
Subject: Re: Declaration of variables in IDL

Posted by [Paul van Delst](#) on Wed, 03 Oct 2001 14:28:33 GMT

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Hans de Boer wrote:

>
> Hi there,
>
> I have been working with IDL for quite a while now, but never
> encountered a way of fixing variable types in IDL. Especially when
> adding new variables to old pieces of code, it can be very confusing if
> a variable of that name was already in use. IDL simply changes the
> variable type (including changes of array dimension) if required and
> possible. If not possible, you are the lucky one to get run-time errors,
> but if possible, the code seems to run quite nicely and the poor
> programmer is left with apparently correct results.
> I also have found that people new to IDL have generated extremely sneaky
> bugs this way.
> Does anybody know of making IDL performing an explicit variable check
> during compilation ?

I dunno about IDL, but my immediate solution (after checking in all the code to be altered into a version control system) would be to sit the prospective programmers in front of the code with a pad and a pencil and disable all but the editor-arrow keys and editor-search functions (to poll the namespace for variables names) and give them a day or two to think about what they need to do, how they would go about doing it (more than one method would be a good thing), and what are the consequences of each method. This initial sit down and think about it period will save a lot more time later because the code won't fall in the messy heap that usually results with the tinker-and-recompile method of change/debugging.

I have had people change some of my code and then later (after they forgot what they did) complain that my code doesn't work and is broken (and sometimes, whimper...sniff, they're not that polite). Needless to say a couple of wasted hours later the code works again - usually by me doing a "rm -fr *" (== delete absolutely everything for you windows/mac fellers) followed by a "cvs checkout".

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