Regular Languages and Expressions

Lecture 2

Thursday, August 31, 2017

Part I

Regular Languages

Regular Languages

A class of simple but useful languages.

The set of regular languages over some alphabet Σ is defined inductively as:

1. $\emptyset$ is a regular language.
2. $\{\epsilon\}$ is a regular language.
3. $\{a\}$ is a regular language for each $a \in \Sigma$. Interpreting a as string of length 1.
4. If L_1, L_2 are regular then $L_1 \cup L_2$ is regular.
5. If L_1, L_2 are regular then $L_1 L_2$ is regular.
6. If L is regular, then $L^* = \cup_{n \geq 0} L^n$ is regular.
   The $\cdot^*$ operator name is **Kleene star**.

Regular languages are closed under the operations of union, concatenation and Kleene star.

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Some simple regular languages

Lemma

If w is a string then $L = \{w\}$ is regular.

Example: $\{aba\}$ or $\{abbabbab\}$. Why?

Lemma

Every finite language L is regular.

Examples: $L = \{a, abaab, aba\}$. $L = \{w \mid |w| \leq 100\}$. Why?

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More Examples

- $\{w \mid w$ is a keyword in Python program$\}$
- $\{w \mid w$ is a valid date of the form mm/dd/yy$\}$
- $\{w \mid w$ describes a valid Roman numeral$\}$
  $\{I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, \ldots\}$.
- $\{w \mid w$ contains "CS374" as a substring$\}$.

Part II

Regular Expressions

Regular Expressions

A way to denote regular languages

- simple patterns to describe related strings
- useful in
  - text search (editors, Unix/grep, emacs)
  - compilers: lexical analysis
  - compact way to represent interesting/useful languages
  - dates back to 50's: Stephen Kleene
    who has a star names after him.

Inductive Definition

A regular expression $\mathbf{r}$ over an alphabet $\mathbf{\Sigma}$ is one of the following:

Base cases:

- $\emptyset$ denotes the language $\emptyset$
- ϵ denotes the language $\{\epsilon\}$.
- $\mathbf{a}$ denote the language $\{a\}$.

Inductive cases: If $\mathbf{r}_1$ and $\mathbf{r}_2$ are regular expressions denoting languages R_1 and R_2 respectively then,

- $(\mathbf{r}_1 + \mathbf{r}_2)$ denotes the language $R_1 \cup R_2$
- $(\mathbf{r}_1\mathbf{r}_2)$ denotes the language R_1R_2
- $(\mathbf{r}_1)^*$ denotes the language R_1^*

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Regular Languages vs Regular Expressions

Regular Languages

$\emptyset$ regular
$\{\epsilon\}$ regular
$\{a\}$ regular for $a \in \Sigma$
$R_1 \cup R_2$ regular if both are
$R_1 R_2$ regular if both are
R^* is regular if R is

Regular Expressions

$\emptyset$ denotes $\emptyset$
ϵ denotes $\{\epsilon\}$
$\mathbf{a}$ denote $\{a\}$
$\mathbf{r}_1 + \mathbf{r}_2$ denotes $R_1 \cup R_2$
$\mathbf{r}_1 \mathbf{r}_2$ denotes $R_1 R_2$
$\mathbf{r}^*$ denote R^*

Regular expressions denote regular languages — they explicitly show the operations that were used to form the language

Notation and Parenthesis

- For a regular expression $\mathbf{r}$, $L(\mathbf{r})$ is the language denoted by $\mathbf{r}$. Multiple regular expressions can denote the same language!
  Example: $(0 + 1)$ and $(1 + 0)$ denote same language $\{0, 1\}$
- Two regular expressions $\mathbf{r}_1$ and $\mathbf{r}_2$ are equivalent if $L(\mathbf{r}_1) = L(\mathbf{r}_2)$.
- Omit parenthesis by adopting precedence order: $*$, concatenate, $+$.
  Example: $r^*s + t = ((r^*)s) + t$
- Omit parenthesis by associativity of each of these operations.
  Example: $rst = (rs)t = r(st)$,
  $r + s + t = r + (s + t) = (r + s) + t$.
- Superscript $+$. For convenience, define $\mathbf{r}^+ = \mathbf{r}\mathbf{r}^*$. Hence if $L(\mathbf{r}) = R$ then $L(\mathbf{r}^+) = R^+$.
- Other notation: $r + s$, $r \cup s$, $r|s$ all denote union. rs is sometimes written as $r \bullet s$.

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Skills

- Given a language L "in mind" (say an English description) we would like to write a regular expression for L (if possible)
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Understanding regular expressions

- $(0+1)^*$: set of all strings over $\{0, 1\}$
- $(0+1)^*001(0+1)^*$: strings with 001 as substring
- $0^* + (0^*10^*10^*10^*)^*$: strings with number of 1's divisible by 3
- $\emptyset 0$: $\{\}$
- $(\epsilon + 1)(01)^*(\epsilon + 0)$: alternating 0s and 1s. Alternatively, no two consecutive 0s and no two consecutive 1s
- $(\epsilon + 0)(1 + 10)^*$: strings without two consecutive 0s.

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Creating regular expressions

- bitstrings with the pattern **001** or the pattern **100** occurring as a substring
  one answer: $(0+1)^*001(0+1)^* + (0+1)^*100(0+1)^*$
- bitstrings with an even number of **1**'s
  one answer: $0^* + (0^*10^*10^*)^*$
- bitstrings with an odd number of **1**'s
  one answer: 0^*1r where r is solution to previous part
- bitstrings that do *not* contain **011** as a substring
- Hard: bitstrings with an odd number of 1s *and* an odd number of 0s.

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Bit strings with odd number of 0s and 1s

The regular expression is

$$(00 + 11)^*(01 + 10)$$
$$\Big(00 + 11 + (01 + 10)(00 + 11)^*(01 + 10)\Big)^*$$

(Solved using techniques to be presented in the following lectures...)

Regular expression identities

- $r^*r^* = r^*$ meaning for any regular expression r, $L(r^*r^*) = L(r^*)$
- $(r^*)^* = r^*$
- $rr^* = r^*r$
- $(rs)^*r = r(sr)^*$
- $(r+s)^* = (r^*s^*)^* = (r^*+s^*)^* = (r+s^*)^* = \ldots$

Question: How does on prove an identity?
By induction. On what? Length of r since r is a string obtained from specific inductive rules.

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A non-regular language and other closure properties

Consider $L = \{0^n 1^n \mid n \geq 0\} = \{\epsilon, 01, 0011, 000111, \ldots\}$.

Theorem

L is **not** *a regular language.*

How do we prove it?

Other questions:

- Suppose R_1 is regular and R_2 is regular. Is $R_1 \cap R_2$ regular?
- Suppose R_1 is regular is $\bar{R}_1$ (complement of R_1) regular?

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A non-regular language and other closure properties

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