CS 3410: RPC Chat System

Introduction

In this assignment, you will write a simple chat server and client. You will use the \texttt{net/rpc} package in the Go standard library to manage communications.

As a user, you will interact with the client. When you start it, you must supply it with your handle and an optional server address:

\texttt{./chatclient alice}

(this connects to localhost:3410). Or

\texttt{./chatclient alice :3411}

(this connects to localhost:3411). Or

\texttt{./chatclient alice krypton.cs.dixie.edu}

(this connects to krypton.cs.dixie.edu:3411). Or

\texttt{./chatclient alice krypton.cs.dixie.edu:3411}

It will connect to the server and register you as a user. In addition, it will get a list of all users currently logged in, and present that list to you:

\begin{verbatim}
Hi alice, connecting to localhost:3410...
List of users currently online:
  jdoe
  bob
  eve
  gary
\end{verbatim}

Then you can type commands. The client understands the following commands:

- \texttt{tell <user> some message}: This sends “some message” to a specific user.
- \texttt{say some other message}: This sends “some other message” to all users.
- \texttt{list}: This lists all users currently logged in.
- \texttt{quit}: This logs you out.
- \texttt{help}: List all of the recognized commands.
- \texttt{shutdown}: This shuts down the server.

In addition to responding to your commands, the client will fetch messages being sent to you and display them on the terminal.

The server

The server sits and waits for incoming RPC requests. It keeps a queue of messages for each user currently logged in, delivering them to the client when the client requests them.

When you start it, you can supply a port number and/or address to listen on, or you can accept the default (port 3410 on all network devices).

\texttt{./chatserver}

or

\texttt{./chatserver -port=3411}
It provides the following functions over RPC to clients:

- **Register**: This message is used when a new client logs in. The request includes a username, and the response is empty. The server should deliver a message that the user has logged in to the queue of everyone else currently logged in.

- **List**: This message is used to gather a list of all users currently logged in. The request has no parameters, and the response is a list of strings, one per user.

- **CheckMessages**: This message gathers all pending messages for a client. The request is a string (the username, as used to register earlier), and the result is a slice of strings. Each message is a string in the list.

- **Tell**: This message sends a message to a specific user. The request is a type containing the following:
  - **User**: A string with the name of the user sending the message.
  - **Target**: A string with the name of the user to send the message to.
  - **Message**: A string.

  The response is empty. If the target user does not exist, the server should deliver a message to the sender (adding it to his/her queue) but should otherwise behave as though it succeeded. The message should be formatted (by the server) as "<Sender> tells you <Message>".

- **Say**: This message sends a message to all users currently logged in. The request is a record:
  - **User**: A string with the name of the user sending the message.
  - **Message**: A string.

  The response is empty. Note that the message should be delivered to all users, including the sender. It should be formatted (by the server) as "<Sender> says <Message>".

- **Logout**: This message logs a user out. All queued messages are discarded, and the queue for that user is destroyed. The request is a username, the response is empty. The server should also deliver a message saying that the user logged out to the queue of every other user currently logged in.

- **Shutdown**: This message shuts the server down. In addition to tracking a message queue for each user, the server object should have a channel. The shutdown handler can put a value in that channel to indicate that the server should shutdown. Then in the main goroutine, wait for a value from the same channel, and return from main normally when a value is found.

The server maintains a queue of messages for every user currently logged in. A user queue is emptied after a CheckMessages transaction when all of the messages have been returned to that user.

**The client**

The client parses the command line and connects to the server with a Register message. It then enters a loop:

- Prompt the user and wait for him/her to type something. Use a buffered reader to get input from the keyboard. See the `bufio` package documentation for an example:
  - `bufio.Scanner`

- Parse the command. If it is a recognized command, form a request and send it to the server. The `strings` package has many useful functions to help with parsing the input.
  - `tell` and `say` send their respective messages to the server and do not print out any additional message to the user.
  - `list` prints out a nicely formatted list of users as reported by the server.
  - `quit` tells the user it is quitting, logs the user out, and quits.
  - `help` displays a list of recognized commands.
  - For an empty line, do not output anything in response to the command.
For an unrecognized command, print an error message and then print the help message.

In addition to the main loop that is handling keyboard input, launch another goroutine to call CheckMessages and display the result to the console. You can do this one of two ways:

1. Have CheckMessages on the server return immediately. The client calls it, displays the results, then sleeps for a second or so (using time.Sleep), then repeats.

2. Have CheckMessages on the server block if there is nothing to return. Only when there is actually a message waiting can it return anything. The client then calls it, reports the result, and immediately calls it again. This is a little trickier, as you will need additional coordination on the server.

**Implementation details**

- Make sure your Go environment is set up correctly. In particular, you should have GOPATH set, and you should be working in a directory somewhere below $GOPATH/src. Be sure to run go fmt once in a while to ensure that your code is well formatted.

- Command-line arguments are supplied as a []string call os.Args. You can use it directly, or you can use the flag package to parse named command-line arguments. See its documentation for details.

- Be careful to check for all of the possible ways that a user can start the client and the server. When joining a hostname with a port, use net.JoinHostPort.

- For an example of how to use the rpc library, see Chapter 13 of “Network Programming with Go”:

  - Chapter 13: Remote Procedure Call

- You should be careful of race conditions in the server. The simplest way to do this is to make sure that only one goroutine at a time can access a queue. There are two simple ways to do this:

  1. Add a sync.Mutex to your server state. Make sure that each RPC handler calls its Lock() method before accessing the rest of the data, and be careful to always call Unlock() when you are done. The easiest way to ensure this is to use defer:

     ```go
     serverstate.mutex.Lock()
     defer serverstate.mutex.Unlock()
     // access the state
     ```

     This will guarantee that Unlock() is called when the function ends.

  2. Put all of the server state in a channel, and have the channel be the object that all of the methods have access to. To access the state, the function must first pull it out of the channel, and then when it is finished with it, it puts it back in the channel. Other goroutines attempting to access it at the same time will block when trying to get it out of the channel.

     To make this work, you must create a channel with a buffer size of 1:

     ```go
     type Server chan *State
     server := Server(make(chan *State, 1))
     ```

     then define all of the RPC functions as methods of the Server type (not the State type).

**What to pass off**

You should demonstrate your programs to me in class. Set up at least four terminal windows: one with a server and three with clients. Be prepared to demonstrate all of the required functionality.