

Advances and challenges in modular semantics

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Topics

- ▶ Structure of semantic descriptions
- ▶ Semantic description frameworks
- ▶ Challenges

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- ▶ Semantic description frameworks
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Conventional descriptions

Conventional descriptions

Language semantics

Conventional descriptions

Language semantics

Syntax

**Auxiliary
entities**

Semantics

Conventional descriptions

Language semantics

Syntax

Expr

Decl

Cmd

...

Auxiliary entities

Environ

Stores

...

Semantics

Expressions

Declarations

Commands

...

Incremental descriptions

Incremental descriptions

Language semantics

Syntax

**Auxiliary
entities**

Semantics

Incremental descriptions

Language semantics

Syntax

Auxiliary
entities

Semantics

Extended language semantics

Syntax

Auxiliary
entities

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Incremental descriptions

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Extended language semantics

Syntax

Auxiliary
entities

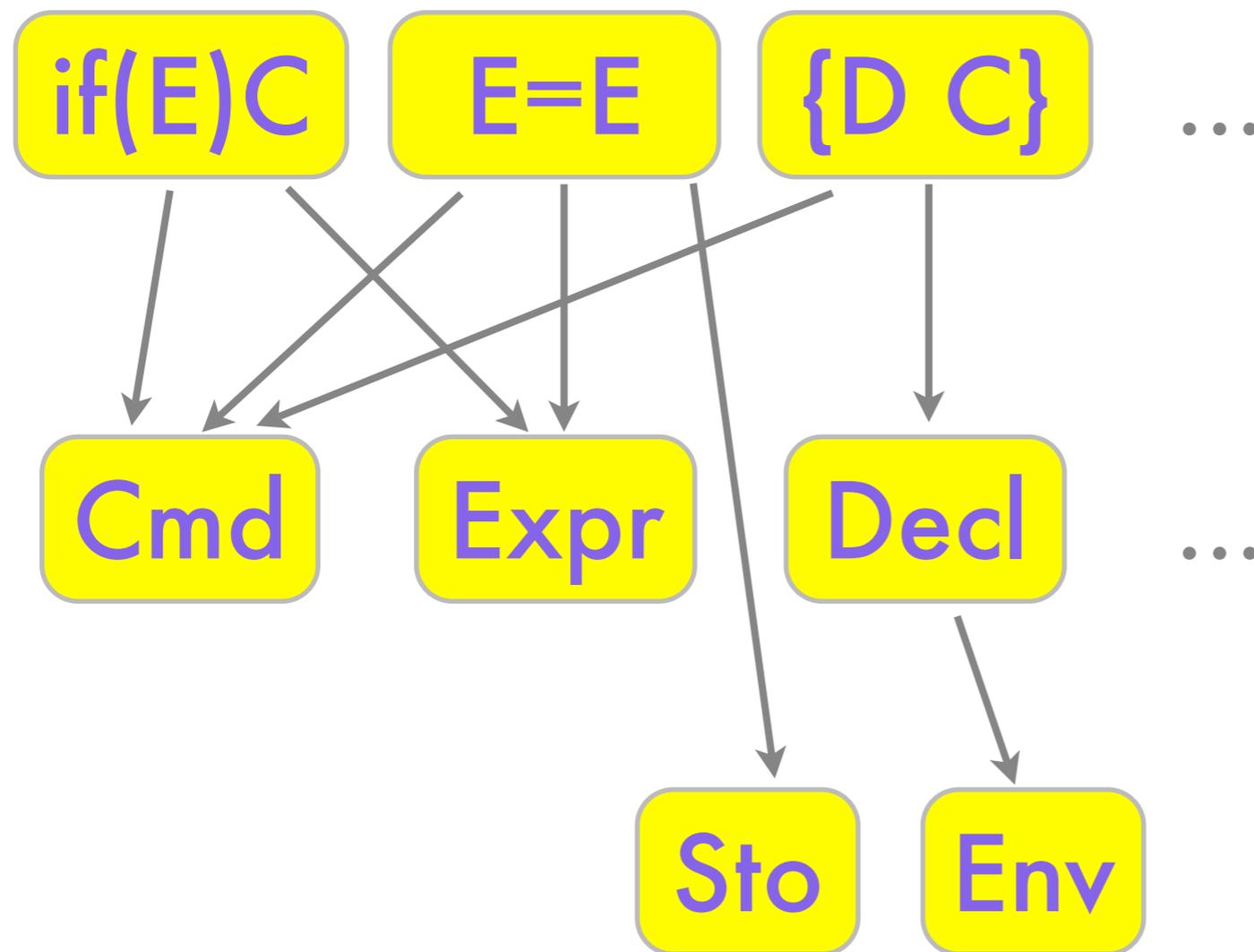
Semantics

...

Component-based descriptions

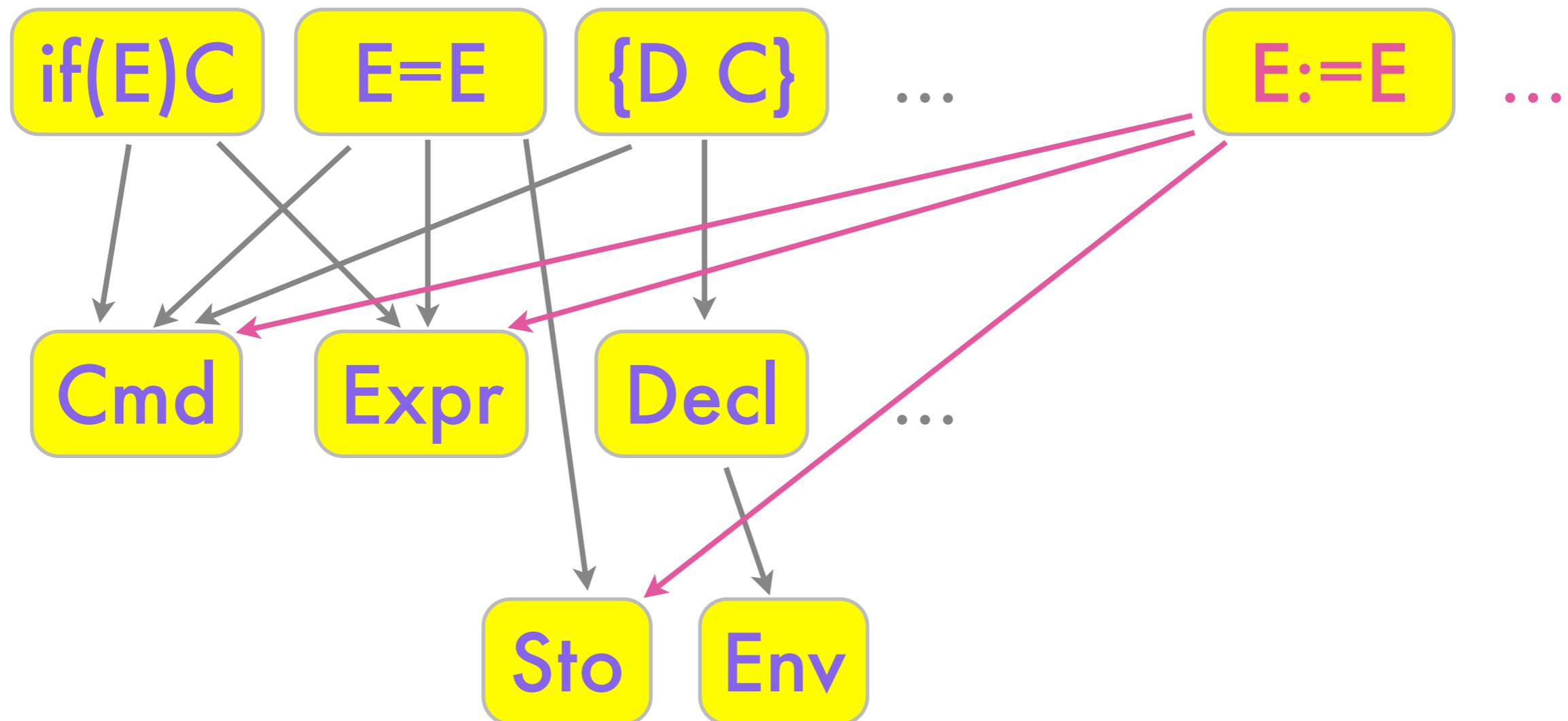
Component-based descriptions

Language semantics



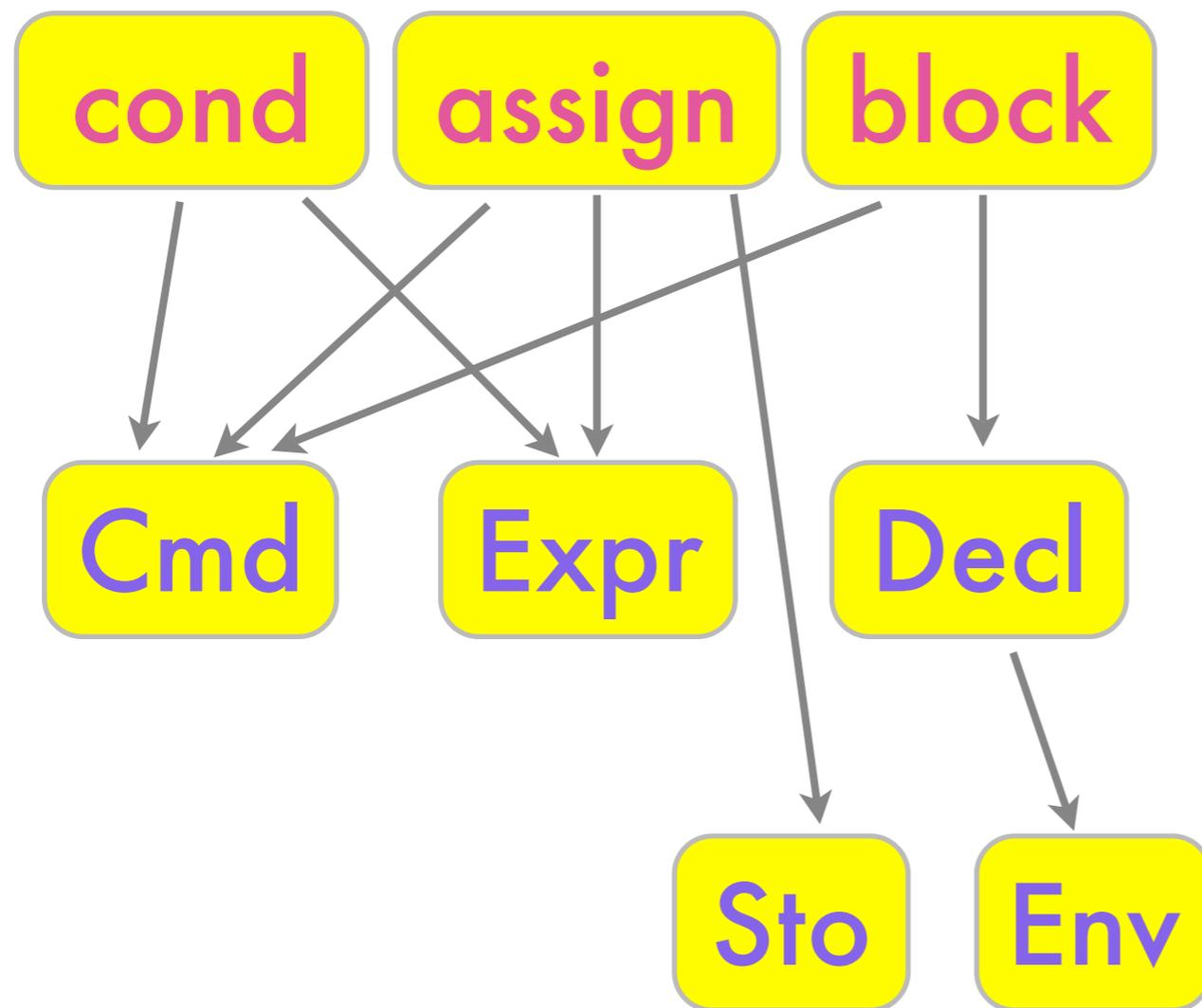
Component-based descriptions

Language semantics



Constructive descriptions

Constructive descriptions



... Abstract construct semantics

...

Constructive descriptions

if(E)C E=E {D C} ...

cond assign block ...

Cmd Expr Decl ...

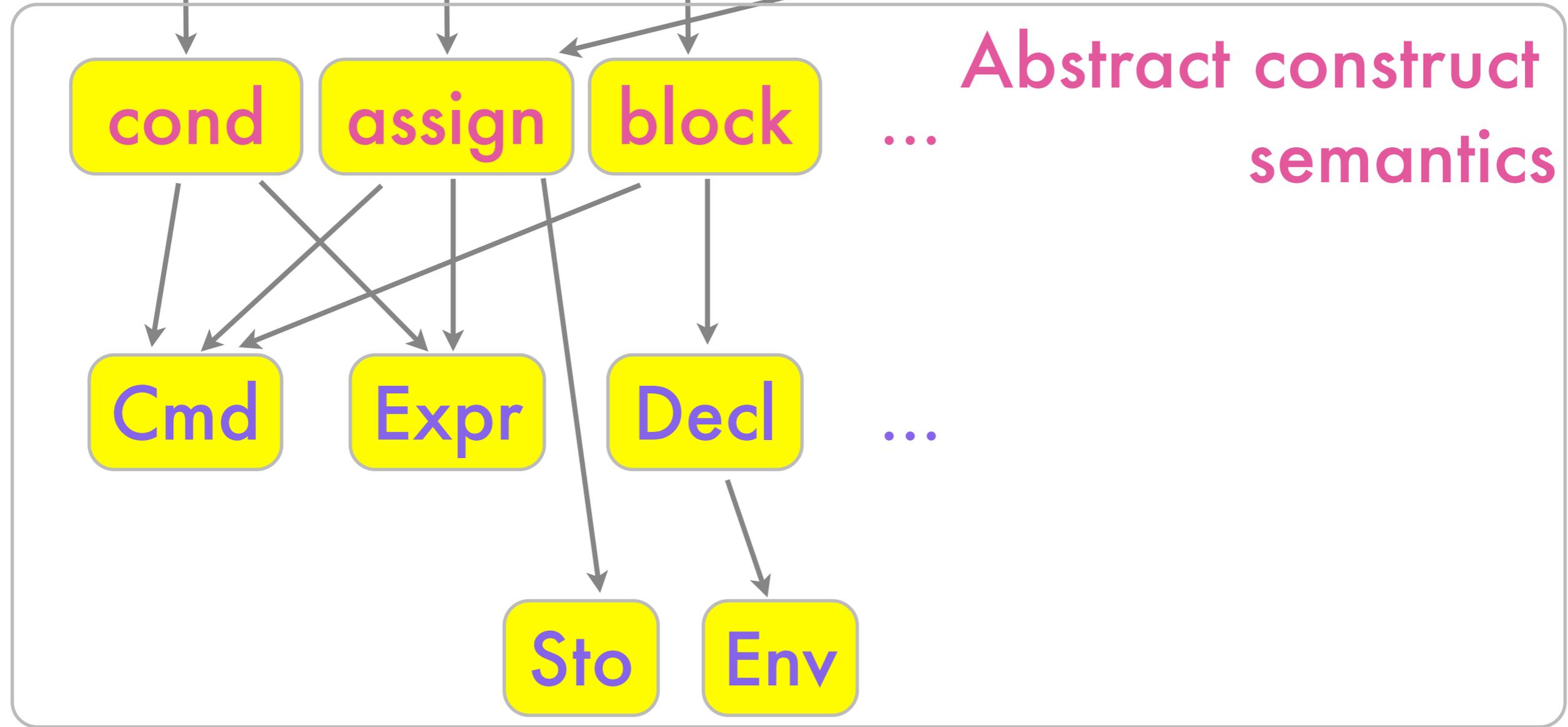
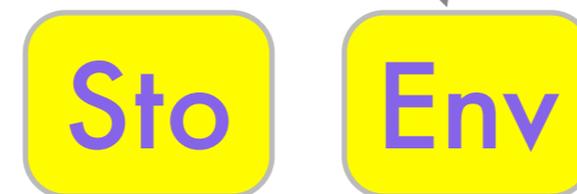
Sto Env

Abstract construct semantics

Constructive descriptions



Abstract construct semantics



Topics

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Denotational semantics

Original Scott-Strachey style (1971)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **no** support for incremental semantics

Problem:

- ▶ **fixed interpretation of λ -notation**

$$\mathcal{C}[\varepsilon_0 := \varepsilon_1] = \lambda\rho.(\lambda\beta_0.(\lambda\beta_1.Assign(\beta_0|L, \beta_1)) * \mathcal{E}[\varepsilon_1](\rho)) * \mathcal{E}[\varepsilon_0](\rho)$$

Denotational semantics

VDM style (Bekič et al. 1974)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **some** support for incremental semantics

Advance:

- ▶ changing interpretation of auxiliary notation

$$\begin{aligned} M[\text{mk-Assign}(lrs, rhs)](env) = \\ \quad \underline{\text{def}} \ l: M[lhs](env); \\ \quad \underline{\text{def}} \ v: M[rhs](env); \\ \text{STR} := \underline{c} \text{ STR} + [l \mapsto v] \end{aligned}$$

Structural operational semantics

Plotkin-style (1981), “natural” style (Kahn 1987)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **no** support for incremental semantics

Problem:

- ▶ **explicit auxiliary information in states**

$$\frac{\rho[\rho_1] \vdash \langle C, \sigma \rangle \rightarrow \langle C', \sigma' \rangle}{\rho \vdash \langle \{ \rho_1 C \}, \sigma \rangle \rightarrow \langle \{ \rho_1 C' \}, \sigma' \rangle}$$

Abstract state machines

Gurevich et al. (mid 1980s)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **some** support for incremental semantics

Advance:

- ▶ suppression of auxiliary entities in transition rules using imperative assignments

$\text{cond}(\blacktriangleright V_1, \beta E_2, \gamma E_3) \quad \rightarrow \quad \mathbf{if} \ V_1 \ \mathbf{then} \ pos := \beta \ \mathbf{else} \ pos := \gamma$

Evaluation contexts

Felleisen et al. (1987)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **some** support for incremental semantics

Advance:

- ▶ suppression of auxiliary entities in reduction rules using program contexts, substitution

$$\{ \rho \ C \} \rightarrow [\rho]C$$

Action semantics

Denotational / operational (with Watt, 1985–2000)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **good** support for incremental semantics

Advance:

- ▶ operational interpretation of auxiliary notation

execute $\llbracket \{ D C \} \rrbracket =$ furthermore *elaborate* D hence *execute* C

Monadic semantics

Moggi (1989), Plotkin & Power (2004)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **good** support for incremental semantics

Advance:

- ▶ flexible interpretation of auxiliary notation

$$\mathcal{C}[\{ D C \}] = \mathcal{D}[D] \gg= \lambda\rho_1. \mathbf{local}(\lambda\rho. \rho[\rho_1])(\mathcal{C}[C])$$

Modular SOS

(MFCS 1999, JLAP 2004)

- ▶ conventional description structure
- ▶ **good** support for incremental semantics

Advance:

- ▶ propagation of auxiliary entities in labels

$$\frac{C \xrightarrow{\{\rho=\rho_0[\rho_1], \dots\}} C'}{\{\rho_1 C\} \xrightarrow{\{\rho=\rho_0, \dots\}} \{\rho_1 C'\}}$$

Component-based semantics

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With Doh (LDTA 2001) and Iversen (IEE 2005)

- ▶ component-based description structure
- ▶ initially for use in action semantics, subsequently also in Modular SOS

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- ▶ agent-oriented action semantics

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Menezes et al. (AAMAS 2002)

- ▶ agent-oriented action semantics

Araújo and Musicante (SCCC 2004),

- ▶ object-oriented action semantics

Constructive semantics

(SBLP 2005)

- ▶ constructive description structure
- ▶ initially for use in action semantics, subsequently also in Modular SOS

Advance:

- ▶ mapping concrete language constructs to combinations of abstract constructs

Aspect-oriented semantics

Tirelo et al. (SBLP 2008)

- ▶ aspect-oriented description structure
- ▶ **good** support for **incremental semantics**

Advance:

- ▶ transformations of denotations

Implicitly-Modular SOS

With New (SOS 2008)

- ▶ good support for component-based and constructive semantics

Advance:

- ▶ implicit propagation of auxiliary entities

$$\frac{\rho[\rho_1] \vdash C \rightarrow C'}{\rho \vdash \{ \rho_1 C \} \rightarrow \{ \rho_1 C' \}}$$

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The POPLmark Challenge

Pierce et al. (2005)

- ▶ Mechanized Metatheory for the Masses

Main aim:

- ▶ machine-checked definitions and proofs about programming languages
- ▶ challenge problems involve “aspects known to be difficult to formalise” – F_{\leq} with records

K-Challenge

Rosu (UIUC report 2007):

- ▶ A rewriting-based framework for computation

Main aim:

- ▶ demonstration of support for **incremental semantics** – extending a simple imperative language with output, procedural abstraction, recursion, references, call/cc, nondeterminism, aspects, concurrency, synchronization, quote

Semantics-online challenge

(2008, in preparation)

Main aims:

- ▶ demonstration of support for **independent** semantic descriptions of a collection of basic **abstract constructs**
- ▶ provide an online repository of **reusable components** in different frameworks

Discussion?

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Modular structure

- ▶ any alternatives?

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- ▶ any alternatives?

Assessment of advances in various frameworks

- ▶ any omissions or injustices?

Discussion?

Modular structure

- ▶ any alternatives?

Assessment of advances in various frameworks

- ▶ any omissions or injustices?

Challenges

- ▶ any better proposals?

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