The State Design Pattern

Readings: OOSC2 Chapter 20

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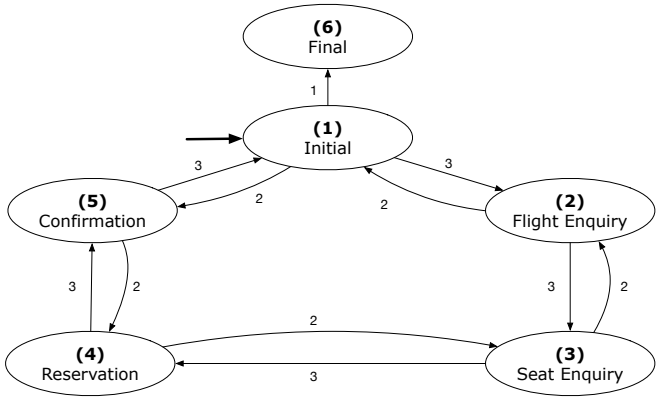
Motivating Problem

Consider the reservation panel of an online booking system:

```
                    -- Enquiry on Flights --

Flight sought from: Toronto        To:        Zurich
Departure on or after: 23 June     On or before: 24 June
Preferred airline (s):
Special requirements:

AVAILABLE FLIGHTS: 1
Flt#AA 42        Dep 8:25        Arr 7:45        Thru: Chicago

Choose next action:
        0 – Exit
        1 – Help
        2 – Further enquiry
        3 – Reserve a seat
```


State Transition Diagram

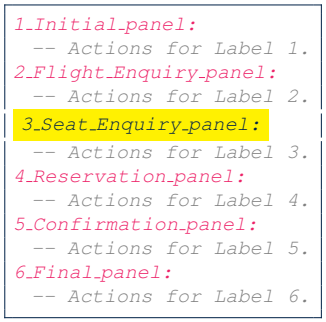
Characterize *interactive system* as: **1)** A set of *states*; and **2)** For each state, its list of *applicable transitions* (i.e., actions).
e.g., Above reservation system as a *finite state machine*:



Design Challenges

1. The state-transition graph may *large* and *sophisticated*.
   A large number N of states and number of transitions $\approx N^2$
2. The graph structure is subject to *extensions*/*modifications*.
   e.g., To merge "(2) Flight Enquiry" and "(3) Seat Enquiry":
   Delete the state "(3) Seat Enquiry".
   Delete its 4 incoming/outgoing transitions.
   e.g., Add a new state "Dietary Requirements"
3. A *general solution* is needed for such *interactive systems*.
   e.g., taobao, eBay, amazon, etc.

A First Attempt



```
1_Initial_panel:
  -- Actions for Label 1.
2_Flight_Enquiry_panel:
  -- Actions for Label 2.
3_Seat_Enquiry_panel:
  -- Actions for Label 3.
4_Reservation_panel:
  -- Actions for Label 4.
5_Confirmation_panel:
  -- Actions for Label 5.
6_Final_panel:
  -- Actions for Label 6.
```

```
3_Seat_Enquiry_panel:
 from
   Display Seat Enquiry Panel
 until
   not (wrong answer or wrong choice)
 do
   Read user's answer for current panel
   Read user's choice C for next step
   if wrong answer or wrong choice then
     Output error messages
   end
 end
 Process user's answer
 case C in
   2: goto 2_Flight_Enquiry_panel
   3: goto 4_Reservation_panel
 end
```


A First Attempt: Good Design?

- Runtime execution ≈ a ***"bowl of spaghetti"***.

  ⇒ The system's behaviour is hard to predict, trace, and debug.
- *Transitions* hardwired as system's ***central control structure***.

  ⇒ The system is vulnerable to changes/additions of states/transitions.
- All labelled blocks are largely similar in their code structures.

  ⇒ This design "***smells***" due to duplicates/repetitions!
- The branching structure of the design exactly corresponds to that of the specific *transition graph*.

  ⇒ The design is ***application-specific*** and *not reusable* for other interactive systems.

A Top-Down, Hierarchical Solution

- *Separation of Concern* Declare *transition graph* as a feature the system, rather than its central control structure:

```
transition (src: INTEGER; choice: INTEGER): INTEGER
   -- Return state by taking transition 'choice' from 'src' state.
 require valid_source_state: 1 ≤ src ≤ 6
         valid_choice: 1 ≤ choice ≤ 3
 ensure valid_target_state: 1 ≤ Result ≤ 6
```

- We may implement `transition` via a 2-D array.

SRC STATE \ CHOICE	1	2	3
1 (Initial)	6	5	2
2 (Flight Enquiry)	–	1	3
3 (Seat Enquiry)	–	2	4
4 (Reservation)	–	3	5
5 (Confirmation)	–	4	1
6 (Final)	–	–	–

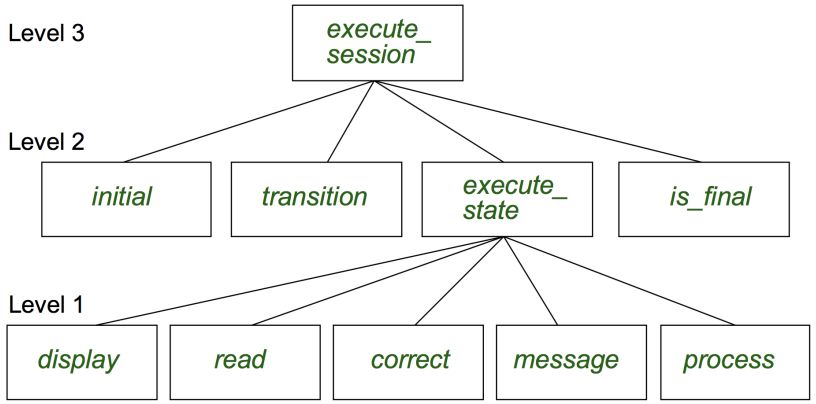
Hierarchical Solution: Good Design?

- This is a more general solution.

  ∵ *State transitions* are *separated* from the system's *central control structure*.

  ⇒ *Reusable* for another interactive system by making changes only to the `transition` feature.
- How does the *central control structure* look like in this design?

Hierarchical Solution: Top-Down Functional Decomposition



Modules of **execute_session** and **execute_state** are general enough on their *control structures*. ⇒ *reusable*

Hierarchical Solution: System Control

All interactive sessions **share** the following *control pattern*:

- Start with some *initial state*.
- Repeatedly make *state transitions* (based on *choices* read from the user) until the state is *final* (i.e., the user wants to exit).

```
execute_session
    -- Execute a full interactive session.
  local
    current_state, choice: INTEGER
  do
    from
      current_state := initial
    until
      is_final (current_state)
    do
      choice := execute_state (current_state)
      current_state := transition (current_state, choice)
    end
  end
```


Hierarchical Solution: State Handling (1)

The following *control pattern* handles **all** states:

```
execute_state (current_state: INTEGER): INTEGER
    -- Handle interaction at the current state.
    -- Return user's exit choice.
  local
    answer: ANSWER; valid_answer: BOOLEAN; choice: INTEGER
  do
    from
    until
      valid_answer
    do
      display(current_state)
      answer := read_answer(current_state)
      choice := read_choice(current_state)
      valid_answer := correct(current_state, answer)
      if not valid_answer then message(current_state, answer)
    end
    process(current_state, answer)
    Result := choice
  end
```


Hierarchical Solution: State Handling (2)

Feature Call	Functionality
display(***s***)	Display screen outputs associated with ***state*** *s*
read_answer(***s***)	Read user's input for answers associated with ***state*** *s*
read_choice(***s***)	Read user's input for exit choice associated with ***state*** *s*
correct(***s***, answer)	Is the user's *answer* valid w.r.t. ***state*** *s*?
process(***s***, answer)	Given that user's *answer* is valid w.r.t. ***state*** *s*, process it accordingly.
message(***s***, answer)	Given that user's *answer* is not valid w.r.t. ***state*** *s*, display an error message accordingly.

Q: How similar are the code structures of the above state-dependant commands or queries?

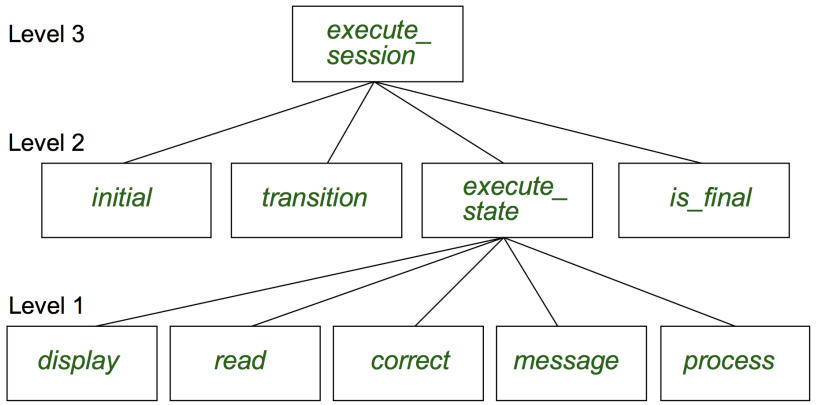
Hierarchical Solution: State Handling (3)

A: Actions of all such state-dependant features must **explicitly** *discriminate* on the input state argument.

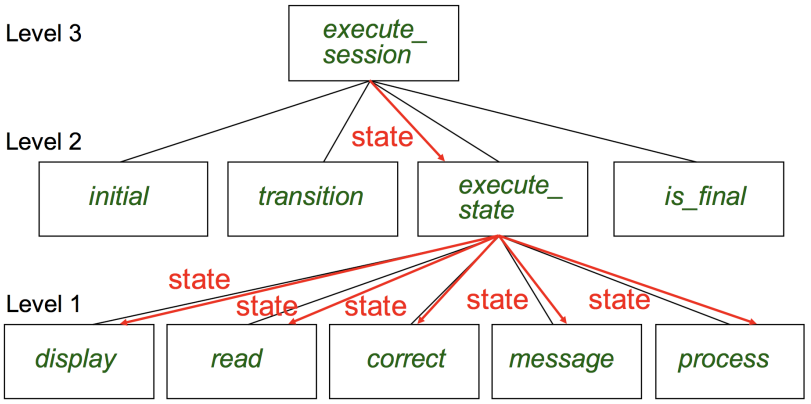
```
display(current_state: INTEGER)
  require
    valid_state: 1 ≤ current_state ≤ 6
  do
    if current_state = 1 then
      -- Display Initial Panel
    elseif current_state = 2 then
      -- Display Flight Enquiry Panel
    ...
    else
      -- Display Final Panel
    end
  end
```

- Such design *smells* !
  ∵ Same list of conditional repeats for **all** state-dependant features.
- Such design ***violates*** the *Single Choice Principle*.
  e.g., To add/delete a state ⇒ Add/delete a branch in all such features.

Hierarchical Solution: Visible Architecture



Hierarchical Solution: Pervasive States



Too much data transmission: `current_state` is passed

- From `execute_session` (**Level 3**) to `execute_state` (**Level 2**)
- From `execute_state` (**Level 2**) to all features at **Level 1**

Law of Inversion

If your routines exchange too many data, then put your routines in your data.

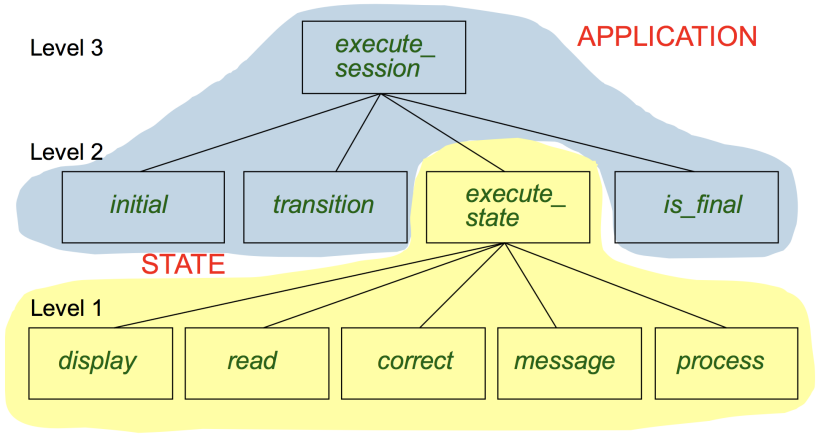
e.g.,
`execute_state` (**Level 2**) and all features at **Level 1**:

- Pass around (as ***inputs***) the notion of ***current_state***
- Build upon (via ***discriminations***) the notion of ***current_state***

```
execute_state  ( s: INTEGER )
display        ( s: INTEGER )
read_answer    ( s: INTEGER )
read_choice    ( s: INTEGER )
correct        ( s: INTEGER ; answer: ANSWER)
process        ( s: INTEGER ; answer: ANSWER)
message        ( s: INTEGER ; answer: ANSWER)
```

⇒ *Modularize* the notion of state as ***class STATE***.
⇒ *Encapsulate* state-related information via a ***STATE*** interface.
⇒ Notion of ***current_state*** becomes ***implicit***: the `Current` class.

Grouping by Data Abstractions

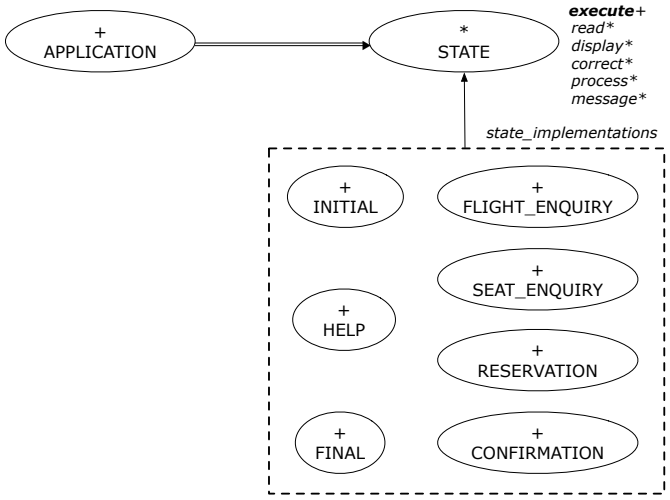


The STATE ADT

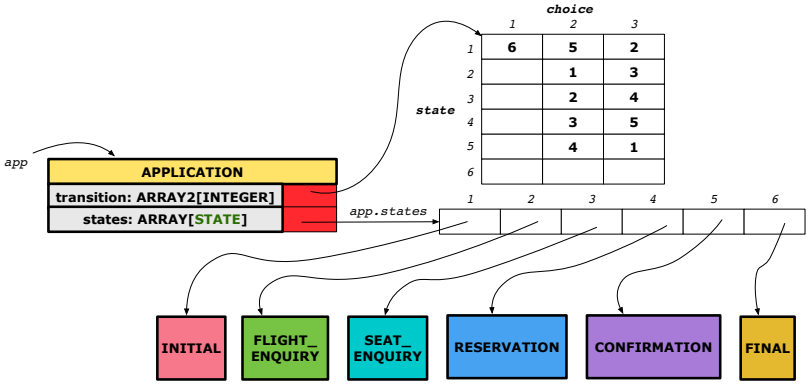
```
deferred class STATE
  read
    -- Read user's inputs
    -- Set 'answer' and 'choice'
    deferred end
  answer: ANSWER
    -- Answer for current state
  choice: INTEGER
    -- Choice for next step
  display
    -- Display current state
    deferred end
  correct: BOOLEAN
    deferred end
  process
    require correct
    deferred end
  message
    require not correct
    deferred end
```

```
  execute
    local
      good: BOOLEAN
    do
      from
      until
        good
      loop
        display
        -- set answer and choice
        read
        good := correct
        if not good then
          message
        end
      end
      process
  end
end
```


Architecture of the State Pattern



The APPLICATION Class: Array of STATE



The APPLICATION Class (1)

```
class APPLICATION create make
feature {NONE} -- Implementation of Transition Graph
  transition: ARRAY2[INTEGER]
    -- State transitions: transition[state, choice]
  states: ARRAY[STATE]
    -- State for each index, constrained by size of 'transition'
feature
  initial: INTEGER
  number_of_states: INTEGER
  number_of_choices: INTEGER
  make(n, m: INTEGER)
    do number_of_states := n
       number_of_choices := m
       create transition.make_filled(0, n, m)
       create states.make_empty
    end
invariant
  transition.height = number_of_states
  transition.width = number_of_choices
end
```


The APPLICATION Class (2)

```
class APPLICATION
feature {NONE} -- Implementation of Transition Graph
  transition: ARRAY2[INTEGER]
  states: ARRAY[STATE]
feature
  put_state(s: STATE; index: INTEGER)
    require 1 ≤ index ≤ number_of_states
    do states.force(s, index) end
  choose_initial(index: INTEGER)
    require 1 ≤ index ≤ number_of_states
    do initial := index end
  put_transition(tar, src, choice: INTEGER)
    require
      1 ≤ src ≤ number_of_states
      1 ≤ tar ≤ number_of_states
      1 ≤ choice ≤ number_of_choices
    do
      transition.put(tar, src, choice)
    end
end
```


The APPLICATION Class (3)

```
class APPLICATION
feature {NONE} -- Implementation of Transition Graph
  transition: ARRAY2[INTEGER]
  states: ARRAY[STATE]
feature
  execute_session
    local
      current_state: STATE
      index: INTEGER
    do
      from
        index := initial
      until
        is_final (index)
      loop
        current_state := states[index]  -- polymorphism
        current_state.execute  -- dynamic binding
        index := transition.item (index, current_state.choice)
      end
    end
end
```


Building an Application

- Create instances of `STATE`.

```
s1: STATE
create {INITIAL} s1.make
```

- Initialize an `APPLICATION`.

```
create app.make(number_of_states, number_of_choices)
```

- Perform polymorphic assignments on `app.states`.

```
app.put_state(initial, 1)
```

- Choose an initial state.

```
app.choose_initial(1)
```

- Build the transition table.

```
app.put_transition(6, 1, 1)
```

- Run the application.

```
app.execute_session
```

An Example Test

```
test_application: BOOLEAN
 local
  app: APPLICATION ; current_state: STATE ; index: INTEGER
 do
  create app.make (6, 3)
  app.put_state (create {INITIAL}.make, 1)
  -- Similarly for other 5 states.
  app.choose_initial (1)
  -- Transit to FINAL given current state INITIAL and choice 1.
  app.put_transition (6, 1, 1)
  -- Similarly for other 10 transitions.

  index := app.initial
  current_state := app.states [index]
  Result := attached {INITIAL} current_state
  check Result end
  -- Say user's choice is 3: transit from INITIAL to FLIGHT_STATUS
  index := app.transition.item (index, 3)
  current_state := app.states [index]
  Result := attached {FLIGHT_ENQUIRY} current_state
end
```


Top-Down, Hierarchical vs. OO Solutions

- In the second (top-down, hierarchy) solution, it is required for every state-related feature to *explicitly* and *manually* discriminate on the argument value, via a a list of conditionals.
  e.g., Given `display(current_state: INTEGER)`, the calls `display(1)` and `display(2)` behave differently.
- The third (OO) solution, called the State Pattern, makes such conditional *implicit* and *automatic*, by making `STATE` as a deferred class (whose descendants represent all types of states), and by delegating such conditional actions to *dynamic binding*.
  e.g., Given `s: STATE`, behaviour of the call `s.display` depends on the *dynamic type* of `s` (such as `INITIAL` vs. `FLIGHT_ENQUIRY`).

Index (1)

Motivating Problem
State Transition Diagram
Design Challenges
A First Attempt
A First Attempt: Good Design?
A Top-Down, Hierarchical Solution
Hierarchical Solution: Good Design?
Hierarchical Solution:
Top-Down Functional Decomposition
Hierarchical Solution: System Control
Hierarchical Solution: State Handling (1)
Hierarchical Solution: State Handling (2)
Hierarchical Solution: State Handling (3)
Hierarchical Solution: Visible Architecture

Index (2)

Hierarchical Solution: Pervasive States
Law of Inversion
Grouping by Data Abstractions
Architecture of the State Pattern
The STATE ADT
The APPLICATION Class: Array of STATE
The APPLICATION Class (1)
The APPLICATION Class (2)
The APPLICATION Class (3)
Building an Application
An Example Test
Top-Down, Hierarchical vs. OO Solutions