COBOL - OVERVIEW

COBOL is a high-level language. One must understand the way COBOL works. Computers only understand machine code, a binary stream of 0s and 1s. COBOL code must be converted into machine code using a **compiler**. Run the program source through a compiler. The compiler first checks for any syntax errors and then converts it into machine language. The compiler creates a output file which is known as **load module**. This output file contains executable code in the form of 0s and 1s.

Evolution of COBOL

During 1950s, when the businesses were growing in the western part of the world, there was a need to automate various processes for ease of operation and this gave birth to a high-level programming language meant for business data processing.

- In 1959, COBOL was developed by CODASYL *ConferenceonDataSystemsLanguage*.
- The next version, COBOL-61, was released in 1961 with some revisions.
- In 1968, COBOL was approved by ANSI as a standard language for commercial use *COBOL* − 68.
- It was again revised in 1974 and 1985 to develop subsequent versions named COBOL-74 and COBOL-85 respectively.
- In 2002, Object-Oriented COBOL was released, which could use encapsulated objects as a normal part of COBOL programming.

Importance of COBOL

- COBOL was the first widely used high-level programming language. It is an English-like language which is user friendly. All the instructions can be coded in simple English words.
- COBOL is also used as a self-documenting language.
- COBOL can handle huge data processing.
- COBOL is compatible with its previous versions.
- COBOL has effective error messages and so, resolution of bugs is easier.

Features of COBOL

Standard Language

COBOL is a standard language that can be compiled and executed on machines such as IBM AS/400, personal computers, etc.

Business Oriented

COBOL was designed for business-oriented applications related to financial domain, defense domain, etc. It can handle huge volumes of data because of its advanced file handling capabilities.

Robust Language

COBOL is a robust language as its numerous debugging and testing tools are available for almost all computer platforms.

Structured Language

Logical control structures are available in COBOL which makes it easier to read and modify. COBOL has different divisions, so it is easy to debug.