating protected access, and "\$" indicating argument access. Identifiers that are protected are visible only in the FOB, or any FOB inheriting from it. An argument identifier is one that will be used as a formal argument, when the FOB is invoked as a function. All argument identifiers are also accessible as public.

As an example, the FOB

$$[\text{'x} \ \rightarrow \ 3 \ \hat{6}]$$

is a FOB that binds the variable x to the value 3. The variable x is considered to be public, and if the FOB is used as a function, it will return the value 6.

Primitive data is defined in the FOBS library. The types *Boolean*, *Char*, *Real*, and *String* have constants with forms close to their equivalent C types. The *Vector* type is a container type, with constants of a form close to that of the Prolog list. For example, the vector

$$["abc", 3, \text{true}]$$

represents an ordered list of a string, an integer, and a Boolean value. Semantically, a vector is more like the Java type of the same name. It can be accessed as a standard list, using the usual *car*, *cdr*, and *cons* operations, or as an array using indexes. It is implemented as a Perl list structure. Unlike the Java vector type, the FOBS-X vector type is immutable. The best approximation to the mutate operation is the creation of a brand new modified vector.

There are three operations that can be performed on any FOB. These are called *access*, *invoke*, and *combine*. An access operation accesses a variable inside a FOB, provided that the variable has been given a public or argument modifier. As an example, in the expression

$$[\text{'x} \ \rightarrow \ 3 \ \hat{6}].x$$

the operator "." indicates an access, and is followed by the identifier being accessed. The expression would evaluate to the value of x , which is 3.

An invoke operation invokes a FOB as a function, and is indicated by writing two adjacent FOBs. The first FOB is the the invoked FOB, and the second FOB contains the actual arguments for the function invocation. In the following example

$$[\text{'y} \ \rightarrow \ _ \ \hat{y}.+[1]] [3]$$

a FOB is defined that binds the variable y to the empty

FOB and returns the result of the expression $y + 1$, when used as a function. When the example is used as a function by the invoke operation, since y is an argument variable, the binding of the variable y to the empty FOB is considered only a default binding. This binding is replaced by a binding to the actual argument, 3. To do the addition, y is accessed for the FOB bound to the identifier $+$, and this FOB is invoked with 1 as its actual argument. The result of the invocation is 4.

In an invocation, it is assumed that the second operand is a vector. This explains why the second operand in the above example is enclosed in square braces. Invocation involves binding the actual argument to the argument variable in the FOB, and then evaluating the expression, giving the return value.

A combine operation is indicated with the operator `;`. It is used to implement inheritance. In the following example

```
[ '+x -> 3 ^ _ ] ;
[ '$y -> _ ^ x.+[y]]          (1)
```

two FOBs are combined. The super-FOB defines a public variable x . The sub-FOB defines an argument variable y , and a ρ -expression. Notice that the sub-FOB has unrestricted access to the super-FOB, and is allowed access to the variable x , whether modified as public, argument or protected.

The FOB resulting from Expression (1) can be accessed, invoked, or further combined. For example the code

```
([ '+x -> 3 ^ _ ] ;
[ '$y -> _ ^ x.+[y]]) . x
```

evaluates to 3, and the code

```
([ '+x -> 3 ^ _ ] ;
[ '$y -> _ ^ x.+[y]]) [5]
```

evaluates to 8.

Multiple combine operations result in FOB stacks, which are compound FOBs. For example, the following code creates a FOB with an attribute x and a two-argument function that multiplies its arguments together. The code then uses the FOB to multiply 9 by 2.

```
([ '+x -> 5 ^ _ ] ; [ '$a -> _ ^ _ ] ;
[ '$b -> _ ^ a.*[b]]) [9, 2]
```

In the invocation, the arguments are substituted in the order from top to bottom of the FOB stack, so that the formal argument a would be bound to the actual argument 2, and the formal argument b would be bound to 9.

In addition to the three primitive FOBS operations, many operations on primitive data are defined in the FOBS library. These operations include the usual arithmetic, logic, and string manipulation operations. In

addition, conversion functions provide conversion from one primitive type to another, when appropriate.

Example (2) presents a larger example to demonstrate how FOBS code might be used to solve more complex programming problems. In this example we define a FOB that implements a standard up-counter. The FOB structure is shown in Fig. 1, using UML. The outermost FOB implements the UML class called *CounterMaker*, that copies a prototype to create new counters. The counters are known as the class *Counter* in Fig. 1. *CounterMaker* creates a new *Counter* when its function *makeCounter* is called. The argument to *makeCounter*, *val*, becomes the initial value of the counter. The counter contains an instance variable, *count*, that contains the current count value. When the *Counter* FOB is invoked, the value of the variable *count* is returned. The counter also contains a function *inc* that "increments" the counter. Since FOBS is stateless, what *inc* actually does is create a new *Counter* object with the incremented *count* variable.

```
## Implementation of a standard
## up-counter
([ '+makeCounter ->
  [ '$val -> 0 ^
    [ '~count -> val ^ _ ];
    [ '+inc ->
      [ '~_ -> _
        ^ makeCounter[
          count.+[1]]
      ]
    ]
  ]
  ^ _ ];
[ '~_ -> _ ^ count]
]
]
## test it
. makeCounter[6]. inc[]
. inc[] []
#
#!
```

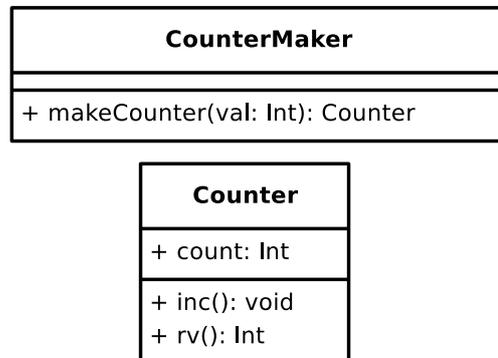


Fig.1. Class structure of Example (2)

Since UML is designed to model object-oriented systems, it is no surprise that using it to model a FOB requires extra notation to handle the ability to invoke a

FOB as a function. In Fig. 1. the notation rv is used to represent the operation of invoking the FOB as a function. The use of rv (return value) in the diagram indicates that, when the FOB *Counter* is invoked, it returns the current value of the variable *count*.

Larger examples, and a more complete definition of the FOBS language are given by Gil de Lamadrid and Zimmerman^[4].

III. CORE-FOBS DESIGN TOPICS

Expression evaluation in FOBS-X is fairly straight forward. Three issues, however, need some clarification. These issues are: the semantics of the redefinition of a variable, the semantics of a FOB invocation, and the interaction between dynamic and static scoping.

3.1. Variable overriding

A FOB stack may contain several definitions of the same identifier, resulting in overriding. For example, in the following FOB

```
[ '$m -> 'a' ^ m.toInt[] ] ;
  [ '+m -> 3 ^ m ]
```

the variable m has two definitions; in the super-FOB it is defined as an argument variable, and in the sub-FOB another definition is stacked on top with m defined as a public variable. The consequence of stacking on a new variable definition is that it completely overrides any definition of the same variable already in the FOB stack, including the modifier. In addition, the new ρ -expression becomes the return value at the top of the full FOB stack.

3.2. Argument substitution

As mentioned earlier, the invoke operator creates bindings between formal and actual arguments, and then evaluates the ρ -expression of the FOB being invoked. At this point we give a more detailed description of the process.

Consider the following FOB that adds together two arguments, and is being invoked with values 10 and 6.

```
([ '$r -> 5 ^ _ ] ;
 [ '$s -> 3 ^ r.+[s]] [10, 6]
```

The result of this invocation is the internal creation of the following FOB stack

```
[ '$r -> 5 ^ _ ] ;
 [ '$s -> 3 ^ r.+[s]] ;
 [ '+r -> 6 ^ r.+[s]] ;
 [ '+s -> 10 ^ r.+[s]]
```

In this new FOB the formal arguments are now public variables bound to the actual arguments, and the return value of the invoked FOB has been copied up to the top of the FOB stack. The return value of the original FOB

can now be computed easily with this new FOB by doing a standard evaluation of its ρ -expression, yielding a value of 16.

3.3. Partial invocation

Modern functional languages often support currying. The major contribution of currying is that it is a way to implement partial application, allowing the user to create a function from a function activation, with some, but not all of the parameters bound.

Originally FOBS implemented only the *invoke* operator, which combined argument binding and evaluation of the ρ -expression. Although the user could specify only a subset of the formal arguments, the result of a partial application was that the default values of the formal arguments would be used, and the return value would be a fully evaluated function, rather than a new partially applied function, as in currying.

When FOBS-X was developed from FOBS, a new operation, denoted as *;;*, was added to the language. This operation, called *partial invocation*, implements a partial application in the semantic environment of FOBS. Although the mechanism in FOBS-X is radically different than currying, the result is close to the same.

The functioning of the partial invocation operator is best illustrated with an example. Consider the following example, using the invoke operator:

```
([ '$r -> 5 ^ _ ] ;
 [ '$s -> 3 ^ r.+[s]] ) ;; [10]
```

Here a FOB stack with two arguments, r , and s , is being invoked with only one actual argument; the value 10. When this happens, a new stack is formed, as discussed previously.

```
[ '$r -> 5 ^ _ ] ;
 [ '$s -> 3 ^ r.+[s]] ;
 [ '+s -> 10 ^ r.+[s]]
```

 (3)

The ρ -expression of this stack, $r.+[s]$ is then evaluated using the new binding for s , 10, and the default binding for r , 5, yielding the value 15. This value is the value of the invoke operation.

Let us now consider the same example using the partial invocation operation.

```
([ '$r -> 5 ^ _ ] ;
 [ '$s -> 3 ^ r.+[s]] ) ;; [10]
```

The partial invocation operator starts by performing argument binding, producing the same stack as the invoke operator. This is the stack of Example (3). However, unlike the invoke operator, there is no evaluation of the ρ -expression. The stack of Example (3) is the result of the partial invocation. This stack can later be supplied with more arguments, and fully invoked, as the user pleases.

3.4. Variable scope, and expression evaluation

Scoping rules in FOBS-X are, by nature, more complex than scoping used in most functional languages. Newer functional languages, such as Haskell and ML, typically use lexical scoping. Dynamic scoping is often associated with older dialects of LISP.

Pure lexical scoping does not cope well with variable overriding, as understood in the object-oriented sense, which typically involves dynamic message binding. To address this issue, FOBS-X uses a hybrid scoping system which combines lexical and dynamic scoping. Consider the following FOB expression.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & [\tilde{y} \rightarrow 1 \hat{_}] ; \\
 & [\tilde{x} \rightarrow \\
 & \quad [\overset{+}{n} \rightarrow y. + [m] \hat{_} n] ; \\
 & \quad [\tilde{m} \rightarrow 2 \hat{_}] \\
 &] ; \\
 & [\tilde{z} \rightarrow 3 \hat{x}. n]
 \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

We are currently mostly interested in the FOB stack structure of Expression (4), and can represent it graphically with the stack graph, given in Fig. 2. In the stack graph each node represents a simple FOB, and is labeled with the variable defined in the FOB. Three types of edges are used to connect nodes: the s-pointer, the t-pointer, and the γ -pointer. The s-pointer describes the lexical nested block structure of one FOB defined inside of another. The s-pointer for each node points to the FOB in which it is defined. For example m is defined inside of the FOB x .

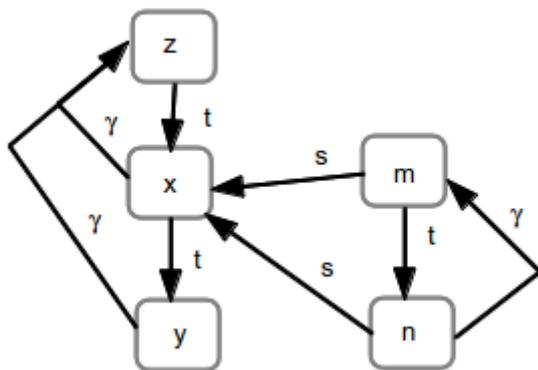


Fig.2. Stack graph of Example (4)

The t-pointer for each node points to the super-FOB of a FOB. It describes the FOB stack structure of the graph. In Fig. 2 there are basically two stacks: the top level stack consisting of nodes z , x , and y , and the nested stack consisting of nodes m , and n .

The γ -pointer is a back pointer, that points up the FOB stack to the top. This provides an easy efficient mechanism for finding the top of a stack from any of the nodes in the stack.

If the FOB z were invoked, it would access the FOB x for the value of n . This would cause the expression $y + m$ to be evaluated, a process that demonstrates the use of all

three pointers. The process of resolving a reference in FOBS-X first examines the current FOB stack. The top of the current stack is reached by following the γ -pointer. Then the t-pointers are used to search the stack from top to bottom. If the reference is still unresolved, the s-pointer is used to find the FOB stack enclosing the current stack. This enclosing stack now becomes the current stack, and is now searched in the same fashion, from top to bottom, using the γ -pointer to find the top of the stack, and the t-pointers to descend to the bottom.

To illustrate this procedure for the example, to locate the definition of the variable y , referenced in the FOB n , the γ -pointer for n is followed up to the FOB m , this FOB is examined, and then its t-pointer is followed down to the FOB x , which is also examined. Not having found a definition for the variable y , the s-pointer for FOB n is followed out to the FOB x , and then the γ -pointer is followed up to the FOB z . FOB z is examined, and its t-pointer is traversed to FOB x , which is also examined. Then the t-pointer for FOB x is finally followed down to the FOB y , which supplies the definition of y needed in the FOB n .

As mentioned above, the scoping for FOBS-X is a combination of lexical and dynamic scoping. S-pointers are lexical in nature, since the nesting of FOBs is a static property. T-pointers and γ -pointers are dynamic. These pointers must be created as new FOB stacks are created during execution.

Table 1. Operations for the Boolean FOB

Library FOB	Operation	Description
Boolean	b.if[x, y]	If Boolean value b is true, return x , otherwise return y
	b.&[x]	Return the boolean value of the expression $b \wedge x$
	b. [x]	Return the boolean value of the expression $b \vee x$
	b.![]	Return the boolean value of the expression

IV. THE FOBS LIBRARY

As FOBS-X can be extended by adding new primitive FOBs to the library, we use the term *native primitive FOBs* to denote the primitive FOBs that are part of core-FOBS. The FOBS library contains definitions of all native primitive FOBs. The native primitive FOBs are *Int*, *Char*, *Real*, *Boolean*, *Vector*, *String*, and *FOBS*. In addition a set of "mix-in" FOBs are contained in the library, that serve the same purpose as mix-in classes described by Page-Jones [9], providing general capabilities to primitive FOBs. For example the *Boolean* FOB uses

the mix-in FOBs *Eq*, and *Printable* to supply operations to compare Boolean values for equality, and the ability to be printed, respectively.

The native primitive FOBs mostly implement the native data types of the FOBS language. Each data type provides the wrapper for the data, along with a set of operations, used to manipulate the data. As an example, Table 1 shows the operations provided by the *Boolean* FOB. This operation structure is shown in the UML diagram of Fig. 3. The operations for the *Boolean* FOB are implication, logical *and*, logical *or*, and logical *not*. The *Boolean* FOB inherits the operations of *equals*, and *not-equals* form the mix-in FOB *Eq*, and it inherits the *toString* function, that generates a print-string, from the FOB *Printable*.

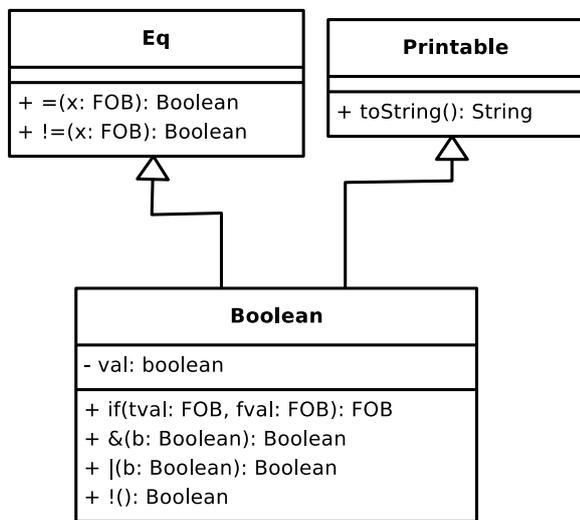


Fig.3. Interface for the *Boolean* FOB

The primitive FOB *FOBS* is the one primitive FOB that does not implement a data type. This FOB is, initially, largely empty. It, however, provides the mechanism for extending the FOBS-X language, allowing it to be adapted to differing scripting environments. The user of the FOBS-X language extends the language by adding modules to the *FOBS* FOB, one for each extension to the language.

V. EXTENSIONS

FOBS is a language that is designed to be extensible, both in terms of syntax, and semantics. To extend the language the user designs an *extension*. An extension is defined by an *extension module*, which is composed of two pieces: a macro file, and a collection of library modules.

5.1. Macro files

FOBS-X allows the syntax of the language to be changed in a limited fashion. The mechanism used to modify the syntax is macro expansion. Before a FOBS expression is parsed, a macro processor is used to expand macros used in the code. In this way, the user can alter

the syntax of FOBS expression by writing and loading the appropriate macros to handle the changes.

Many programming languages have macro capabilities. These range from the fairly simple mechanisms in the programming language *C*, to the relatively more sophisticated mechanisms of *LISP*. It was felt that these simple systems were inadequate for FOBS. In particular, to implement a fair degree of flexibility, we felt that the ability to modify syntax should be more extensive than these types of systems offer, including a limited ability to change delimiter symbols. The language *MetaML* [13] provides much more sophisticated macro capabilities. It is built for the manipulation of macro type code, and implements multi-stage meta-programming. The macro capability of FOBS-X is much lighter weight than that of *MetaML*, but ideas from *MetaML* have found their way into FOBS-X. In particular, we found the staging of macro expansion useful. The staging in our case is used to implement macro operator precedence.

Macro definitions are quadruples, which are described in detail by Gil de Lamadrid [5]. Example (5) gives a simple demonstration of the form of macro definitions.

```

## the array mutate operation
#defleft
  #?x [ #*i ] <- #?y
#as
  ( #?x ) . -+ [ #*i , #*y ]
#level
  3
#end
  
```

(5)

The macro quadruple consists of the following parts.

- S_1 : the search string, which includes wild-card tokens.
- S_2 : the replacement string, which includes wild-card tokens.
- P : the priority of the macro, with priority 19 being highest priority, and priority 0 being the lowest.
- d : the direction of the scan, with *right* indicating right-to-left, and *left* indicating left-to-right.

In the FOBS notation of Example (5) the parts of the quadruple are specified using either the *#defleft*, or the *#defright* directive. Firstly, the directive specifies the direction d , depending on whether *#defleft* or *#defright* is used. Then the search string S_1 , the replacement string S_2 , and the priority P are specified, in order, separated by the two delimiters *#as*, and *#level*, and terminated by the *#end* directive.

The strings S_1 , and S_2 are strings of FOBS lexicons, and wild-card tokens. Wild card tokens are all tokens that begin with either the sequence *"#?"* or *"#*"*, indicating a *single* wild card token, or a *multiple* wild card token, respectively. A single wild card matches a single *atom*, and a multiple wild card matches a string of atoms. An

make only minor changes to the semantics of FOBS. To make small changes it is more appropriate for the user to do so using a tool that simplifies the process. The tool that we have developed is the FOBS Extension Definition Language Extension (FEDELE).

When designing FEDELE, we first thought of a meta-language that was implemented as an external tool. However, since FOBS is a scripting language, and designed for just such work, we rapidly realized that it made sense to implement FEDELE as a FOBS-X extension. FEDELE is, therefore, a FOBS-X extension that helps the user create other FOBS-X extensions.

VI. THE FEDELE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The standard extension is unusual in that it is an extension with only one component: the macro file. No semantic changes are made to FOBS; only syntactic changes. Most extensions contain both a macro file and library modules. FEDELE is a more usual extension. Library modules provide the capabilities of the package, and a macro file provides more convenient syntax for using it.

The FEDELE extension provides a simpler way of writing the library modules necessary for implementing an extension. The FEDELE language allows the user to specify the structure of the extension much in the same way that YACC (see Johnson ^[7]) allows a programming language designer to specify the structure of a new programming language. The specification is translated into a set of Perl modules implementing the extension. The modules are then placed in a directory, and the directory path is placed on the Perl include path *@INC*, extending the directories searched for library modules. This summarizes the process of extending the library, but to continue our discussion of FEDELE, we will need to examine the structure of the FOBS-X library in more detail.

6.1. The FOBS library implementation

The FOBS-X library is composed of a collection of primitive and utility FOBs. As explained previously primitive FOBs use utility FOBs to mix-in general capabilities. However, from the standpoint of structure, there is no difference between a primitive and a utility FOB. In this discussion we will therefor consider only the structure of a primitive FOB.

To illustrate the structure of a primitive FOB, we take as example the FOB *Boolean*. The Boolean FOB can be represented in UML as shown previously in Fig. 3. It contains an instance variable *val* that contains the actual Boolean value, represented as a character string. It also contains the common Boolean operations of *and*, "&", *or*, "|", and *not*, "!". In addition it contains the operator *if* that implements the implication operator. The FOB *Boolean* inherits operations from the FOBs *Eq*, and *Printable*. From *Eq* it inherits the operations *equals*, "=", and *not-equals*, "!=". From *Printable* it inherits the operation *toString*, that converts a Boolean value into a printable string.

It should be noted that the term "inheritance" for primitive FOBs is only loosely applied. In fact, the mechanism is more of a message-forwarding mechanism. That is to say that, for example, if a *Boolean* FOB receives an *equals* access request, the request is forwarded to its parent *Eq* FOB.

Implementing the *Boolean* FOB in Perl is done with two structures: a hash table, containing the data of the primitive FOB, and a Perl module, *Boolean*, that contains code for all of the operations in the primitive FOB.

6.2. Primitive FOB Hash Table Structure

The hash-table representing the data in a primitive FOB stores information in attribute-value pairs. The attributes of interest are the following.

- *type* - This attribute gives the type of the FOB. Using the notation described by Gil de Lamadrid & Zimmerman ^[4], a primitive FOB is of type "omega", and a non-primitive FOB has type "phi".
- *code* - This attribute stores the name of the primitive FOB. For the FOB *Boolean*, the code attribute would have the value "Boolean".
- Super-FOBs - This is a collection of attributes, one per parent FOB. Each of these attributes stores an instance of one of the parent FOBs. For the FOB *Boolean* there are two such attributes. *superEq* stores an instance of the primitive FOB *Eq*, and *superPrintable* stores an instance of the primitive FOB *Printable*.

In addition to the above standard attributes, the primitive FOB hash-table contains attributes that are specific to the particular primitive FOB. For the *Boolean* primitive FOB, there is only one more attribute: the attribute *val*, that holds the Boolean value of the FOB, stored as a character string.

6.3. Primitive FOB Module Structure

The main library module for a primitive FOB has the same name as the primitive FOB. For example, for the primitive FOB *Boolean* there is a Perl module called *Boolean*. This module has four standard functions in it.

- *construct* - This function constructs the hash table representing an instance of the primitive FOB.
- *constructConstant* - This function is an extension of the function *construct*. It constructs the instance, using *construct*, and then initializes it by filling in any instance variables.
- *alpha* - This is the function α that is described by Gil de Lamadrid & Zimmerman ^[4]. It takes a single argument, a character string, and accesses the primitive FOB for the value of the identifier specified by the argument.
- *iota* - This is the function ι described by Gil de Lamadrid & Zimmerman ^[4]. It takes a single argument, a *Vector* FOB, and invokes the primitive FOB using the vector to supply its actual

arguments.

6.4. Operation Modules

The main module of a primitive FOB is not the only module needed to define the FOB. To understand why this is so, consider the following FOBS code, and the semantics of invocation.

```
false.&[true] (7)
```

In this expression, the Boolean FOB *false* is being accessed for its *and* operation. The operation is then being invoked, with the argument *true*. However, the question arises, when we say that *the operation* is invoked, what, in fact, is an operation, in terms of implementation? The simple answer is that if an operation is invoked, then it must be a FOB, because only FOBs are invoked. This observation becomes trivially clear when we look at an example that does not involve a primitive FOB.

```
[ '+ & -> [ '~_ -> _ ^ false ]
  ^ _]. & [true] (8)
```

In this example, as in Example (7), a FOB is accessed for an "&" operation, and the operation is invoked with the Boolean FOB *true*. The difference is that in Example (8) the FOB being accessed is not a primitive FOB. What is produced by the access operation is a FOB, in this case, that always returns the value *false*. We observe that the same must be true of Example (7). That is to say that an access operation always produces a FOB, whether the FOB being accessed is a primitive FOB or not.

What the above discussion points out is that when we access an operator in a primitive FOB, what is produced is a FOB. That FOB, when invoked would perform the particular operation. Every operator in a primitive FOB must have defined a FOB that will perform the given operation. For a library FOB such as *Boolean*, each of its operators is defined as a primitive FOB. For example the *and* operator for the FOB *Boolean* is defined as a primitive library FOB called *Boolean_and*. We refer to library modules for the operations of a primitive FOB, as *primitive operation modules*.

To summarize, a primitive FOB is represented as a set of library modules. These consist of the main library module, described above, and a set of operation modules, one per operation. An operation module contains the same functions as the main module. That is to say that the operation module will have a *construct* function, a *constructConstant* function, an *alpha* function, and an *iota* function, each with the same role as in the main module. Each of these functions would perform actions appropriate to the operator. That is to say that the *alpha* function would always return an empty FOB, and the *iota* function would perform the operation of the operation module.

6.5. Extension Access

Once the user has defined an extension, the language FOBS-X must be able to allow the user to use the extension. This section describes the mechanism used to allow FOBS-X code to use an extension.

The modules of the extension can be placed at any location in the directory hierarchy of the operating system. The author of the extension then must inform the FOBS-X interpreter where the extension is located. As discussed previously, this is done by ensuring that the extension directory is on the list of include directories for Perl, *@INC*. This is easily done by setting the environment variable *PERL5LIB* to the extension path.

Recall that the two components of an extension are the macro file, and the library modules. We discuss how the FOBS-X interpreter locates both of these components in this section. We begin with how the macro file is located. A macro file is loaded with the *#use* directive. An example might be

```
#use Count
```

This directive tells the FOBS-X interpreter to look for a file called *Count.fobs* containing the macros of the extension. What the FOBS-X interpreter does then is to search Perl include directories, listed in the array *@INC*. There are two exceptions to the procedure, as illustrated in the following *#use* invocations.

```
#use #SE
#use #FEDELE
```

The extensions *#SE*, the standard extension, and *#FEDELE* are considered part of the FOBS-X language, and as such are located in a separate default FOBS include directory.

We now turn to the location of library modules. The standard mechanism for accessing the library in FOBS is a reference to a constant. For example, if a FOBS expression contains a reference to the constant *true*, the FOBS interpreter observes that this is a *Boolean* constant. The interpreter then goes to the default library directory, locates the main *Boolean* module, and invokes its *constructConstant* constructor function to create the hash-table. *ConstructConstant* also links the main module to the hash-table, using a Perl mechanism called *blessing*, effectively making the hash table an *object*, in the object-oriented sense, which is to say that the hash table can be sent messages corresponding to any of the functions defined in the main *Boolean* module.

When the user defines their own library module, the above procedure cannot be used, because there is no FOBS constant for the new primitive FOB that would trigger the FOB construction. Instead, the construction of a FOB is triggered using the FOB *FOBS*. This is illustrated in the following FOBS expression.

FOBS.Count.new[5] (9)

The FOB *FOBS* is a primitive FOB in the FOBS-X library used to present links to extensions to the user. In Example (9), the user is attempting to access the identifier *Count*, which is the name of an extension. This identifier is not explicitly defined in the FOB *FOBS*. However, the FOBS-X interpreter will consider it implicitly defined, and, when referenced, will attempt to load the main module for the extension from the list of Perl include directories.

If we assume that the *Count* FOB is defined along the lines of the UML diagram in Fig. 1, the *Count* FOB has one operation, *inc*, explicitly defined. For every extension, generated by FEDELE or not, the primitive FOB must also contain a *new* operation. This operation, when called, generates a new instance of the FOB, and calls the *constructConstant* constructor for the FOB. In Example (9), the *new* operator is called to construct a primitive *Count* FOB, initialized to the value 5.

VII. THE FEDELE EXTENSION

This section describes the components of the FEDELE extension. FEDELE has both a macro file, extending the syntax of FOBS to more easily specify extension components, and library modules, providing the operators required to specify the contents of the library modules of the new extension, and write the module out. We begin by describing the FEDELE operations.

7.1. The FEDELE Primitive FOB

The primitive FOB *FOBS.FEDELE* is a very uncomplicated FOB that has no accessible identifiers in it, and can only be invoked. The result of an invocation is a *FEDELE_module* FOB. The *FEDELE_module* is a data structure used to collect information on the new FOB being described. Fig. 4 is the UML diagram showing the two FOBs: *FEDELE*, and *FEDELE_module*.

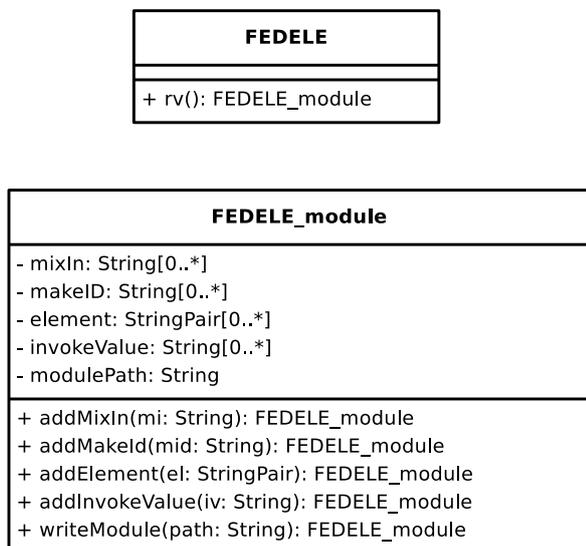


Fig.4. Interface for FEDELE

The *FEDELE_module* FOB contains variables for storing the following items

- *mixIn*: a list of primitive mix-in FOBs.
- *makeID*: a list of identifiers that will be included in the hash-table representing the FOB.
- *element*: a list of operations that will be included in the FOB. Each operation is represented as a pair consisting of the operation name, and a snippet of Perl code that will become the body of the *iota* function for the operation.
- *invokeValue*: a snippet of Perl code that will become the body of the *iota* function for the new FOB itself.
- *modulePath*: the directory on to which the files of the library module will be written.

In addition to the above variables, the *FEDELE_module* also contains operators for adding items to its data structures. Each operation adds an item and returns the modified *FEDELE_module*.

7.2. The FEDELE Macros

The second part of the FEDELE extension is a macro file that defines the FEDELE language, and allows easier specification of a primitive FOB. The FEDELE language is a structured language. The structures of the language are listed in Table 2.

A FEDELE specification, at the outer level is an *extension* structure. This structure would contain clauses; each clause being either a *mixIn*, a *make*, an *element*, or an *invoke* structure. This is illustrated more clearly in the next section. FEDELE translates the *extension* structure into FOBS code that creates a *FEDELE_module*. The clause structures are translated into *FEDELE_module* operations that add the appropriate elements to the module. For example, the *make* clause would translate into an invocation of the *addMakeId* operator shown in Fig. 4.

VIII. A FEDELE EXAMPLE

We now present an example to illustrate how FEDELE is used. Suppose that the user wished to add a primitive FOB to the library that is similar to the counter FOB of Example (2). Remember that this example is illustrated in UML in Fig. 1. The new library FOB, however, unlike the counter of Example (2), will be mutable. That is to say that a counter will have state, and each time the counter is incremented it will change its state, rather than produce a new counter with the modified state. This new counter will also support two new syntactic constructs: one to easily construct a counter, and one to increment the counter. The syntax of these operations is illustrated in the following example.

++(%C(5))

This example uses the "%C" operator to create a

counter initialized to 5. The second operator illustrated, "++", is used to increment a counter.

Table 2. FEDELE macro operations

Structure	Description
extension " <i>xmd</i> " { <i>clauses</i> } to <i>path</i>	Defines an extension with name <i>xmd</i> , to be written to the given directory path. It contains clauses giving the content of the extension <i>xmd</i> .
mixIn <i>mixinFOB</i>	A clause indicating that the FOB <i>mixinFOB</i> from the library is a super-FOB for this FOB. This clause can be repeated to include several super-FOBs.
make { <i>idList</i> }	Describes the constant constructor for the FOB. The constructor will be available as the function FOBS. <i>xmd</i> . new. <i>New</i> takes an argument for each identifier listed, and stores the argument as the value of the identifier. The <i>idList</i> is given as a list of strings, separated by commas.
element " <i>id</i> " as " <i>perlScript</i> "	Gives the name of an element, or operator, of the FOB available through the access operator. The included Perl script gives the value returned if the operator is invoked.
invoke " <i>perlScript</i> "	The Perl script gives the result of an invoke operation on the FOB itself.

Our new counter will also allow the user to increment the counter by any value, as opposed to just an increment of one. An increment of more than one will not be supported by the macros, but can still be accomplished by using the *inc* function itself, as in

c. inc[3]

that increases the value of the counter *c* by 3. Fig. 5 shows the new FOB structure in UML.

8.1. The Counter FEDELE Specification

The extension specification for our new counter consists of a FEDELE specification describing the library modules, and a macro file defining the syntax of the constructor operator, and the increment operator.

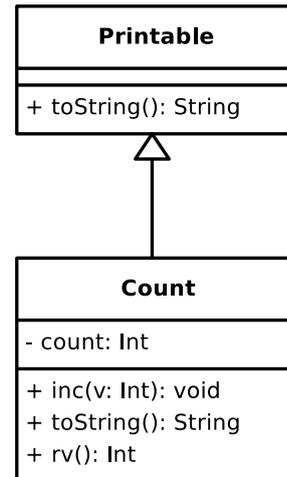


Fig.5. The mutable counter FOB

We begin by presenting the FEDELE code to generate the library modules.

```

## FEDELE specification to
## generate the example counter
#use #FEDELE

extension "Count" {
  mixIn "Printable"
  make {"count"}
  element "inc" as "
  $args = lib::
  PrimitiveFobs
  ->thunkDown($args->[0]);
  if($args eq $undef) {
    return(lib::
      PrimitiveFobs::
      getEmpty())
  };
  if($args->{type} eq
  \"omega\" &&
  $args->{code} eq
  \"Int\") {
    $it->{count}->{val}
    += $args->{val};
    return($it);
  }
  return(lib::PrimitiveFobs
  ::getEmpty());
}

```

(10)

```

element "toString" as "
  my $v = $it->{count}->
    {val};
  return(lib::FEDELE::
    evalString(
      "\\|\\|"%C:"\\|\\|")
      .+[$v .toString[] \\|\\|));
"
  invoke "
    return($it->{count});
"
} to "e:/fobs-x/code/Count"
#.
#!

```

(10 cont.)

Considering the overall structure of Example (10), it is, in fact, faithful to the UML description of Figure 5. It specifies a mix-in FOB *Printable*, an identifier *count*, two operations, *inc*, and *toString*, and a return value when invoked.

The Perl code snippets from Example (10) illustrate several issues concerned with the interface between FOBS-X and Perl. The first issue is how to enable a Perl segment to access the arguments of the function call. This is accomplished through the use of several special variables.

- `$it` - The FOB being operated on. That is to say that `$it` is the target of the invoke operation.
- `$args` - A *Vector* FOB containing the arguments of the invoke operation.

The object `$it` contains all the identifiers declared in the FEDELE declaration as hash attributes. For instance, in the *Count* FOB, the sequence `$it->{count}` is the *count* identifier of Fig. 5.

To access the arguments in the variable `$arg` a helper function is necessary. The arguments to FOBs are stored in *thunks*. To be used, the FOB inside the argument *thunk* must be unwrapped and evaluated. The function `lib::PrimitiveFobs->thunkdown` can be used for this purpose, as demonstrated in the definition of the operator *inc*.

There are a couple of other useful Perl functions used in Example (10). The function `lib::PrimitiveFobs::getEmpty` can be used to create an instance of the empty FOB, a FOB often used to signal an exception. Another function `lib::FEDELE::evalString` is used to evaluate FOBS expressions within the Perl code. This is a useful feature. Often it is easier to perform certain actions in FOBS, than in Perl. *EvalString* provides the ability to mix Perl with FOBS code, allowing the user to choose the more efficient implementation.

8.2. The Counter Macro File

The second component of the extension is the macro

file that introduces more compact syntactic notation for the new counter operations. The contents of the file are shown in Example (11).

```

## macros for the Counter
## example FOB
#defleft
  % C ( #?op )
#as
  ( FOBS . Count . new
    [ #?op ] )
#level
  9
#end
(11)

#defleft
  ++ #?op
#as
  #?op . inc [ 1 ]
#level
  8
#end
#!

```

The macro file contains the definitions of two macros. The first one implements the constructor structure with the "%C" notation. It matches a string beginning with the character sequence "% C", and followed by a single atom enclosed in parentheses. This sequence is replaced by an invocation of `FOBS.Count.new` with the matched atom as an argument.

The second macro is for the increment operator. It matches the operator "++" followed by an atom, and replaces it with an invocation of the *inc* operation on the matched atom with argument 1.

8.3. Stateful and stateless programming

The counter defined by Examples (10) and (11) demonstrates rather graphically one of the issues concerning the hybrid paradigm of FOBS. There is a dichotomy between functional programming and object-oriented programming. The object-oriented paradigm clearly involves the explicit maintenance of state. In fact we often refer to the bindings of instance variables as the state of the object. On the other hand, although state does exist in functional languages, and is usually maintained by the system stack, it is not manipulated explicitly, in the sense that the program does not change the state directly as is the case in imperative and object-oriented programs, but rather indirectly by invoking functions. But, this difference between the two paradigms often becomes significant, and produces awkward situations in FOBS.

One of the defining characteristics of FOBS is referential transparency. This puts FOBS squarely in the camp of stateless programming. This is seen when we observe, for example, that identifiers can be bound to a value only once. Mutable objects are not an option in this style of programming.

On the other hand, mutable objects are a staple of object-oriented programming. Also, state is often an integral part of scripting environments. For example, operating systems scripting often involves manipulating the state, represented as environment variables. To accommodate these situations in a language that advertises itself as an universal scripting language, it is not unreasonable for the user to wish to introduce state into FOBS. This is not difficult; the library can be extended to include mutable FOBs, as for example the *Count* FOB. However, it is still a stretch to use the language FOBS to manipulate these new mutable FOBs. In particular, what is needed to handle mutable FOBs is the ability to define operators whose return values are not used, but rather they are invoked only for their side-effects on the state.

The problem of doing this type of stateful programming in a functional paradigm has been well researched, and has resulted in a body of literature on monadic programming (see Peyton Jones & Wadler ^[10], for example). Related to these results is a technique that has long been used in the object-oriented paradigm, called *method chaining*. This technique is used to pass multiple messages to the same object, as in the example

```
recipient.doX(xArg).doY(yArg)
```

in which the mutable object *recipient* is being first sent the message *doX* with the argument *xArg*, followed by the message *doY* with the argument *yArg*. Although the operations *doX*, and *doY*, naturally, might be thought of as returning no value, with the chaining technique they would instead return the object being operated on, *recipient*. In this way the next message in the chain is sent to the same recipient. One can think of the operators as passing the state along the chain from one operator to the next.

The technique of chaining is used in FOBS to handle mutable objects, allowing a sequence of operations resulting in state changes. Its effects can be observed in the code snippets of Example (10). The operator *inc* is defined to return the variable *\$it*, which is the target FOB, and this allows FOBS expressions such as `++(++%C(5))`, with a chain of increment operations being applied to the same FOB.

IX. FOBS AND SCRIPTING

The intended use of FOBS-X is as a universal scripting language. Scripting languages are used to automate processes in a variety of environments. One of the most prevalent uses is in operating system interface. Scripting languages have also become very useful in creating dynamic web pages, and handling the collection of data using forms. They are also used in application programs, such as spreadsheets to automate calculations or procedures. In each of these applications the runtime system has two major components: an interpreter to execute scripts, and an interface that allows the script to

interact with the environment. In FOBS-X, the library FOB *FOBS* is the interface to the environment. To adapt FOBS-X to a particular environment, an extension is created in the FOB *FOBS*. This extension contains all operations required for the interface, defined as FOBs.

As seen in the previous section, we have somewhat automated the process of creating these extensions. The user supplies a FEDELE description of an extension, and it is translated into a Perl definition.

We have commenced the construction of a UNIX extension. We present an example of how this extension might be used in scripting. A simple UNIX C-shell script follows that takes a command line argument, and prints out all file names in the current directory containing that string.

```
#!/bin/csh
if ( $#argv == 0 ) then
    echo Usage: $0 name
    exit 1
else
    set user_input =
        $argv[1]
    ls | grep i
        $user_input
endif
exit 0
```

Assuming that an extension UNIX has been created, the above code could be translated into SE-FOBS-X as follows.

```
#use #SE
#use UNIX
if {unix.args.length[] = 0}
then {
    ## execute echo and exit
    ## in sequence, using
    ## the UNIX extension
    ## operation =>,
    ## (sequence)
    unix.echo["Usage: " +
        unix.args[0] +
        " name"]
    => unix.exit[1]
} else {
    fob {
        userInput
        val {
            unix.args[1]
        }
        ret {
            ## use the UNIX
            ## package
            ## operator || to
            ## perform the
```

```

    ## UNIX pipe
    ## operation on
    ## ls and grep,
    ## and use the
    ## sequence
    ## operator to
    ## follow this
    ## with an exit.
    unix.ls[] ||
    unix.grep["i",
        userInput] =>
    unix.exit[0]
} \
} []
}
#
#!

```

This script begins with two directives that inform the FOBS preprocessor that the standard and UNIX extensions are being used. The UNIX extension makes available the keyword `unix`, that is a convenience definition that allows the user to use this simple keyword, rather than the full specification, `FOBS.UNIX`.

Another notation defined in the UNIX extension is the operator `"=>"`, which might be called the *sequence* operation. This operator is used to interact with UNIX, which is stateful, using the FOBS computational model, which is stateless. In UNIX, operations are performed in sequence, and although they return values, they are usually performed for their side effects. The sequence operator takes as operands two FOBS expressions representing UNIX commands, performs them in sequence, alters the UNIX environment, and returns the return value of the last command as a FOB. The operator implements the chaining technique, discussed in Section 8.3.

A last notation used in the example is the operation `"||"`. This is also part of the UNIX extension, and implements the UNIX pipe operation.

As a universal scripting language, FOBS-X will often be required to interact with stateful environments. The FOBS-X library gives FOBS-X that ability, although such interaction diminishes the referential transparency of the language. To ameliorate the situation, the library is structured to isolate all operations with side effects in the FOB *FOBS*.

X. CONCLUSION

We have briefly described a core FOBS-X language. This language is designed as the basis of a universal scripting language. It has a simple syntax and semantics.

FOBS-X is a hybrid language, which combines the tools and features of object oriented languages with the tools and features of functional languages. In fact, the defining data structure of FOBS is a combination of an

object and a function. The language provides the advantages of referential transparency, as well as the ability to easily build structures that encapsulate data and behavior. This provides the user with a choice of paradigms.

Core-FOBS-X is the core of an extended language, SE-FOBS-X, in which programs are translated into the core by a macro processor. This allows for a language with syntactic sugar, that still has the simple semantics of our core-FOBS-X language.

Because of the ability to be extended, which is provided by SE-FOBS-X, the FOBS-X language gains the flexibility that enables it to be a universal scripting language. The language can be adapted syntactically, using the macro capability, to new scripting applications. The Extension FEDELE allows the semantics of the language to be adapted to new applications. FEDELE makes the process of extending the library easier, by automatically generating new library modules from a high-level specification language.

We are currently working on developing extensions for various scripting environments. Our next project is to produce a UNIX extension. Further in the future, we plan to investigate using FOBS for web scripting applications.

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