



Application of software data dependency detection algorithm in superscalar computer architecture

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↑ ABSTRACT

This paper treats the problem of detection of data hazards in superscalar execution. The algorithm of independent instruction detection is represented. It can be used in out-of-order execution logic and code optimised algorithms. The algorithm uses the platform of Intel Pentium architecture and analyse the IA-32 instruction set. The algorithm is implemented in a software simulator, which represents the way the Intel Pentium Processor works. It can be used in software module, which simulates out-of-order execution logic.

↑ REFERENCES

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Application of Software Data Dependency Detection Algorithm in Superscalar Computer Architecture

Elena Zaharieva-Stoyanova, Lorentz Jäntschi

Abstract: *This paper treats the problem of detection of data hazards in superscalar execution. The algorithm of independent instruction detection is represented. It can be used in out-of-order execution logic and code optimised algorithms. The algorithm uses the platform of Intel Pentium architecture and analyse the IA-32 instruction set. The algorithm is implemented in a software simulator, which represents the way the Intel Pentium Processor works. It can be used in software module, which simulates out-of-order execution logic.*

Key words: *Simulators, RISC architecture, Intel Pentium processor, IA-32 architecture, Data hazards, Data-flow analysis.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Instruction-level parallelism is a frequently used technique in up-to-date processors' architectures. It makes it possible to execute more than one instruction per cycle. Today's processors use more than one pipeline, which means that they have superscalar architecture.

Although the pipeline usage is a feature of RISC processors, this technique is used also in processors with mixed architecture - a mix of RISC and CISC. For example, developing IA-32 architecture, Intel Corporation introduced superscalar technique in the Pentium processor. The first Intel Pentium processor has two 5-stage pipelines. Next comes 3-ways superscalar P6 architecture with 10-stage pipelines [3]. The number of pipeline stages in NetBurst architecture is increased to 20 [1].

Because of the possibility to execute more than one instruction per cycle, the instruction-level parallelism increases the performance highly. On the other hand, an ideal sequence of uniform instructions is rare. The execution of one instruction often depends on the result of the previous instruction's execution. This situation is called **data hazard** [2].

Data hazards make the performance lower. The situation when the next instruction depends on the results of the previous one is occurred very often. It means that these instructions cannot be executed together.

To decrease the influence of data hazards, P6 processor architecture introduced the concept of **dynamic execution**. It makes it possible to get as far as out-of-order execution in a superscalar implementation. Dynamic execution incorporates the concepts **dynamic data flow analysis** and **speculative execution** [6][7].

This paper treats the problem of detection of data hazards in superscalar execution. The algorithms of independent instruction detection are represented. They can be used in out-of-order execution logic and code optimized algorithms. The algorithms use the platform of Intel Pentium architecture and analyze the IA-32 instruction set. The algorithms are implemented in a software simulator, which represents the way the Intel Pentium Processor works.

II. DATA HAZARDS IN SUPERSCALAR ARCHITECTURES

The superscalar architecture makes it possible to execute more than one instruction per cycle. To execute several instructions simultaneously, the instructions have to be arranged in an ideal sequence, and that happens rarely. Every deviation from the ideal sequence of uniform instructions is called **a hazard** [2].

The hazard is situation that prevents the next instruction in the instruction stream from executing during its designated clock cycle. Hazards in pipelines can make it necessary to stall pipelines. They reduce the performance from the ideal speedup gained by pipelining and superscalar execution.

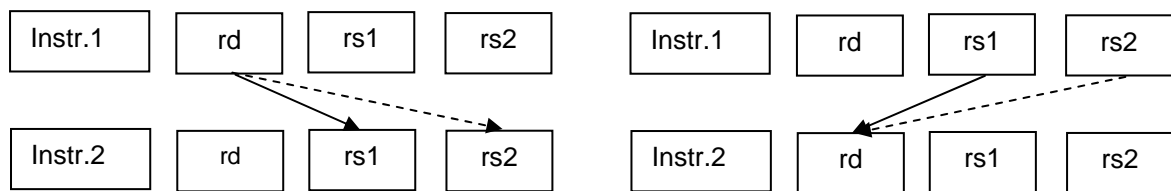
There are three types of hazards: **structural**, **data** and **control** hazards. Structural hazards arise from resource conflicts in the hardware. In these cases, the hardware cannot support some combination of instructions in simultaneous overlapped execution. Data hazards appear when the execution of an instruction depends on the results of previous instruction. Control hazards arise from the pipelining of branches, calls and other instructions that change Program Counter. Control hazards reduce the performance when these types of instructions occur in a program very often.

Structural hazards could be avoided by duplicating hardware resources. To avoid control hazards, the branch prediction technique is used.

Data hazards are more common than the rest. As it was mentioned, they arise because of data interdependency in the instructions' order. Depending on the order of read and writes access in the instruction data hazards may be classified as follows:

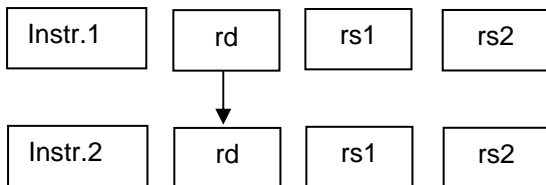
- RAW (read after write);
- WAR (write after read);
- WAW (write after write).

RAW data hazard is the most common type. It arises when the next instruction tries to read a source before the previous instruction writes to it. So, the next instruction gets the old value incorrectly (fig.1a). WAR hazard arises when the next instruction writes to a destination before the previous instruction reads it. In this case, the previous instruction gets a new value incorrectly (fig. 1b). WAW data hazard is situation when the next instruction tries to write to a destination before a previous instruction writes to it and it results in changes done in the wrong order (fig.1c).



(a) RAW data hazard

(b) WAR data hazard



(c) WAW data hazard

Fig. 1. The examples of data hazards

It is difficult to find a solution to the problem with data hazards. One possible solution of this problem is a simple hardware technique called a **forwarding** or **bypass**. This technique works as follows: The ALU result is always fed back to the ALU input latches. If the hardware detects that the next instruction uses the results

from the previous instruction, the control logic selects the forwarded result as the ALU input rather than the value read from the register files.

RAW data hazards result in performance, which is lower than that of one-pipeline architectures. The situation when the next instruction depends on the results of the previous one is encountered very often. It means that these instructions cannot be executed together. For example, the first Intel Pentium has two 5-stage pipelines. If two neighbor instructions are independent they could be decoupled and executed together in U and V pipeline. If there is data dependency in the instructions, the second instruction waits to be decoupled with a next one [8].

As it mentioned, to decrease the influence of data hazards, P6 processor architecture introduced the concept of **dynamic execution**. Dynamic execution incorporates the concepts **dynamic data flow analysis** and **speculative execution** [6][7].

III. SOFTWARE DATA DEPENDENCY DETECTION ALGORITHM

To find data hazards in program execution order, it is necessary to observe neighbour instructions. If they use the same sources and a destination, it is possible to arise some type of data hazards.

The number of the neighbour instruction observed by hazard detection algorithm depends on the pipelines' number. For example, two-way superscalar architecture in Intel Pentium P5 needs to find whether there is dependency between two neighbour instructions [8].

To determine software dependency between two neighbor instructions, it is necessary to detect whether they use the same data operands or not. Instructions use register, memory, or immediate values as data operands. In this paper the RISC architecture features are used.

RISC processors have Load/Store architecture. It means that only two special instructions use a memory operand: Load and Store. Other instructions, like ALU type addition and subtraction, use registers and do not use memory.

RISC instructions use three operands. In this case, the source operands are reusable. The common instruction format is:

Instruction Rd, Rs1, Rs2,

where: Rd is destination; Rs1, Rs2 are sources.

The algorithm keeps the result data in a buffer with size equal to the number of instructions. If there is data dependency between instructions, the corresponding value in the buffer is: 1 for RAW, 2 for WAR, 4 for WAW. Otherwise, the value is 0. The value at the start is 0 because the first instruction is independent.

Each instruction could be described with following information:

- code - instruction code;
- Rd - destination;
- Rs1 - first source;
- Rs2 - second source.

The algorithm for detection of software dependency is given on fig. 2.

A real program would have to verify if there are any identical registers: EAX and AX, for example. This would depend on the particular algorithm implementation. No information about instruction code and addressing mode is needed in most cases. This information is used for full instruction description.

Step 1: Determining of first instruction as undependable.

buffer[0]=0;

for i = (first instruction) to (last instruction – 1)

{ **Step 2: Determine the information for the instruction i: code1, Rd1, Rs11, Rs12**

Step 3: Determine the information for the instruction i+1: code2, Rd2, Rs21, Rs22

Step 4: Determine if there is RAW data hazard:

if ((Rs21==Rd1) or (Rs22==Rd1)) buffer[i]=1;

Step 5: Determine if there is WAR data hazard:

if ((Rs11==Rd2) or (Rs12==Rd2)) buffer[i]=2;

Step 6: Determine if there is WAW data hazard:

if ((Rs11==Rd2) or (Rs12==Rd2)) buffer[i]=4;

}

Fig. 2. Algorithm for detection of software data dependency

IV. APPLICATION OF SOFTWARE DATA DEPENDENCY DETECTION ALGORITHM

The represented algorithm is implemented in software simulator of Intel Pentium architecture.

Simulation is a frequently used technique in computer architecture development. The software simulators could be used as a tool for studying these architectures and optimisation processes. The existing demo programs show these principals just as an overall picture. The reason to create a new simulator is to show the base concepts of the Intel Pentium processors working by means of short assembly programs. This simulator could be used also for source code efficiency evaluation [4][5]. This type of simulator would be very useful in higher-school education to illustrate the pipelining in a superscalar architecture. Moreover, it shows a commonly used real processor as Intel Pentium.

The base structure of Intel Pentium processor simulation model of is given in [5][6]. The Graphics User Interface (GUI) consists of the following forms:

- **Source code window** - it shows the source code in the code segment (.code).
 - **Data window** – it shows the contents of the memory bytes, where the standard data segment (.data) is allocated.
 - **Stack window** – it shows the contents of the memory bytes, where the stack segment (.stack) is allocated.
 - **Registers window** - it shows the contents of general-purpose registers and the flags.
 - **Pipelines window** - this is a graphics representation of the work of the two pipelines for the next 5 -10 cycles.
- Apart from the GUI, the program includes the following modules:
- **Load Source** – it loads source code in the simulator. It also finds syntax errors in the source.
 - **Cycles per Instruction** – it defines the number of the cycles needed for the execution of the current instruction; it also determines the type, the number of the operands, and the address mode.
 - **Coupling of Instructions** - it defines whether two instructions can be coupled and executed simultaneously avoiding data hazard.

• **Branch Prediction** - this program simulates the functioning of branch prediction. If there is a jump, a branch, or a call instruction, branch prediction proceeds to predict if the branch shall be taken or not.

The simulator of IA-32 architecture consists of four base modules. One of them is **Coupling of instructions**. It determines whether two instructions can be coupled and executed together avoiding data hazards. In this paper the algorithm of module **Coupling of instructions** is represented.

Each program instruction gives itself the following information:

- a source operand;
- a destination operand;
- is it a simple instruction or not;
- is it an ALU instruction or not.

The information about instruction code is useless in this case.

According to the decoupling rules, only hardware-executed instructions can be decoupled and executed together. This kind of instructions are: MOV, LEA, PUSH, POP; ALU type instructions like ADD, ADC, SUB, SBB, AND, OR, XOR, NOT.

ALU type instructions need two sources. Intel Pentium has mixed architecture - between RISC and CISC. IA-32 instructions use two data operands, so instructions like ADD use the same operand for destination and first source. That is why it is necessary to know if it is an ALU instruction or not.

This information is described as follows:

```
struct instruction_info
{ char destination[4];
  char source[4];
  unsigned char s_type:1;
  unsigned char alu_type:1;
};
```

If the instruction is hardware-executed, s_type is 1; if the instruction is one of ADD, ADC, SUB, SBB, AND, OR, XOR, NOT, alu_type is 1. *Destination* and *source* are destination/source data or register.

```
struct instruction_info prev, next;
/* prev, next keep information about two neighbors instructions */
int i, n; // n is number of instructions
unsigned char *buffer; // the result buffer
buffer = new char [n];
buffer[0] = 0; // first instruction is independent for (i=1; i<n; i++)
{ /* determining the information for the previous instruction i-1; prev stores this
information */
  /* determining the information for next instruction i; next stores this information */
  if(strcmp(prev.destination,next.source))buffer[i]=1;
  else *(buffer+i) = 0;
  if(((next.alu_type)&&strcmp(prev.destination, next.destination)) buffer[i] = 1;
}
delete [] buffer;
```

Fig. 3. The algorithm of module Coupling of Instructions

The program verifies also if the source and destination registers are identical. For example, registers EAX and AX are identical but the registers AH and AL is not.

This algorithm is realized by a function in the **Coupling of instructions** module, which searches for independent instructions to decouple. It is given on fig.3.

V. CONCLUSION

Instruction-level parallelism makes it possible to execute more than one instruction per cycle. Today's processors use more than one pipeline, which means that they have superscalar architecture.

Instruction-level parallelism increases the performance but an ideal sequence of uniform instructions is rare. The execution of one instruction often depends on the result of the previous instruction's execution. This situation is a data hazard. Data hazards reduce the architecture performance.

This paper treats the problem of detection of data hazards in superscalar execution. The algorithm of independent instruction detection is represented.

The algorithm is implemented in a software simulator, which represents the way the Intel Pentium Processor works. It simulates decoupling of instructions.

Simulating and showing all processes related with Pentium processor working at real-time is too hard task and it is not necessary for the objective of this research. The objective is creation of a simulator, which is able to show the pipelining in a superscalar architecture using a real existing architecture as an example.

To be created a software simulator of Intel Pentium processors' functionality, it is necessary to simulate data flow analysis. In this paper the algorithm of independent instruction detection is represented. The algorithm is implemented in a program module ***Coupling of instruction***, which is a part of software simulator of IA-32 architecture.

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