

questions about VB.NET, and uses in education

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Hi,

Hi, I was looking for your opinion on VB.NET - its long-term prospects, etc. Sorry this is vague, but it's not meant to be a troll. It's a pro-VB.NET post actually.

I haven't used VB or VB.NET really, but I have used Realbasic (a vb clone), Java, C#, C, and Python.

I work in education, and I'd like something that is easy enough for teachers and students to use to develop real, usable applications, not just to learn programming for programming's sake. We used to use Hypercard/Supercard for this kind of stuff, and Realbasic was ok, too, but they are commercial, not cheap, and also lock you in to their environment. Nowadays most in education use Java and flash.

I didn't really consider VB.NET before because it is also proprietary and I didn't want to force teachers or students to have to buy Visual Studio even if there is academic pricing. But now we have the free SharpDevelop IDE as well as Mono's mbas and MonoDevelop IDE for other platforms.

MY QUESTIONS:

But I'm wondering why there seems to be a lot of negative opinions about VB.NET when it is very well designed and much easier to learn and use than even python for example.

And secondly, is there a real waning interest in VB.NET, or is VB.NET's long-term future in any jeopardy? Will VB.NET ever become an open standard like C#? Is Microsoft going to do anything with .NET to compete more with java and flash's features like easier animations, better scientific/numeric libraries, and running in any browser (not just IE)? Avalon seems too limiting.

Thanks for any feedback.

I have a lot of appreciation for the design of VB.NET now.

When I've looked at ways to make other open source languages like python or boo easier for beginners, the ideas turn out to be the same as what VB.NET uses. Things like using "as" for types: "i as String" (seen in

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boo), case-insensitivity, real division ($7/4=1.75$ instead of 1 like in python and C#), WYSIWYG form designer, etc.

So I'm listing some other nice features in the design of VB.NET and then some drawbacks, but I don't see why VB.NET deserves so much heat.

NICE FEATURES OF VB.NET:

- you can use GUI designers and code completion when coding VB in an IDE, including the free SharpDevelop IDE (you have nothing as good as this for python or javascript for example)
- uses just = for both assignment and equivalence tests, instead of = and ==, which can cause errors in other languages.
- use of understandable English keywords like "MustInherit" instead of obtuse keywords like abstract or virtual. Although I'm sure this is a significant drawback when you already have learned java or C#, and the upper-casing of all keywords hurts readability a little I think.
- case-insensitive syntax (unlike C# or python), which definitely helps beginners
- no semi-colons at the end of the line, no curly braces for blocks
- don't have to worry about perfectly indenting everything like in python
- flexible options that let you for example not have to declare every variable first if you don't want to
- the My.Computer stuff added for .NET 2.0
- default values for parameters

DRAWBACKS:

- missing some advanced features that C# has, but many were added for VB.NET in .NET 2.0. It even supports generics.
- sometimes difficult for classic VB programmers to switch to VB.NET since it is quite different with its new OOP java-like features.
- my main reason for not considering VB.NET before was because it wasn't open or free. But now we can use SharpDevelop or Mono's mbas and MonoDevelop, although I believe its vb implementation is behind on .NET 2.0 features.
- The array index thing is a bit strange, like this creates a 5 item array, not 4: Dim names(4) As String
- the popularity of VB and VB.NET seems to be waning. Book sales have dropped a good bit over the past couple of years. People are switching to C# instead of VB.NET I guess. It seems like most every .NET code sample out there is in C# too instead of VB.NET.
- both VB.NET and C# have no type inference. If the compiler were open and flexible we could add this ourselves (see the boo language for .NET for example) as well as other useful new features that may take Microsoft years to add if they add them at all.
- event handling is clunky, "AddHandler MsgArrivedEvent, AddressOf My_MsgArrivedCallback"

GENERAL DRAWBACKS OF .NET FOR EDUCATION

- can't run apps in any browser like java, only IE on Windows
- not as geared to animations and simulations like java and flash are
- Mono hasn't caught on as much yet as hopefully it will

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