
Subject: Re: Finding if a structure tag name is defined?

Posted by [Mark Hadfield](#) on Wed, 15 Oct 2003 02:35:58 GMT

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wmc@bas.ac.uk wrote:

> David Fanning <david@dfanning.com> wrote:

>

>> Reimar Bauer writes:

>>

>>> I often use `is_tag` to determine if a tag is in a structure

>

>> But, alas, you are still going to have to call `IS_TAG`

>> as many times as you have letters in your keyword, if

>> you hope to fish it out unambiguously. :-(

>

> Hmm, so, isn't that a flaw in IDL? Taking on board your

> well-reasoned critique of (over)using `_extra`, it still seems

> quite reasonable to expect to be able to find if a given tag

> exists in a given structure, via a mechanism as simple as

> using `n_elements` to see if a given variable exist. IDL seems

> to make this simple task harder than it should be.

>

> (and anyway, looking at the pro, it only needs calling once).

I thought David's point was that searching for a tag in the `_EXTRA` structure (which is a little harder than it should be in IDL, but not all that onerous) is something you generally should not do, because it becomes laborious if you want to support keyword abbreviation. And of course you **do** want to handle keyword abbreviation, unless you want to write documentation that says "IDL allows abbreviated keywords, except in my routines".

If you aren't interested in a keyword in the current routine, bundle it in an `_EXTRA` structure (or `_REF_EXTRA` hidden string-array thingy). If you do, declare it explicitly.

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