Subject: Re: IDL memory question
Posted by David Kastrup on Mon, 07 Sep 1998 07:00:00 GMT
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Eugenio Sansosti <sansosti@irece1.irece.na.cnr.it> writes:

> Suppose I define a very big array, for instance a=fltarr(8000,8000).
> When I finish using it, I can make memory free by assigning to it a
> scalar value (for example a=0.), as also suggested in the IDL
> documentation.
>
> Even if this operation make the required memory free for my IDL
> application, it does not make memory free for other applicstions running
> onmy machine. That is, other machine users cannot use the memory I have
> allocated untill I exit IDL.
>
> Does any of you have a solution for that? Is it an IDL configuration
> problem or is there any IDL command I can use?

I would guess that IDL basically uses the malloc/free heap system from the underlying system-library/operating system. If it does, this would mean that, for example, on a standard Linux system (which allocates larger chunks of memory in a very specific way), the memory could be immediately reclaimed by other applications. Other systems where glibc is being used would show the same behaviour, but I would not guess that IDL would be compiled using glibc on other systems.

Most standard Unix (and MSDOS) libraries don't ever give back memory allocated by malloc to the system, and some do this only in very specific circumstances unlikely to occur in a complex system like IDL.

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