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# Calling C And C++ From IDL Using Microsoft Visual C++ And Call\_external: Demystifying Creating And Debugging An IDL DLL

Calling C and C++  
from IDL Using Micro-  
soft Visual C++ and  
call\_external

*Demystifying creating  
and debugging  
an IDL DLL*

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## Synopsis

In this book, we will explain the use of Microsoft Visual C++ Express to interface C and C++ code to IDL. Visual C++ Express is available for free to download from Microsoft website. Additionally, we will explain the use of Microsoft Visual C++ Professional to interface C and C++ code with IDL. There are a number of advantages of using Microsoft Visual C++ environment such as 1.You can use C and C++ code. 2.Your code may exist on multiple files.3.Setting Microsoft compiler options is simple. For example, optimizing the code for speed.4.You can interface to other libraries such as STL and OpenCV.5. You can Debug the DLL.In this book, we will use examples to explain calling C and C++ functions from IDL. This book will give you a working knowledge within few minutes and will make understanding this topic much easier. There are some circumstances that you may need IDL to call code written in other programming languages such as C, C++ or FORTRAN. Examples of such circumstances are 1.You need to interface some type of hardware, such as a camera or a stepper motor, to IDL. The driver of this hardware may be written in other programming languages such as C. 2.You have an existing code written in C, C++ or other programming language and you need to call this code from IDL.3.You have an analysis routine in IDL that is just too slow and you would like to write this routine in another programming language to improve its performance.4.You would like to use a library that is callable from another programming language such as STL, ITK and OpenCV. There are a number of methods to interface code written in other programming languages to IDL. For example, you can use SPAWN, call\_external or DLMS. There are advantages and disadvantages of each method. In this book, we will discuss the call\_external method only. The biggest advantage of the call\_external method is its simplicity. Also, the call\_external method is much faster than the DLMS method. In other words, calling a C++ function from IDL using call\_external executes much faster than calling the same function using DLM method. There are a number of examples in IDL that explain how to use the call\_external method. These examples use make\_dll IDL function. There are a number of disadvantages of using the make\_dll function to build a library callable from IDL. Examples of these drawbacks are 1.The make\_dll function can be used for C code only. It is not capable of using C++ code.2.The code compiled using the make\_dll function must be in one file. There are some cases in which your code exists in a number of files.3.Setting a compiler options using make\_dll method is not easy.

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