Parallel Execution of OPS5 in QLISP

by

Hiroshi G. Okuna and Anoop Gupta

Department of Computer Science
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305
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Abstract

Production systems (or rule-based systems) are widely used for the development of expert systems. To speed-up the execution of production systems, a number of different approaches are being taken, a majority of them being based on the use of parallelism. In this paper, we explore the issues involved in the parallel implementation of OPS5 (a widely used production-system language) in QLISP (a parallel dialect of Lisp proposed by John McCarthy and Richard Gabriel). This paper shows that QLISP can easily encode most sources of parallelism in OPS5 that have been previously discussed in literature. This is significant because the OPS5 interpreter is the first large program to be encoded in QLISP, and as a result, this is the first practical demonstration of the expressive power of QLISP. The paper also lists the most commonly used QLISP constructs in the parallel implementation (and the contexts in which they are used), which serve as a hint to the QLISP implementor about what to optimize. We also discuss the exploitation of speculative parallelism in RHS-evaluation for OPS5, which has not been previously discussed in the literature.
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Parallel Execution of OPSS in QLISP

Abstract

Production systems (or rule-based systems) are widely used for the development of expert systems. To speed-up the execution of production systems, a number of different approaches are being taken, a majority of them being based on the use of parallelism. In this paper, we explore the issues involved in the parallel implementation of OPSS (a widely used production-system language) in QLISP (a parallel dialect of Lisp proposed by John McCarthy and Richard Gabriel). This paper shows that QLISP can easily encode most sources of parallelism in OPSS that have been previously discussed in literature. This is significant because the OPSS interpreter is the first large program to be encoded in QLISP, and as a result, this is the first practical demonstration of the expressive power of QLISP. The paper also lists the most commonly used QLISP constructs in the parallel implementation (and the contexts in which they are used), which serve as a hint to the QLISP implementor about what to optimize. We also discuss the exploitation of speculative parallelism in RHS-evaluation for OPSS. This has not been previously discussed in the literature.

1. Introduction

There are several different programming paradigms that are currently popular in Artificial Intelligence, examples being production systems (or rule-based systems), frame-based systems, semantic-network systems, logic-based systems, blackboard systems. Of the above, production systems have been widely used to build large expert systems [10, 14]. Unfortunately, production systems run quite slowly, and this has especially been a problem for applications in the real-time domain. Production systems must be speeded-up significantly if they are to be used in new increasingly complex and time-critical domains. In this paper, we focus our attention on a specific production-system language, OPSS, that has been widely used to build expert systems and whose performance characteristics have been extensively studied. We also focus on parallelism as a means to speed-up the execution of OPSS.

The parallel execution of the OPSS production-system language has been studied by several groups [4, 8, 11, 13]. Their general approach consisted of two steps: (i) the design of a dedicated parallel machine suitable for execution of OPSS; and (ii) the mapping of the OPSS compiler and run-time environment on to the parallel hardware. In these implementations, the second step (the mapping step) involves parallel encoding of OPSS using hardware specific and operating-system specific structures. In this paper, we explore how this mapping step may be done in a high-level parallel dialect of Lisp, called QLISP. The main advantages of encoding using a high-level programming language are: (i) Increase in portability, since the code does not depend on machine specific features; (ii) Greater flexibility and expressive power of the high-level language results in faster turn-around time, fewer errors, and more readable and modifiable code. The main disadvantage, of course, is that the encoding may not be as efficient as hand-coded hardware-specific encodings. We normally do not worry about such issues for uniprocessors — language compilers for uniprocessors are good enough — but the disadvantage is significant for parallel implementations where the technology is not as far advanced. There is one more strong motivation for doing a parallel implementation of OPSS while remaining within Lisp (unlike most previous parallel implementations). This is that OPSS is often used as an embedded system within larger AI systems, and the fact that the rest of these systems are encoded in Lisp, if OPSS is also encoded in Lisp, then it makes the task of interfacing much simpler.

There are several parallel Lisp languages, for example, Multilisp [5, 6, 7] and QLISP [3], that are available for speeding up Lisp programs by using multiple processors. Since QLISP is based on the Common Lisp [12], it provides very powerful facilities to the user. Multilisp is based on a functional programming subset of Lisp.
Another distinguishing feature of QLISP is that control mechanisms to access shared data or global data are embedded in Lisp primitives. Other parallel Lisp languages use some data structures for locking, such as semaphores. QLISP enables the user to write parallel programs without paying much attention to the consistency of shared or global data. One of the main purposes of this research is to explore the expressive power of QLISP by implementing a large program in it. Ours is the first large ("real") program implemented in QLISP, so this constitutes the first practical demonstration of the expressive power of QLISP. We also list the most commonly used QLISP constructs and the contexts in which they are used, which can serve as a guide for optimizing the implementation of the QLISP language. A language where it is easy to express parallel constructs, but which does not offer better performance is not of much use.

The approach we take for parallelizing OPS5 is based on that of the Production System Machine (PSM) project at Carnegie-Mellon University [4]. The PSM project studied how the speed-up from parallelism increases as one goes from coarse-granularity (rule-level) to fine-granularity (intra-node) parallelism. We implement each of their schemes and show that it is relatively easy to encode these parallel schemes within QLISP. We also show some interesting ways in which to exploit conflict-resolution parallelism and speculative parallelism in RHS evaluation using QLISP.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents some background information about the OPS5 language, the Rete algorithm used to implement OPS5, and about QLISP. Section 3 describes how we do a parallel implementation of OPS5 using QLISP and the various issues involved. Finally, Section 4 is devoted to a discussion and conclusions.

2. Background

2.1. The OPS5 Production-System Language

An OPS5 [1] production system is composed of a set of if-then rules called productions that make up the production memory, and a database of assertions called the working memory. The assertions in the working memory are called working memory elements. Each production consists of a conjunction of condition elements corresponding to the if part of the rule (also called the left-hand side of the production), and a set of actions corresponding to the then part of the rule (also called the right-hand side of the production). The left-hand side and the right-hand side are separated by the "--->" symbol. The dons associated with a production can add, remove or modify working memory elements, or perform input-output. Figure 2-1 shows two simple productions p1 (with three condition elements) and p2 (with two condition elements).

(p p1 (C1 "color <x>" 'size 12)  
 (C2 "price 38 "color <x>" )  
 (C3 "color <x>" )  
 --->  
 (remove 2) )  

(p p2 (C2 "price 38 "color <y>" )  
 (C4 "color <y>" )  
 --->  
 (modify 1 "price 50) )

Figure 2-1: Example of productions

The production system interpreter is the underlying mechanism that determines the set of satisfied productions

---

1The parallel computations of a program can be divided into two categories: mandatory computations and speculative computations [7]. The former means that all computations executed in parallel are necessary, while the latter means that some computations executed in parallel may not be necessary.
and controls the execution of the production system program. The interpreter executes a production system program by performing the following recognize-act cycle:

- **Match:** In this first phase, the left-hand sides of all productions are matched against the contents of working memory. As a result, a conflict set is obtained, which consists of instantiations of all satisfied productions. An instantiation of a production is an ordered list of working memory elements that satisfies the left-hand side of the production.

- **Conflict-Resolution:** In this second phase, one of the production instantiations in the conflict set is chosen for execution. If no productions are satisfied, the interpreter halts.

- **Act:** In this third phase, the actions of the production selected in the conflict-resolution phase are executed. These actions may change the contents of working memory. At the end of this phase, the first phase is executed again.

Each working memory element is a parenthesized list consisting of a constant symbol called the class of the element and zero or more attribute-value pairs. The attributes are symbols that are preceded by the operator ^. The values are symbolic or numeric constants. Each conditional element in the LHS consists of a class name and one or more terms. Each term consists of an attribute prefixed by ^, an operator, and a value. An operator is optional and its default value is =, other operators are <, <=, =>, >, and >=. A value is either a constant or a variable. A variable is represented by an identifier enclosed by < and >. A variable can match any value, but all occurrences of the same variable in the LHS of a rule should match the same value. Conditional elements may not contain all pairs of attribute-value present in a working memory element. If a conditional element is preceded by ^, it is called a negated condition element. The match for a rule succeeds only if there is no working memory element matching its negated condition element.

The RHS of a production can contain any number of actions. Actions can be classified into:
- Working memory operations: These are make, remove, and modify.
- I/O operations: These are openfile, closefile, and write.
- Binding operations: These are bind and cbind.
- Miscellaneous operations: These are default, call, halt, and build.

The above action types often take functions as arguments. Some such functions are (quote), substr, genatom, compute, litval, accept and acceptline.

### 2.2. The Rete Match Algorithm

Empirical study of various OPS5 programs shows two interesting characteristics: temporal redundancy and structural similarity [2]. Temporal redundancy refers to the fact that a rule-firing makes only a few modifications to the working memory and most working-memory elements remain unchanged. Structural similarity refers to the fact that all productions are not totally distinct, and that there are many similarities between the condition elements of different productions. The Rete match algorithm exploits these two features to speed up the match phase of the interpreter.

The Rete algorithm uses a special kind of data-flow network compiled from the left-hand sides of productions to perform match. The network is generated at compile time, before the production systems is actually run. Figure 2-2 shows such a network for the two productions shown in Figure 2-1. In this figure, lines have been drawn between nodes to indicate the paths along which information flows. Information flows from the top-node down along these paths. The nodes with a single predecessor (near the top of the figure) are the ones that are concerned with individual condition elements. The nodes with two predecessors are the ones that check for consistency of variable bindings between condition elements. The terminal nodes are at the bottom of the figure. Note that when two left-hand sides require identical nodes, the algorithm shares part of the network rather than building duplicate nodes.
To avoid performing the same tests repeatedly, the Rete algorithm stores the result of the match with working memory as state within the nodes. This way, only changes made to the working memory by the most recent production firing have to be processed every cycle. Thus, the input to the Rete network consists of the changes to the working memory. These changes filter through the network updating the state stored within the network. The output of the network consists of a specification of changes to the conflict set.

The objects that are passed between nodes are called tokens, which consist of a tag and an ordered list of working-memory elements. The tag can be either a +, indicating that something has been added to the working memory, or a -, indicating that something has been removed from it. The list of working-memory elements associated with a token corresponds to a sequence of those elements that the system is trying to match or has already matched against a subsequence of condition elements in the left-hand side.

The data-flow network produced by the Rete algorithm consists of four different types of nodes. These are:

1. Constant-test nodes: These nodes are used to test if the attributes in the condition element which have a constant value are satisfied. These nodes always appear in the top part of the network. They have only one input, and as a result, they are sometimes called one-input nodes.

2. Memory nodes: These nodes store the results of the match phase from previous cycles as state within them. The state stored in a memory node consists of a list of the tokens that match a part of the left-hand side of the associated production. For example, the right-most memory node in Figure 2-2 stores all tokens matching the second condition-element of production p2.

At a more detailed level, there are two types of memory nodes -- the α-mem nodes and the β-mem nodes. The α-mem nodes store tokens that match individual condition elements. Thus all memory nodes immediately below constant-test nodes are α-mem nodes. The β-mem nodes store tokens that match a sequence of condition elements in the left-hand side of a production. Thus all memory nodes immediately below two-input nodes are β-mem nodes.
3. Two-input nodes: These nodes test for joint satisfaction of condition elements in the left-hand side of a production. Both inputs of a two-input node come from memory nodes. When a token arrives on the left input of a two-input node, it is compared to each token stored in the memory node connected to the right input. All token pairs that have consistent variable bindings are sent to the successors of the two-input node. Similar action is taken when a token arrives on the right input of a two-input node.

There are also two types of two-input nodes -- the and-nodes and the not-nodes. While the and-nodes are responsible for the positive condition elements and behave in the way described above, the not-nodes are responsible for the negated condition elements and behave in an opposite manner. The not-nodes generate a successor token only if there are no matching tokens in the memory node corresponding to the negated condition element.

4. Terminal nodes: There is one such node associated with each production in the program, as can be seen at bottom of Figure 2-2. Whenever a token flows into a terminal node, the corresponding production is either inserted into or deleted from the conflict set.

23. QLISP - Parallel Lisp Language

QLISP is a queue-based parallel Lisp proposed by Dick Gabriel and John McCarthy [3] and is being implemented on an Alliant FX/8 shared-memory multiprocessor by Stanford University and Lucid Inc. QLISP is similar to Multilisp [5, 6, 7], but language constructs incorporate important mechanisms for parallel computation such as spawning and locking. The spawned processes are put in the system queue and given to a processor by the scheduler to evaluate it. The key ideas in QLISP were derived by reexamining Common Lisp [12] from the perspective of parallel processing, and by striving to make the minimal number of extensions to Common Lisp. Some QLISP primitives are summarized in the following subsections.

23.1. QLET

The qlet form executes its local binding in parallel.

\[ \text{qlet predicate \{ (\text{var value}) \} \text{ form} \] \[ ^* \]

The qlet form is a construct to evaluate all values in parallel. However, its computational semantic depends on the result of predicate which is evaluated first in the qlet form.

- If the result of predicate is nil, the qlet form acts exactly as the let form.
- If the result of predicate is neither nil nor eager, a process for each value is spawned and the process evaluating a qlet form is suspended. When all the results of value are available, each result is bound to each var and the process evaluating a qlet form resumes its computation; that is, the body of a qlet form is evaluated.
- If the result of predicate is eager, a special value, future\(^2\), is bound to each var and the body of a qlet form is evaluated immediately. A future is associated with a process which evaluates a value eventually. In the execution of the body, if the value is not supplied yet, the process executing the body is suspended till the value is available.

Two kinds of parallel fibonacci functions are shown in Fig. 2-3.

The first one calculates a fibonacci number by spawning a process to calculate every fibonacci number of a smaller number. There may occur a combinatorial explosion of processes if \( n \) is a large number. For example, the number of spawned processes is 176.21890 and 242784 for \( n = 10 \) and 25, respectively. The second fibonacci function spawns a process only if the depth of the nesting is less than the value of *cut-off*\(^3\). The qlet predicate

\[ ^2 \text{Since the pcall form in MultiLisp evaluates arguments da function in parallel, it will be easily implement by qlet in QLISP} \]
\[ ^3 \text{The mechanism of eager is an implicit implementation of the future form in MultiLisp, or the lazy evaluation.} \]
PARALLEL EXECUTION OF OPS5 IN QLISP

(defun fib (n)
  (cond ((< n 2) 1)
        (t (qlet t ((fl (fib (- n 1)))
                       (a (fib (- n 2)))
                       (f2 (fib (- n 2))))
            (+ fl a f2))))

(defun fib-c (n)
  (labels ((fib-cutoff (n depth)
             (declare (special *cutoff-number+))
             (cond ((< n 2) 1)
                   (t (qlet (< depth *cutoff-number*)
                        (fl (fib-cutoff (- n 1)) (1+ depth))
                        (f2 (fib-cutoff (- n 2)) (1+ depth)))
                        (+ fl a f-3 n)))
            (fib-cutoff n 0))))

Figure 2-3: Two parallel Fibonacci functions - Example of qkt
enables the user to control the spawning of processes. Needless to say, an appropriate value for *cut-off* should be
determined by the tradeoff between the cost and benefit of spawning.

23.2. QLAMBDa

The lambda form in the Common Lisp creates a closure which is used to share variables among several functions
or as an anonymous function. The qlambda form creates a process closure.

(qlambda predicate lambda-list (form) *)

A process closure is used not only to share variables among several process closures but also to control an
exclusive invocation of the same process closure. That is, only one application of a process closure is evaluated and
other applications of the same process closure are suspended. The evaluation of a process closure depends on the
value of predicate which is evaluated at the time of evaluation of the qlambda form, that is, creation of a process closure.

- If the result of predicate is nil, the qlambda form acts exactly as the lambda form. That is, a lexical
  closure is created.
- If the result of predicate is neither nil nor eager, a process closure is created. When it is applied with
  arguments, a separate process is spawned for evaluation. If more than one applications occur, only one
  applications are evaluated and others are blocked. This is an implicit locking mechanism.
- If the result of predicate is eager, a process closure is created and spawned immediately without
  waiting for any arguments.

A process closure may be used as an anonymous process, of which application is evaluated as a separated process.
The spawn form is a shorthand form to do it; that is,

(s p a w n (form) *) is the same as ((qlambda t ({} (form) *)).

In a sequential construct such as block, all forms may be evaluated in parallel by spawn. A set of functions to
update of the conflict-set is shown in Fig. 2-4. The global variable *conflict-set-lock* holds a qlambda
closure to control the exclusive access to the variable *conflict-set* which holds the list of production

---

*This curious mechanism can be used to write a parallel Y operator, that is, for all f, Y(f)=f(Y(f)), in QLISP. However, other useful applications are not yet known.*
instances. The idea to provide an exclusive access to *conflict-set* is to execute an update operation by using the same qlambda closure. The lock is released when register-ca returns a value immediately or when sort-conf lict-set updates the *conflict-set* or executes a sorting by spawning a subprocess by qlet with the predicate eager.

```
(proclaim (special *conflict-aet-lock* *conflict-set*))

(defun ops-init ()
  (setq *conflict-set-lock*
    (qlambda t (body) (apply (car body) (cdr body)))))

(defun insertca (name data rating)
  (funcall *conflict-set-lock*
    (list 'register-ca
      name data (cons (sort-time-tag data) rating) t)))

(defun removeca (name data rating)
  (funcall *conflict-set-lock*
    (list 'register-ca
      name data (cons (sort-time-tag data) rating) nil)))

(defun register-ca (name data key flag)
  (cond ((null *conflict-set*)
    (aetq*conflict-set*
      (carete-new-cs-element key nil name data flag))
    (t (sort-conflict-aet name data key flag *conflict-set*))))
```

Figure 2-4: Locking for Conflict-set

233. CATCH and THROW

A pair of catch and throw provides a way to do a non-local exit in the Common Lisp.

```
(catch tag form) and (throw tag value)
```

In QLISP, it provides not only a means of non-local exit but also a mechanism to control subprocesses spawned during the evaluation of form in the catch form. If the catch gets a value by the normal termination of the form or a throwing, the catch kills all processed spawned during the execution of the form. If the value contains a future, the associated processes are not killed. Note that the execution of a process spawned at a value-ignoring position of a sequential construct is aborted.

23.4. QCATCH

The qcatch form is similar to the catch form, but the control of spawned processes is different.

```
(qcatch tag form)
```

If the evaluation of the form terminates normally and the qcatch gets a value, the qcatch waits for all the processes spawned during the execution of the form to terminate. Therefore, processed spawned at a value-ignoring position will be evaluated before terminating the qcatch form. If the execution of the form is aborted by a throwing, the qcatch kills all spawned processes beneath it.

23.5. UNWIND-PROTECT

The unwind-protect form is useful to do some cleanup jobs no matter what the unwind-protect form is terminated.

```
(unwind-protect protected-form (cleanup-form) *)
```

The unwind-protect form is very important in QLISP world in order to make the data consistent, because processes
PARALLEL EXECUTION OF OPSS IN QLISP

3. Parallel execution of OPSS programs

As stated in Section 2.1, the OPSS interpreter repeatedly executes a match -- conflict-resolution -- act cycle. In this section, we discuss how parallelism may be exploited in executing each of the three phases. Most of the discussion focuses on the match phase, as the match phase takes 90% of the time in the interpreter.

3.1. Parallelism in Match Phase

In this section, we explore how parallelism may be exploited to speed up the match phase. We present several different algorithms. We start with a coarse-granularity algorithm and slowly move towards finer granularity. In particular, we explore parallelism at three levels of granularity -- rule-level parallelism, node-level parallelism, and intra-node parallelism. All of the above algorithms are based on the Rete algorithm described in Section 22. What changes from one parallel algorithm to the other is the kinds of node activations that are allowed to be processed in parallel. The granularities we choose to discuss here correspond to those discussed in [4].

Before exploring the above schemes further, a word about the different kinds of node activations in the Rete network. Activations of constant-test nodes (shown in top part of network in Figure 2-2) require just a simple test and are fairly cheap to execute. We call these test activations. It is usually not worth it to spawn a process to execute an individual test activation, because the overhead of spawning is larger than the work saved.

The second kind of node activations are the memory-node activations. These require that a token be added or deleted from the memory node, and can be expensive because a delete request may require searching through all the tokens stored in that memory node. The third kind are the two-input node activations & that require searching through the opposite memory-node to find all matching tokens (tokens with consistent variable bindings). These are also fairly expensive. We normally lump the processing required by the two-input node and the associated memory nodes together into a single task/process, because the two are closely interrelated (the two-input activation examines the memory node) and separating them incurs a large synchronization overhead. One also has to be careful about the sequence in which the above node activations are executed. For example, the Rete algorithm sometimes generates conjugate tokens, where exactly the same token is first scheduled to be added to the memory node and later deleted. The final result should be that the state of the memory node remains unchanged. However, in parallel implementations it is easily possible that the scheduler decides to pick the delete request before the add request, and if not handled properly, the final state of the memory node may have an extra token. To process conjugate pairs correctly, each memory node has an extra-deletes-list to store a deleted token whose target token has not arrived yet.

Finally, there are terminal-node activations that insert or delete instantiations/tokens into the conflict-set. Here also the problem of conjugate tokens can occur. The details for terminal-node activations are discussed later in Section 3.2.

For all the parallel implementation discussed in this paper, we use a common strategy for handling the test activations. (We present this strategy here, before discussing the differing strategies for the remaining types of activations.) This strategy is that multiple activations of the root node are processed using separate processes (i.e., activations corresponding to different changes to working memory are processed in parallel). However, all
successors of the root node or the ctest nodes are evaluated using the following rule. If the successor node is also a ctest node then evaluate it sequentially within the same process, otherwise fork a separate process to do the evaluation. The code for such an evaluation policy is shown in Figure 3-1.

(defun match (token root-node)
  (qlet 'eager
    (foo (doliat (node (successor root-node)))
      (cond ((c-teat? node) (c-teat token node))
        (t (qlet 'eager
            (foo (eval-node token node)))))))))

(defun c-teat (token node)
  (cond ((do-c-teat token node)
    (eval-node-list token (successor node)))))

(defun eval-node-list (token node-list)
  (cond ((null node-list)
    (t (let ((node (pop node-list)))
      (qlet (cond ((lock-node-p node) 'eager)
        (t t))
        (foo (eval-node token node))
        (bar (eval-node-list token node-list)))))))))

(defun eval-node (token node)
  (cond ((funcall (function node) token (arguments node))
    (eval-node-list token (successor node)))))))

Figure 3-1: QLISP code to evaluate Rete nodes in parallel.

3.1.1. Rule-level Parallelism

Rule-level parallelism is a very natural form of parallelism in production systems. Here the march for each individual rule is performed in parallel. In the context of our Rete-based implementation, this requires that we introduce lock nodes at points where a ctest node leads into a memory-node. All lock nodes before memory-nodes of the same rule use an identical lock, and those before memory-nodes of distinct rules use distinct locks. Figure 3-3 shows how the original Rete network of Figure 2-2 is modified to exploit rule-level parallelism. (Identical locks are shown grouped together in figure.) The locks are implemented using qlambda closures, and the code for one such lock node is shown in Figure 3-2. As discussed earlier, a QLISP closure ensures that only one process can be actively executing inside the closure. The proposed locks then ensure that all activations corresponding to a single rule are executed in sequence, which is the desired semantics for rule-level parallelism.

(qlambda-closure successor-node) ;; structure of lock node
(qlambda t (token node) (funcall (eval-node token node))) ; qlambda closure for the lock node.

Finally, we need to provide locks before the tokens enter the conflict-set, since the conflict-set is a global data structure and multiple processes should not be modifying it at the same time.

Using rule-level parallelism, previous studies [4] show that only about 5-fold speed-up can be obtained. This is (i) because the number of rules that require significant processing is small and (ii) because even amongst these affected rules there is a large variation in the processing requirements. To reduce this variation in the processing times, we now discuss exploiting parallelism at a finer granularity where the processing for a single rule can be done in parallel.
3.12. Node-level Parallelism

When using node-level parallelism \[4\], any distinct two-input nodes can be evaluated in parallel\[5\. To implement node-level parallelism, lock nodes are placed before each two-input node and its associated memory nodes as shown in Figure 3.4. The structure of a lock node is the same for node-level and rule-level parallelism. However, the value of the query predicate are different for evaluating different types of node activations. The predicate is true for evaluating a memory-node and a tow-input node, but it is ‘eager for evaluating successor nodes below a two-input node. That is, the execution of a two-input node is terminated by a future and the lock is released.

Note that if some two-input node generates multiple tokens, the next two-input node becomes a bottleneck. This is because only one activation of a given two-input node can be processed at the same time.

3.13. Intra-node Parallelism

The intra-node parallelism \[4\] exploits maximal parallelism present in the Rete algorithm. If multiple tokens arrive at a two-input node, then these multiple activations of the two-input node are processed in parallel. However, we have to be very careful about how we access the memory nodes: (i) it is not desirable to have multiple processes modifying the same memory node; and (ii) the correct operation of the Rete algorithm requires that the opposite memory-node should not be modified while processing a two-input node activation. To ensure the correct operation, we adopt the solution proposed by Gupta in \[4\]. We use a common hash-table for all tokens stored in the memory nodes of the Rete network. Tokens are put into hash-table buckets based on the node-id of the associated

---

\[5\] According to the result of the simulations of PSM, the speedup of node-parallelism is about 5-fold.
two-input node and some values that are tested from the token. The buckets in this hash-table are controlled by locks that are implemented as qlambda closures. Figure 3-5 shows the structure of this hash table. This scheme works because the probability that multiple tokens would hash to the same bucket is considered small. If they do hash to the same bucket then they have to be processed sequentially.

In the above scheme, the Rete network reverts back to its original structure as shown in Figure 2-2 (except that locks are needed for executing the terminal nodes). All the remaining locks that were earlier associated with the Rete network are no longer present. Locking has now moved to hash-table buckets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lock</th>
<th>left-hash-table</th>
<th>right-hash-table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>token-list</td>
<td>token-list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extra-deletes-list</td>
<td>extra-deletes-list</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3-5:** Hash table for memory nodes
3.2. Conflict-Resolution Parallelism

During the conflict-resolution phase one of the several production instantiations in the conflict-set is selected for execution. The method by which this production instantiation is selected is called the tit-resolution strategy. OPSS provides for two conflict-resolution strategies -- LEX (lexical) and MEA (means-ends-analysis). The two differ in the way a key is constructed for sorting various instantiations. The key for LEX consists of the sorted time-tag values of the working-memory elements in the instantiation. The key for MEA consists of the time-tag of the first working-memory element in the instantiation, followed by the sorted time-tag values of the remaining working-memory elements in the instantiation.

To perform conflict resolution, normally, the conflict-set is maintained as a sorted list of production instantiations. Executing conflict-resolution in parallel imposes the following requirements:

- We must allow multiple instantiations to be inserted into a deleted from the conflict-set in parallel.
- We must allow for conjugate pairs of instantiations, where the delete request for an instantiation is received before the add request.
- We would like to have the highest priority instantiation available to the RHS evaluation process as soon as possible, although the rest of the conflict-set data structure is not completely sorted.

To handle the first requirement, we build an asynchronous systolic priority queue structure in software [9] using QLISP. In this structure, inserts and deletes are input at the head of the priority queue. These then asynchronously filter down until they find the right position in the sorted queue. A delete may annihilate an already present element if it is already present. If a delete does not find a corresponding element already there (conjugate token problem), it locates itself at the right location in the queue with a special flag, and waits for the corresponding add request to come by later. An insert behaves similarly. The key point is that the highest priority instantiation is always available at the head of the queue, even if elements are still percolating down in the lower priority regions of the queue. The data structure that we use for a single instantiation in the priority queue is shown in Figure 3-6 and some related code is shown in Figure 24.

conflict-set-element =
  (key next-element positive-instance-list negative-instance-list)

where next-element = (qlambda-closure . conflict-set-element)
  key = (sorted-time-tag-of-instance-element . rating-of-production)
  positive-instance-list = (positive-instance . . .)
  extra-deletes-list = (extra-deletes-instance . . .)
  positive-instance = ((flag . simplified-form) production . instance-element-list)
  extra-deletes-instance = (production . instance-element-list)

Figure 3-6: Representation of a production instance

The time to calculate the maximum element in the above scheme is \( O(k) \), where \( k \) is the number of changes to the conflict-set per recognize-act cycle. Since \( k \) is around 5 for most systems this is not a problem. The time to finish sorting, however, can be much larger. This time is \( O[N \times k] \), where \( N \) is the total number of elements in the conflict-set, which can be much larger. This is not optimal for sorting, but it is good for getting the highest priority element. The highest priority element is used in the speculative execution of the RHS.
33. Speculative Execution of RHS

In the normal execution of a rule-based system, one would wait until conflict-resolution finishes completely before starting to execute the RHS of the highest priority rule. However, in a parallel implementation, this may imply too sequential a behavior. Even if RHS execution takes only 10% of the time, this limits the maximum speed-up to 10-fold. As a solution, we propose the speculative evaluation of RHS in this paper. By speculative evaluation of RHS we mean the following. While the match and conflict-resolution are still going on, we make a guess about the highest priority rule. (This in our case is simply the rule currently at the head of the conflict-set.)

We start evaluating the RHS of this rule, i.e., gathering up the changes it would make to working memory in a list (without actually changing the waking memory). If our guess is proved wrong, that is whenever there is a change in the rule at the head of the conflict-set, we simply create a new process to evaluate the RHS of this new rule. We currently do not abort the previously evaluating RHS because aborting is not easy to implement in QLISP. Furthermore, it is possible that the evaluated RHS of the non-higher rule may come in useful on a later cycle.

The OPSS/QLISP system provides a new action command $sfcall$, side-effect-free call which execute a user-defined routines written in QLISP or in Lisp. These user-defined routines should not refer any global data which may be modified by other routines, because the system assumes that simplification should be valid at any time and independent from any global context. The algorithm of simplification is sketched below:

1. Check the type of operations.
   - If a working memory operation, calculate all arguments and make a token.
     - If make, make a token of add and replace the original action with it.
     - If remove, make a token of delete and replace the original action with it.
     - If modify, make a token of delete and a token of add and replace the original action with them.

   However, if an action contains a function such as accept, acceptline, these functions are not executed. Only omitted attribute-value pairs are supplied and the original action is replaced with a new action which has all attribute-value pairs.

2. If a side-effect-free call $sfcall$ do it

3. If a side-effect-free call $sfcall$, process next action.

This simplification is quite similar to the argument evaluation for a Lisp function with keyword arguments of the Common Lisp. The simplification routine is invoked when the maximum production instance of conflict-set is changed and stores a simplified form to the simplified form slot of the instance. Note that this simplified form is valid for any time, because it is calculated with using only local values which is specified in an instance. Conjugate pairs may create unnecessary processes, but the current implementation does not abort them, because such an aborting mechanism is not easy to implement and the number of conjugate pairs are not expected to be large.

4. Discussion

In this paper, we present the details of an implementation of the OPSS production-system language using QLISP, a parallel dialect of Lisp. We would like to make the following observations:

- The number of modifications needed to the original lisp code for OPSS were minimal to exploit the different kinds of parallelism. For example, to exploit the three kinds of parallelism described for match, less than 100 lines of code (out of a total of about 3000 lines in the original code) had to be modified. We believe that such a high-level programming approach provides very powerful and flexible tools for research in parallel programming.

- The QLISP constructs that we used most frequently in our parallel implementation are "(qlet 'eager ...)" to spawn new processes and "(qlambda t ...)" process closures lock locks. The code sections that are locked and the processes that are spawned consist of a few lines of lisp code with some but not much recursion or iteration. On average, we expect the individual tasks to take about 1 millisecond of
computation time on a 1 MIPS machine. This requires that the process creation overhead, the locking overhead, and the scheduling overhead for the spawned tasks be significantly less than 1 millisecond, if the suggested implementations are to be useful. If the overheads are much larger, then all the advantages of parallel execution will be subsumed by the overhead.

- We are currently using a QLISP simulator to obtain some performance numbers. Our implementation is running, and we have just started getting some performance numbers. Unfortunately, the simulator does not model the underlying hardware very accurately, so we still do not have a good idea about the true overheads involved. However, for reasons mentioned in the next point, this may not be a big problem in practice.

- The parallel constructs provided by QLISP (quiet, qlambda, ...) take a predicate that controls whether a parallel process is actually spawned or not. This convenient run-time method of controlling the granularity at which parallelism is exploited is a very powerful mechanism. It makes it extremely easy to modify code to adjust to different implementations with differing overheads. It is also convenient to adjust the granularity depending on the load present on the parallel machine.

- As stated in the beginning of this paper, another advantage of implementing OPSS in QLISP, instead of in Pascal or C, is that it is easy to embed the OPSS system within other AI systems (which normally use Lisp). Furthermore, if there are complex functions in the RHS of rules, these functions can also use the parallel constructs available in QLISP, which is not possible in previously proposed parallel implementations of OPSS.

- As a final means for improving performance for existing OPSS systems we are planning to directly compile OPSS into QLISP code, instead of using an interpreter as we currently do.

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