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Subject: Re: Your experience with other scientific languages?  
Posted by [Michael Galloy](#) on Mon, 11 Nov 2013 17:59:52 GMT  
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On 11/11/13, 10:11 AM, Fabien wrote:

> It is not my intention to start a troll-like discussion here. I am  
> reading this newsgroup since a couple of years now and I really  
> appreciate the friendly tone of this group (I followed some other groups  
> where arrogant people argued with other arrogant people... awful).  
> Having said this, I am wondering why we are never talking about other  
> languages. Is it to avoid trolls like me, or because EXELIS people also  
> read this group? (did I emphasize already how much I appreciate the  
> reactivity of Mark and Chris on this group? ;-))

I think we don't discuss them here is simply because this is an IDL  
newsgroup, though I think your discussion is still appropriate as it  
relates IDL to other languages.

> To my point: I am starting a career in academia and my future employer  
> and colleagues don't use IDL. I could argue with my future boss and make  
> him pay for an IDL license. But I am seriously wondering if I want to do  
> this during my whole career (taking the risk to always be the only one  
> using IDL), and I am thinking about leaning Python. I've been searching  
> a bit for pro and cons, and since I am in the atmospheric sciences I  
> came to this website for example:  
> <http://pyaos.johnny-lin.com/?p=544>  
>  
> Such a topical argument can last for ever, starting with the pros and  
> cons of open-source VS commercial softwares. So I will try to limit the  
> discussion to a couple of points:  
>  
> - Map Projections: pyproj relies on the state-of-the art proj.4, and can  
> do Datum shifts (it seems). IDL's system is quite old and can't do datum  
> shifts.  
> - Graphics: I read in a VISualize presentation that IDL's objective was  
> to be "better than Python" in plotting (can't find the PDF anymore).  
> Does that mean that Python is really good at plotting?  
> - Statistics: my feelings says that Python probably has many more tools  
> "out-of-the-box" due to the larger community.  
> - Easiness of use: I am a Linux user so I am not afraid of installing  
> some packages, but I'm told that python is quite complicated in this  
> respect.  
>  
> My question: did some of you have experience with python or similar  
> languages and if yes, what was your impressions \*from the IDL user  
> perspective\*? Any thoughts are appreciated!

I like Python and have used it for occasional projects. Back when I was

using it more frequently, it was a difficult task to collect and build all the third-party packages required to do scientific programming. I think that is mostly solved by packages such as Anaconda ([store.continuum.io/cshop/anaconda](http://store.continuum.io/cshop/anaconda)). If you have to do something outside the normal realm of scientific programming, like web programming, Python gives you a lot of choices.

Mike

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Modern IDL: A Guide to IDL Programming (<http://modernidl.idldev.com>)

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