

Chapter 7

Types and type checking

Course "Compiler Construction" Martin Steffen Spring 2021



Section

Introduction

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General remarks and overview

- Goal here:
 - what are types?
 - static vs. dynamic typing
 - how to describe types syntactically?
 - how to represent and use types in a compiler?
- coverage of various types
 - basic types (often predefined/built-in)
 - type constructors
 - values of a type
 - type operators
 - representation at run-time
 - run-time tests and special problems (array, union, record, pointers)
- specification and implementation of type systems/type checkers
- advanced concepts



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Equality of types

Why types?

- crucial, user-visible abstraction describing program behavior
- one view: type describes a set of (mostly related) values
- static typing: checking/enforcing a type discipline at compile time
- dynamic typing: same at run-time, mixtures possible
- completely untyped languages: very rare to non-existant, types were part of PLs from the start.

Milner's dictum ("type safety")

Well-typed programs cannot go wrong!

- strong typing:¹ rigorously prevent "misuse" of data
- types useful for later phases and optimizations
- documentation and partial specification



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¹Terminology rather fuzzy, and perhaps changed a bit over time.

Types: in first approximation

Conceptually

- semantic view: set of values plus a set of corresponding operations
- syntactic view: notation to construct basic elements of the type (its values) plus "procedures" operating on them
- compiler implementor's view: data of the same type have same underlying memory representation

further classification:

- built-in/predefined vs. user-defined types
- basic/base/elementary/primitive types vs. compound types
- type constructors: building more compex types from simpler ones
- reference vs. value types



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Some typical base types



base types

```
int 0, 1, ... +,-,*,/ integers real 5.05E4... +,-,* real numbers bool true, false and or (|)... booleans char 'a' characters
```

- often HW support for some of those (including some of the op's)
- mostly: elements of int are not exactly mathematical integers, same for real
- often variations offered: int32, int64
- often implicit conversions and relations between basic types
 - which the type system has to specify/check for legality
 - which the compiler has to implement

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Some compound types

compound types		
array[09] of real		a[i+1]
list	[], [1;2;3]	concat
string	"text"	concat
struct / record		r.x

mostly reference types

. . .

- when built in, special "easy syntax" (same for basic built-in types)
 - 4 + 5 as opposed to plus (4,5)
 - a[6] as opposed to array_access(a, 6) ...
- parser/lexer aware of built-in types/operators (special precedences, associativity, etc.)
- cf. functionality "built-in/predefined" via libraries



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Abstract data types

- unit of data together with functions/procedures/operations . . . operating on them
- encapsulation + interface
- often: separation between exported and internal operations
 - for instance public, private ...
 - or via separate interfaces
- (static) classes in Java: may be used/seen as ADTs, methods are then the "operations"

```
ADT begin
integer i;
real x;
int proc total(int a) {
    return i * x + a // or: ``total = i * x + a''
}
end
```



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Type constructors: building new types

- array type
- record type (also known as struct-types)
- union type
- pair/tuple type
- pointer type
 - explict as in C
 - implict distinction between reference and value types, hidden from programmers (e.g. Java)
- signatures (specifying methods / procedures / subroutines / functions) as type
- function type constructor, incl. higher-order types (in functional languages)
- (names of) classes and subclasses
- . . .



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Arrays

Array type

```
array [<indextype>] of <component type>
```

- elements (arrays) = (finite) functions from index-type to component type
- allowed index-types:
 - non-negative (unsigned) integers?, from ... to ...?
 - other types?: enumerated types, characters
- things to keep in mind:
 - indexing outside the array bounds?
 - are the array bounds (statically) known to the compiler?
 - dynamic arrays (extensible at run-time)?



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One and more-dimensional arrays



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- Type checking

- one-dimensional: efficiently implementable in standard hardware (relative memory addressing, known offset)
- two or more dimensions

```
array [1..4] of array [1..3] of real array [1..4, 1..3] of real
```

- one can see it as "array of arrays" (Java), an array is typically a reference type
- conceptually "two-dimensional"- linear layout in memory (language dependent)

Records ("structs")

```
struct {
  real r;
  int i;
}
```

- values: "labelled tuples" (real× int)
- constructing elements, e.g.

```
struct point {int x; int y;};
struct point pt = { 300, 42 };
```

struct point

- access (read or update): dot-notation x.i
- implementation: linear memory layout given by the (types of the) attributes
- attributes accessible by statically fixed offsets
- fast access
- cf. objects as in Java



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Tuple/product types

- $T_1 \times T_2$ (or in ascii T_1 * T_2)
- elements are tuples: for instance: (1, "text") is element of int * string
- generalization to *n*-tuples:

value	type
(1, "text", true)	int * string * bool
(1, ("text", true))	<pre>int * (string * bool)</pre>

- structs can be seen as "labeled tuples", resp. tuples as "anonymous structs"
- tuple types: common in functional languages,
- in C/Java-like languages: n-ary tuple types often only implicit as input types for procedures/methods (part of the "signature")



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Union types (C-style again)

```
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```

```
union {
  real r;
  int i
}
```

- related to sum types (outside C)
- (more or less) represents disjoint union of values of "participating" types
- access in C (confusingly enough): dot-notation u.i

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Union types in C and type safety

• union types is C: bad example for (safe) type disciplines, as it's simply type-unsafe, basically an *unsafe* hack . . .

Union type (in C):

- nothing much more than a directive to allocate enough memory to hold largest member of the union.
- in the example: real takes more space than int

Explanation

- implementor's (= low level) focus and memory allocation, not "proper usage focus" or assuring strong typing
- ⇒ bad example of modern use of types
- better (type-safe) implementations known since
- ⇒ variant record ("tagged"/"discriminated" union) or even inductive data types



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Variant records from Pascal

```
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```

```
record case isReal: boolean of true: (r:real); false: (i:integer);
```

- "variant record"
- non-overlapping memory layout²
- programmer responsible to set and check the "discriminator" self
- enforcing type-safety-wise: not really an improvement :-(

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²Again, that's an implementor-centric view, not a user-centric one.

Inductive types in ML and similar

- type-safe and powerful
- allows pattern matching

```
IsReal of real | IsInteger of int
```

allows recursive definitions ⇒ inductive data types:

```
type int_bintree =
   Node of int * int_bintree * bintree
| Nil
```

- Node, Leaf, IsReal: constructors (cf. languages like Java)
- constructors used as discriminators in "union" types

```
type exp =
   Plus of exp * exp
| Minus of exp * exp
| Number of int
| Var of string
```



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Recursive data types in C

does not work

"indirect" recursion

```
struct intBST {
  int val:
  int is Null:
  struct intBST left, right;
```

```
struct intBST {
  int val;
  struct intBST *left, *right;
```

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```
In Java: references implicit
```

```
class BSTnode {
int val;
BSTnode left, right:
```

- note: implementation in ML: also uses "pointers" (but hidden from the user)
- no nil-pointers in ML (and NIL is not a nil-pointer, it's a constructor)

Pointer types

- pointer type: notation in C: int*
- " * ": can be seen as type constructor

```
int* p;
```

- random other languages: ^integer in Pascal, int ref in ML
- value: address of (or reference/pointer to) values of the underlying type
- operations: dereferencing and determining the address of an data item (and C allows "pointer arithmetic")



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Implicit dereferencing

- many languages: more or less hide existence of pointers
- cf. reference vs. value types often: automatic/implicit dereferencing

```
C r;
C r = new C();
```

- "sloppy" speaking: "r is an object (which is an instance of class C /which is of type C)",
- slightly more precise: variable " r contains an object...
- precise: "variable r will contain a reference to an object"
- r.field corresponds to something like " (*r).field, similar in Simula



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Programming with pointers

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- "popular" source of errors
- test for non-null-ness often required
- explicit pointers: can lead to problems in block-structured language (when handled non-expertly)
- watch out for parameter passing
- aliasing
- null-pointers: "the billion-dollar-mistake"
- take care of concurrency

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Function variables

program Funcvar:

```
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```

```
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```

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Type checking

```
Procedure Q();
   var
      a integer;
      Procedure P(i : integer);
      begin
         a:= a+i; (* a def'ed outside
    end:
   begin
      pv := @P;  (* ``return'' P (as side effect)
                    (* "@" dependent on dialect
  end:
                    (* here: free Pascal
begin
  Q();
  pv(1);
end.
```

var pv : Procedure (x: integer); (* procedur var

Function variables and nested scopes

- tricky part here: nested scope + function definition escaping surrounding function/scope.
- here: inner procedure "returned" via assignment to function variable
- stack discipline of dynamic memory management?
- related also: functions allowed as return value?
 - Pascal: not directly possible (unless one "returns" them via function-typed reference variables like here)
 - C: possible, but *nested* function definitions not allowed
- combination of nested function definitions and functions as official return values (and arguments): higher-order functions
- Note: functions as arguments less problematic than as return values.



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Function signatures

- define the "header" (also "signature") of a function³
- in the discussion: we don't distinguish mostly: functions, procedures, methods, subroutines.
- functional type (independent of the name f): int \rightarrow int

```
Modula-2

| var f: procedure (integer): integer; | int (*f) (int)
```

- *values*: all functions (procedures . . .) with the given signature
- problems with block structure and free use of procedure variables.

³Actually, an identfier of the function is mentioned as well.

Escaping

3

4 5

6

8

```
program Funcvar;
var pv : Procedure (x: integer); (* procedur var
  Procedure Q();
   var
      a integer:
     Procedure P(i : integer);
     begin
         a:= a+i; (* a def'ed outside
    end:
 begin
      pv := @P;  (* ``return'' P (as side effect)
                    (* "@" dependent on dialect
  end:
                    (* here: free Pascal
begin
  Q();
  pv (1);
end.
```

- at the end of line 15: variable a no longer exists
- possible safe usage: only assign to such variables (here pv) a new value (= function) at the same blocklevel the variable is declared

Classes and subclasses

Parent class

Subclass B

Subclass C

```
class A {
   int i;
   void f() {...
}
```

```
class B extends A {
   int i
   void f() {...}
}
```

```
class C extends A
  int i
  void f() {...}
}
```

- classes resemble records, and subclasses variant types, but additionally
 - visibility: local methods possible (besides fields)
 - subclasses
 - objects mostly created dynamically, no references into the stack
 - subtyping and polymorphism (subtype polymorphism):
 a reference typed by A can also point to B or C objects
- special problems: not really many, nil-pointer still possible



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Access to object members: late binding

- notation rA.i or rA.f()
- dynamic binding, late-binding, virtual access, dynamic dispatch . . . : all mean roughly the same
- central mechanism in many OO language, in connection with inheritance

Virtual access rA.f() (methods)

"deepest" f in the run-time class of the *object*, rA points to

- remember: "most-closely nested" access of variables in nested lexical block
- Java:
 - methods "in" objects are only dynamically bound (but there are class methods too)
 - instance variables not, neither static methods "in" classes.



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Example: fields and methods

```
public class Shadow {
    public static void main(String[] args){
        C2 c2 = new C2();
        c2.n();
class C1 {
    String s = "C1";
    void m () {System.out.print(this.s);}
class C2 extends C1 {
    String s = "C2";
    void n () {this.m();}
```



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Diverse notions

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- Overloading
 - common for (at least) standard, built-in operations
 - also possible for user defined functions/methods . . .
 - disambiguation via (static) types of arguments
 - "ad-hoc" polymorphism
 - implementation:
 - put types of parameters as "part" of the name
 - look-up gives back a set of alternatives
- type-conversions: can be problematic in connection with overloading
- (generic) polymporphism swap(var x,y: anytype)



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Classes as types

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- classes = types? Not so fast
- more precise view:
 - design decision in Java and similar languages (but not all/even not all class-based OOLs): that class names are used in the role of (names of) types.
- other roles of classes (in class-based OOLs)
 - generator of objects (via constructor, again with the same name)⁴
 - containing code that implements the instances

```
C x = new C()
```

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⁴Not for Java's *static* classes etc, obviously.

Example with interfaces

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```
interface | 1 { int m (int x); }
interface 12 { int m (int x); }
class C1 implements I1 {
    public int m(int y) {return y++; }
class C2 implements 12 {
    public int m(int y) {return y++; }
public class Noduck1 {
    public static void main(String[] arg) {
        11 \times 1 = \text{new C1}(); // 12 not possible
        12 \times 2 = \text{new C2()};
        x1 = x2:
                                   // ???
```

Analogous when using classes in their roles as types

When are 2 types "equal"?

- type equivalence
- surprisingly many different answers possible
- implementor's focus (deprecated): type int and short are equal, because they "are" both 2 byte
- type checker must often decide such equivalences
- related to a more fundamental question: what's a type?

Example: pairs of integers

```
type pair_of_ints = int * int;;
let x : pair_of_ints = (1,4);;
```

Questions

- Is "the" type of (values of) x pair_of_ints, or
- the product type int * int, or
- both, as they are equal, i.e., pair_of_int is an abbreviation of the product type (type synonym)?



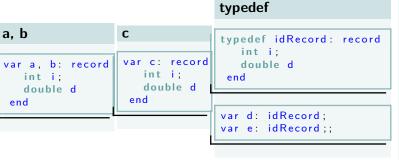
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Structural vs. nominal equality



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what's possible?

```
a := c;
a := d;
a := b;
d := e;
```

Types in the AST

- types are part of the syntax, as well
- represent: either in a separate symbol table, or part of the AST



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Record type

```
record
x: pointer to real;
y: array [10] of int
end
```

Procedure header

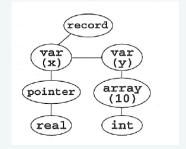
```
proc(bool,
union a: real; b:char end
int):void
end
```

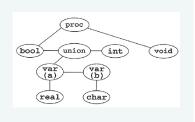
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Structured types without names



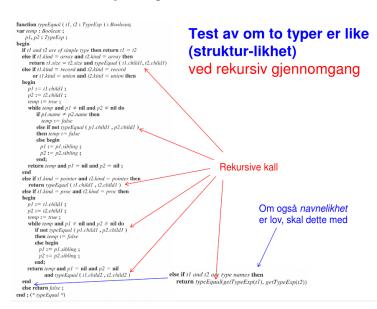
```
var\text{-}decls \rightarrow var\text{-}decl \mid var\text{-}decl
var\text{-}decl \rightarrow \text{id}: type\text{-}exp
type\text{-}exp \rightarrow simple\text{-}type \mid structured\text{-}type
simple\text{-}type \rightarrow \text{int} \mid \text{bool} \mid \text{real} \mid \text{char} \mid \text{void}
structured\text{-}type \rightarrow \text{array} [num]: type\text{-}exp
\mid \text{record} \ var\text{-}decls \text{ end}
\mid \text{union} \ var\text{-}decls \text{ end}
\mid \text{pointerto} \ type\text{-}exp
\mid \text{proc} \ (type\text{-}exps) \ type\text{-}exp
type\text{-}exps \rightarrow type\text{-}exps \ type\text{-}exp} \mid type\text{-}exp
```

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Types with names

```
var\text{-}decls \rightarrow var\text{-}decls; var\text{-}decl \mid var\text{-}decl
         var-decl \rightarrow id: simple-type-exp
       tupe-decls \rightarrow tupe-decls; type-decl \mid type-decl
        type\text{-}decl \rightarrow \mathbf{id} = type\text{-}exp
         type-exp \rightarrow simple-type-exp \mid structured-type
simple-type-exp \rightarrow simple-type \mid id
                                                                              identifiers
     simple-type \rightarrow int \mid bool \mid real \mid char \mid void
structured-type \rightarrow array [ num ] : simple-type-exp
                            record var-decls end
                            union var-decls end
                            pointerto simple-type-exp
                            proc (type-exps) simple-type-exp
        type\text{-}exps \rightarrow type\text{-}exps, simple\text{-}type\text{-}exp
                          simple-type-exp
```

Name equality

- all types have "names", and two types are equal iff their names are equal
- type equality checking: obviously simpler
- of course: type names may have scopes....

```
function typeEqual (t1, t2: TypeExp): Boolean;
var temp: Boolean;
  p1, p2: TypeExp;
begin
  if t1 and t2 are of simple type then
    return t1 = t2
  else if t1 and t2 are type names then
    return t1 = t2
  else return false;
end;
```



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Type aliases

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- languages with type aliases (type synonyms): C, Pascal,
 ML
- often very convenient (type Coordinate = float
 * float)
- light-weight mechanism

type alias; make t1 known also under name t2

```
t2 = t1 // t2 is the ``same type''.
```

also here: different choices wrt. type equality

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Type aliases: different choices



Alias, for simple types t1 = int; t2 = int; often: t1 and t2 are the "same" type Alias of structured types t1 = array [10] of int; t2 = array [10] of int; t3 = t2 often: t1 and t2 are the mostly t3 \neq t1 \neq t2

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Type checking of expressions (and statements)

- types of subexpressions must "fit" to the expected types the contructs can operate on
- type checking: top-down and bottom-up task
- ⇒ synthesized attributes, when using AGs
 - Here: using an attribute grammar specification of the type checker
 - type checking conceptually done while parsing (as actions of the parser)
 - more common: type checker operates on the AST after the parser has done its job
 - type system vs. type checker
 - type system: specification of the rules governing the use of types in a language, type discipline
 - type checker: algorithmic formulation of the type system (resp. implementation thereof)



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Grammar for statements and expressions

```
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```

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Type checking as semantic rules

Grammar Rule	Semantic Rules
var-decl → id: type-exp	insert(id .name, type-exp.type)
type-exp → int	type-exp.type := integer
type-exp → bool	type-exp.type := boolean
$type-exp_1 \rightarrow array$ [num] of $type-exp_2$	type-exp ₁ .type := makeTypeNode(array, num .size, type-exp ₂ .type)
$stmt \rightarrow \texttt{if} \ exp \ \texttt{then} \ stmt$	<pre>if not typeEqual(exp.type, boolean) then type-error(stmt)</pre>
$stmt \rightarrow id := exp$	<pre>if not typeEqual(lookup(id .name), exp.type) then type-error(stmt)</pre>
$exp_1 \rightarrow exp_2 + exp_3$	<pre>if not (typeEqual(exp2.type, integer) and typeEqual(exp3.type, integer)) then type-error(exp1); exp1.type := integer</pre>
$exp_1 \rightarrow exp_2 \text{ or } exp_3$	<pre>if not (typeEqual(exp2.type, boolean) and typeEqual(exp3.type, boolean)) then type-error(exp1); exp1.type := boolean</pre>
$exp_1 \rightarrow exp_2$ [exp_3]	if isArrayType(exp ₂ .type) and typeEqual(exp ₃ .type, integer) then exp ₁ .type := exp ₂ .type.child1 else type-error(exp ₁)
$exp \rightarrow num$	exp.type := integer
exp → true	exp.type := boolean
$exp \rightarrow false$	exp.type := boolean
$exp \rightarrow id$	exp.type := lookup(id.name)



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More "modern" presentation



- representation as derivation rules
- Γ : notation for symbol table
 - Γ(x): look-up
 Γ, x : T: insert
- more compact representation
- one reason: "errors" left implicit.

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Type checking (expressions)

 $\Gamma \vdash exp_1 + exp_2 : int$

Declarations and statements

```
\Gamma, x : \mathsf{int} \vdash rest : \mathsf{ok}
                                                                     \Gamma, x : \mathtt{bool} \vdash rest : \mathtt{ok}
                                      - TD-Int
                                                                                                             - TD-Bool
  \Gamma \vdash x : \mathbf{int} : rest : \mathsf{ok}
                                                                     \Gamma \vdash x : \mathbf{bool}; rest : \mathsf{ok}
    \Gamma \vdash num : int \qquad \Gamma(type-exp) = T
      \Gamma, x : \mathtt{array} \ num \ \mathtt{of} \ T \vdash rest : \mathtt{ok}
\Gamma \vdash x : \mathbf{array} [num] : type-exp; rest : ok
 \Gamma \vdash x : T \qquad \Gamma \vdash exp : T
                                                                                     \Gamma \vdash exp : \texttt{bool} \qquad \Gamma \vdash stmt : \texttt{ok}
                                    TS-Assign
         \Gamma \vdash x := exp : ok
                                                                                          \Gamma \vdash \mathbf{if} \ exp \ \mathbf{then} \ stmt : \mathsf{ok}
 \Gamma \vdash stmt_1 : \mathsf{ok} \qquad \Gamma \vdash stmt_2 : \mathsf{ok}
                                                  ------ TS-SEQ
             \Gamma \vdash stmt_1 ; stmt_2 : ok
```

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