Knowledge Industry Survival Strategy (KISS)
Fundamental Principles and Interoperability Requirements for Domain Specific Modeling Languages

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Abstract
Domain Specific Languages are raising the level of abstraction of software specifications and of knowledge representation in general. When DSLs are used to formalize the results of domain analysis, the result is a clean separation of concerns in the problem space. This is a major advance over aspect oriented programming, where separation of concerns is only achieved in the solution space. However, the level of interoperability between current DSL tools is comparable to the level of interoperability between CASE tools in the 90s. To increase the popularity of DSL based approaches, this needs to change. Software development has become highly decentralized, and an assumption that all parties in a global software supply chain will use identical tooling is simply not realistic. As a result today's software supply chains are much less automated than supply chains in other, more mature industries. The KISS series of workshops is used to incrementally establish a consensus on the fundamental principles that underpin the use of DSLs, and to improve DSL tool interoperability.

Categories and Subject Descriptors D.2.11 [Software Engineering]: Software Architectures – data abstraction, domain-specific architectures, languages (e.g., description, interconnection, definition).

General Terms Documentation, Design, Economics, Reliability, Human Factors, Standardization, Languages, Verification.

Keywords Domain specific language; interoperability; modularity; modeling language design; model driven software.

1. Objectives
Meeting DSL interoperability challenges requires a significant increase in the use of formal specifications in the wider context of developing software intensive systems, and advanced tooling for creating, managing, and exploiting formal specifications. KISS [1] [2] is an industry led initiative with two goals:

1. Reaching a strong consensus on fundamental values and principles for designing and using DSLs
   - The substrate on top of which practical interoperability can be achieved
2. Progress towards interoperability between tools
   - Not aiming too high, but instead achieving practical results

2. Results Achieved To Date
Building software intensive systems has taught us that domain specific languages represent the key to capturing, preserving, and exploiting knowledge in virtually all industries. Spurious complexity is our biggest enemy. Hence, when designing software, we keep it sweet & simple (KISS). Most importantly, we are committed to the following values, fundamental principles, and guidelines:

2.1 Values
1. We strive to automate software construction from domain models; therefore we consciously distinguish between building software factories and building software applications
2. We work with domain-specific assets, which can be any-
things from models, components, frameworks, generators,
to languages and techniques

3. We support the emergence of supply chains for software
services, which implies domain-specific specialization
and enables mass customization

4. We see Open standards, as well as Open Source test beds
and reference implementations as driving interoperability

5. We use methodologies that conform with the values of
the Agile Manifesto

2.2 Fundamental principles for designing domain
specific languages

1. There must be an economic imperative for the develop-
ment of a DSL

2. The DSL must be meaningful to users of the DSL

3. The DSL must be appropriate for the intended processing

4. The DSL definition must always be available when pro-
cessing a model

5. The DSL should be cognitively efficient for the users of
the DSL

6. The DSL should have multiple notations where necessary

7. DSLs should be kept small through modularization and
integration

8. DSLs should offer mechanisms for modularizing and in-
tegrating models

9. The DSL should be supported by appropriate tooling for
DSL users

2.3 Guidelines

1. DSL development must assemble sufficient expertise in:
   - Problem domain; solution domain; designing DSLs;
     language implementation technologies

2. DSL development must anticipate evolution of the DSL

3. DSL modularization should take into account DSL user
   roles

4. DSL design and validation should use an iterative ap-
   proach

5. DSL design should involve the construction of concrete
   examples

6. DSL notations should take into account established do-
   main notations

— Peter Bell, Jorn Bettin, Tony Clark, Keith Duddy, Scott
Finnie, Matthew Fowler, Steven Kelly, Jack Kennedy, Frank
Sauer, Laurence Tratt, Markus Voelter, Jos Warmer

These results reflect the 2nd KISS workshop on 16 June
2009 at the Code Generation conference [3]. Material related
to the fundamental principles was first presented at the 1st
KISS workshop on 14 April 2009 at the ASWEC conference
[4]. The core values were originally articulated at a birds-of-
a-feather session at OOPSLA 2003.

The specific goal for the OOPSLA workshop is the con-
solidation of KISS results achieved in 2009, and publication
of these results in an Industrialized Software Manifesto.

3. Format and Activities

The workshop will be highly interactive, making use of the
Open Space Technology format.

Jorn Bettin will introduce the workshop with an assess-
ment of the readiness of software organizations to adopt the
use of domain specific languages as part of model driven
product line approaches. The talk will underscore the need
for interoperability between domain specific language de-
sign/implementation tools.

4. Publication of Results

The organizers will consider the best papers for publication
in the theme issue of the SoSyM journal on Model Based

References


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