

# Software Design

Deriving a solution which  
satisfies software requirements

## Objectives

- To introduce the process of software design
- To describe the different stages in this design process
- To show how object-oriented and functional design strategies are complementary
- To discuss some design quality attributes

# Topics covered

- The design process and design methods
- Design strategies including object-oriented design and functional decomposition
- Design quality attributes

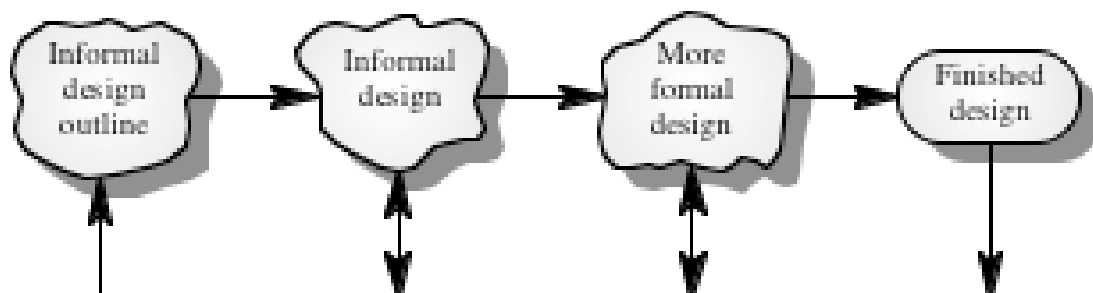
# Stages of design

- Problem understanding
  - Look at the problem from different angles to discover the design requirements
- Identify one or more solutions
  - Evaluate possible solutions and choose the most appropriate depending on the designer's experience and available resources
- Describe solution abstractions
  - Use graphical, formal or other descriptive notations to describe the components of the design
- Repeat process for each identified abstraction until the design is expressed in primitive terms

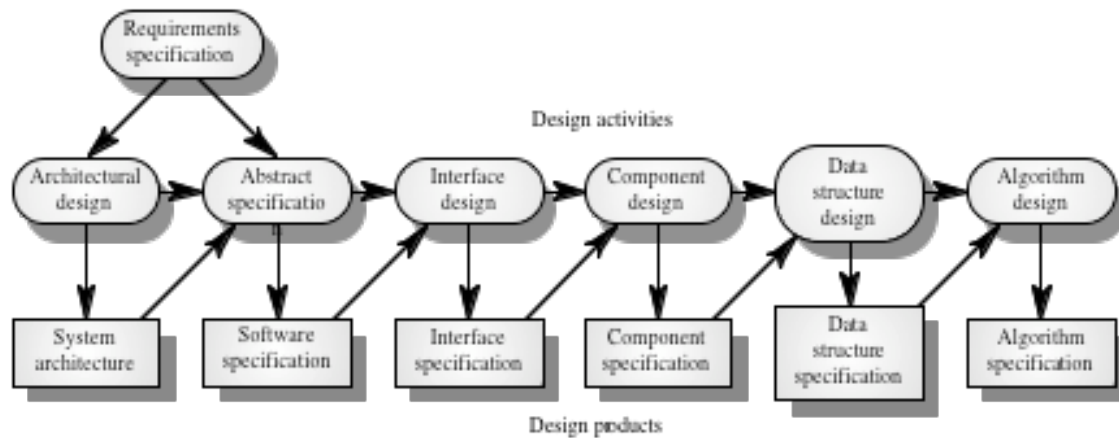
# The design process

- Any design may be modeled as a directed graph made up of entities with attributes which participate in relationships
- The system should be described at several different levels of abstraction
- Design takes place in overlapping stages. It is artificial to separate it into distinct phases but some separation is usually necessary

## From informal to formal design



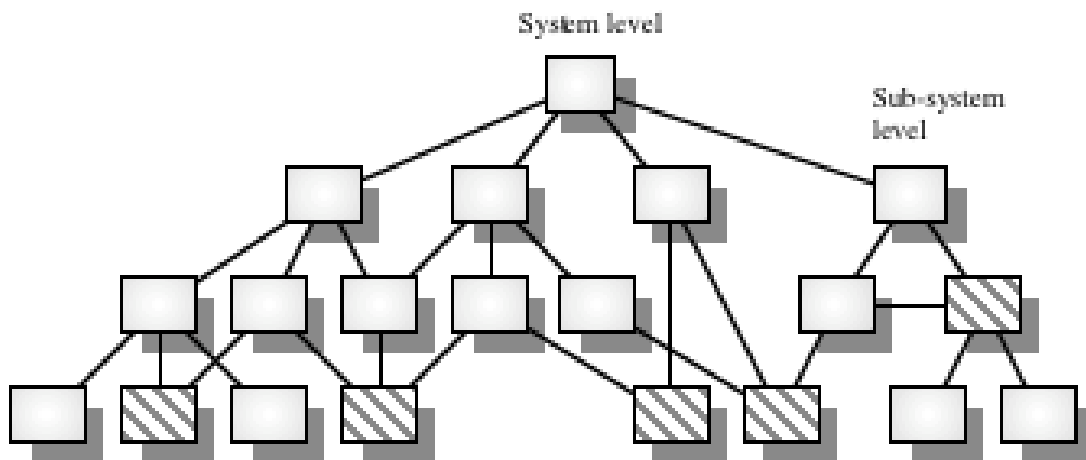
# Phases in the design process



## Design phases

- *Architectural design* Identify sub-systems
- *Abstract specification* Specify sub-systems
- *Interface design* Describe sub-system interfaces
- *Component design* Decompose sub-systems into components
- *Data structure design* Design data structures to hold problem data
- *Algorithm design* Design algorithms for problem functions

# Hierarchical design structure



## Top-down design

- In principle, top-down design involves starting at the uppermost components in the hierarchy and working down the hierarchy level by level
- In practice, large systems design is never truly top-down. Some branches are designed before others. Designers reuse experience (and sometimes components) during the design process

## Design methods

- Structured methods are sets of notations for expressing a software design and guidelines for creating a design
- Well-known methods include Structured Design (Yourdon), and JSD (Jackson Method)
- Can be applied successfully because they support standard notations and ensure designs follow a standard form
- Structured methods may be supported with CASE tools

## Method components

- Many methods support comparable views of a system
- A data flow view (data flow diagrams) showing data transformations
- An entity-relation view describing the logical data structures
- A structural view showing system components and their interactions

## Method deficiencies

- They are guidelines rather than methods in the mathematical sense. Different designers create quite different system designs
- They do not help much with the early, creative phase of design. Rather, they help the designer to structure and document his or her design ideas

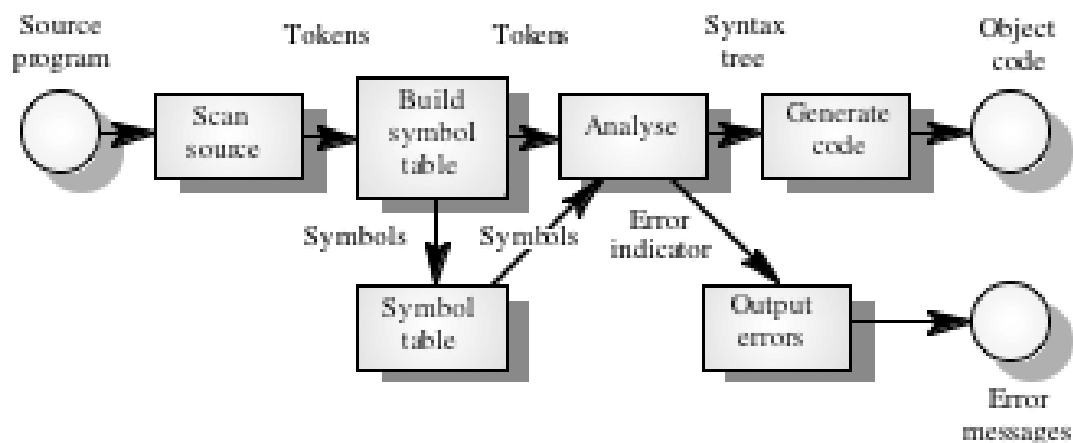
## Design description

- *Graphical notations*. Used to display component relationships
- *Program description languages*. Based on programming languages but with more flexibility to represent abstract concepts
- *Informal text*. Natural language description.
- All of these notations may be used in large systems design

# Design strategies

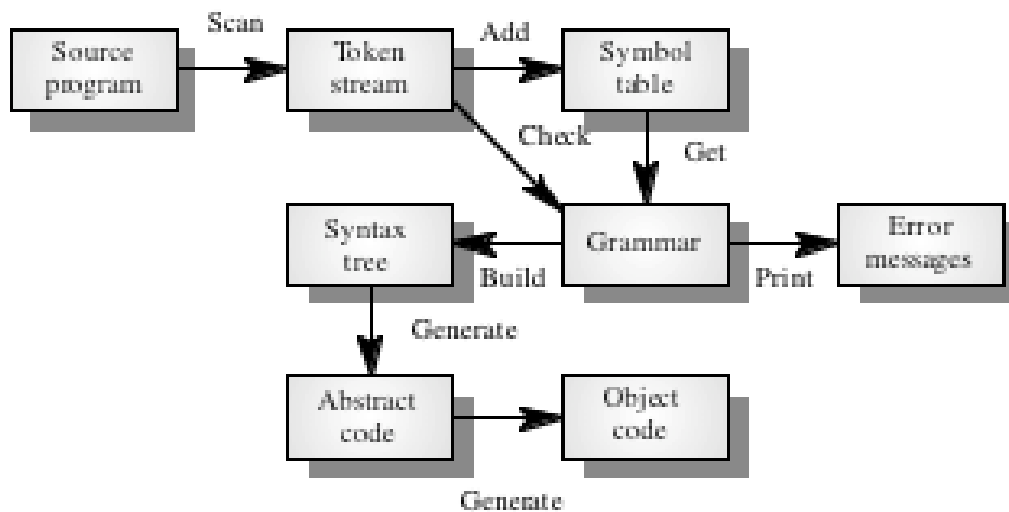
- **Functional design**  
The system is designed from a functional viewpoint. The system state is centralized and shared between the functions operating on that state
- **Object-oriented design**  
The system is viewed as a collection of interacting objects. The system state is decentralized and each object manages its own state. Objects may be instances of an object class and communicate by exchanging messages.

## Functional view of a compiler





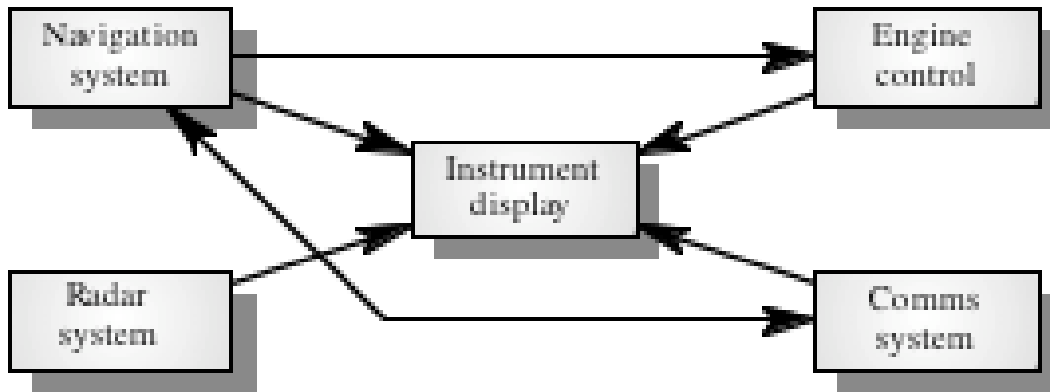
# Object-oriented view of a compiler



## Mixed-strategy design

- Although it is sometimes suggested that one approach to design is superior, in practice, an object-oriented and a functional-oriented approach to design are complementary
- Good software engineers should select the most appropriate approach for whatever sub-system is being designed

# Aircraft sub-systems



## High-level objects

- The navigation system
- The radar system
- The communications system
- The instrument display system
- The engine control system
- ...

## System functions (sub-system level)

- Display track (radar sub-system)
- Compensate for wind speed (navigation sub-system)
- Reduce power (engine sub-system)
- Indicate emergency (instrument sub-system)
- Lock onto frequency (communications sub-system)
- ...

## Low-level objects

- The engine status
- The aircraft position
- The altimeter
- The radio beacon
- ...

# Design quality

- Design quality is an elusive concept. Quality depends on specific organizational priorities
- A 'good' design may be the most efficient, the cheapest, the most maintainable, the most reliable, etc.
- The attributes discussed here are concerned with the maintainability of the design
- Quality characteristics are equally applicable to function-oriented and object-oriented designs

# Cohesion

- A measure of how well a component 'fits together'
- A component should implement a single logical entity or function
- Cohesion is a desirable design component attribute as when a change has to be made, it is localized in a single cohesive component
- Various levels of cohesion have been identified

## Cohesion levels

- **Coincidental cohesion (weak)**
  - Parts of a component are simply bundled together
- **Logical association (weak)**
  - Components which perform similar functions are grouped
- **Temporal cohesion (weak)**
  - Components which are activated at the same time are grouped
- **Procedural cohesion (weak)**
  - The elements in a component make up a single control sequence

## Cohesion levels

- **Communicational cohesion (medium)**
  - All the elements of a component operate on the same input or produce the same output
- **Sequential cohesion (medium)**
  - The output for one part of a component is the input to another part
- **Functional cohesion (strong)**
  - Each part of a component is necessary for the execution of a single function
- **Object cohesion (strong)**
  - Each operation provides functionality which allows object attributes to be modified or inspected

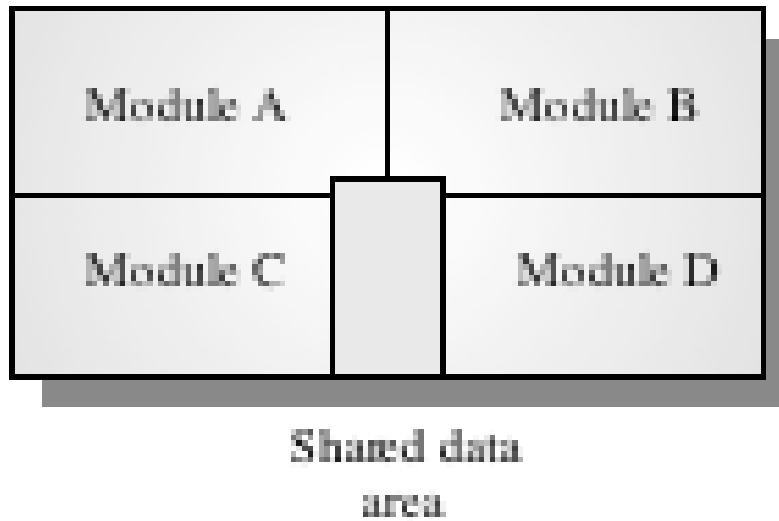
## Cohesion as a design attribute

- Not well-defined. Often difficult to classify cohesion
- Inheriting attributes from super-classes weakens cohesion
- To understand a component, the super-classes as well as the component class must be examined
- Object class browsers assist with this process

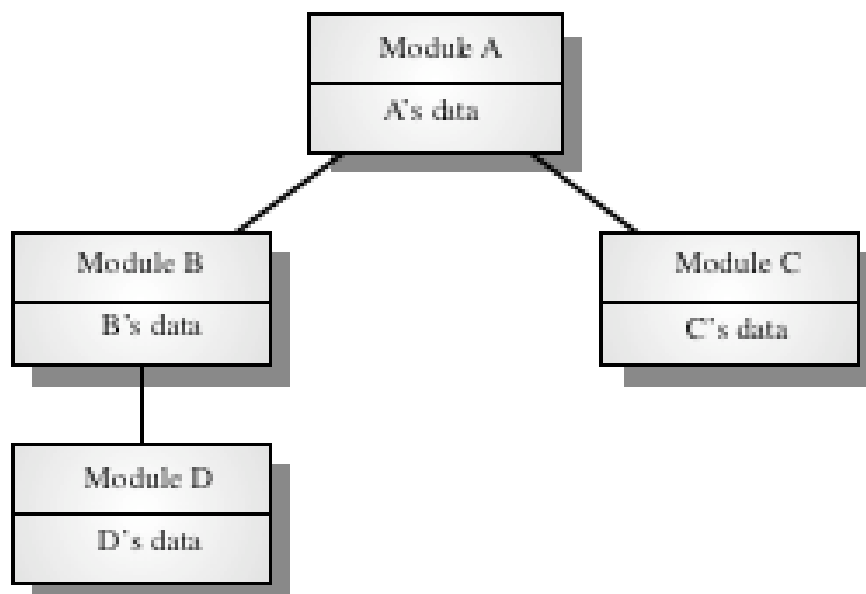
## Coupling

- A measure of the strength of the inter-connections between system components
- Loose coupling means component changes are unlikely to affect other components
- Shared variables or control information exchange lead to tight coupling
- Loose coupling can be achieved by state decentralization (as in objects) and component communication via parameters or message passing

# Tight coupling



# Loose coupling



## Coupling and inheritance

- Object-oriented systems are loosely coupled because there is no shared state and objects communicate using message passing
- However, an object class is coupled to its super-classes. Changes made to the attributes or operations in a super-class propagate to all sub-classes. Such changes must be carefully controlled

## Understandability

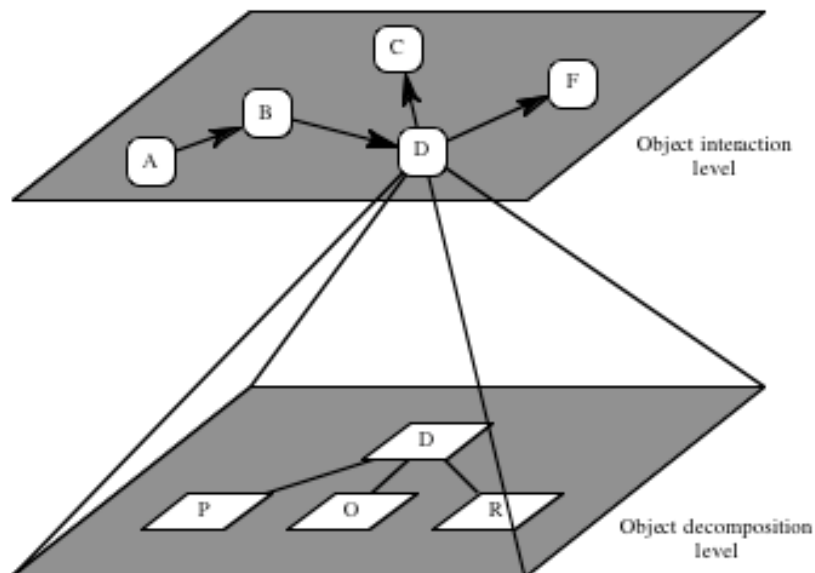
- Related to several component characteristics
  - *Cohesion*. Can the component be understood on its own?
  - *Naming*. Are meaningful names used?
  - *Documentation*. Is the design well-documented?
  - *Complexity*. Are complex algorithms used?
- Informally, high complexity means many relationships between different parts of the design. hence it is hard to understand
- Most design quality metrics are oriented towards complexity measurement. They are of limited use



# Adaptability

- A design is adaptable if:
  - Its components are loosely coupled
  - It is well-documented and the documentation is up to date
  - There is an obvious correspondence between design levels (design visibility)
  - Each component is a self-contained entity (tightly cohesive)
- To adapt a design, it must be possible to trace the links between design components so that change consequences can be analyzed

## Design traceability



## Adaptability and inheritance

- Inheritance dramatically improves adaptability. Components may be adapted without change by deriving a sub-class and modifying that derived class
- However, as the depth of the inheritance hierarchy increases, it becomes increasingly complex. It must be periodically reviewed and restructured

## Key points

- Design is a creative process
- Design activities include architectural design, system specification, component design, data structure design and algorithm design
- Functional decomposition considers the system as a set of functional units
- Object-oriented decomposition considers the system as a set of objects