CMSC 330: Organization of Programming Languages

Regular Expressions and Finite Automata
How do regular expressions work?

- What we’ve learned
  - What regular expressions are
  - What they can express, and cannot
  - Programming with them

- What’s next: how they work
  - A great computer science result
Languages and Machines
A Few Questions About REs

- How are REs implemented?
  - Implementing a one-off RE is not so hard
    - How to do it in general?

- What are the basic components of REs?
  - Can implement some features in terms of others
    - E.g., $e^+$ is the same as $ee^*$

- What does a regular expression represent?
  - Just a set of strings
    - This observation provides insight on how we go about our implementation

- ... next comes the math!
Definition: Alphabet

- An **alphabet** is a finite set of symbols
  - Usually denoted $\Sigma$

- Example alphabets:
  - Binary: $\Sigma = \{0, 1\}$
  - Decimal: $\Sigma = \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9\}$
  - Alphanumeric: $\Sigma = \{0-9, a-z, A-Z\}$
Definition: String

- A string is a finite sequence of symbols from $\Sigma$
  - $\varepsilon$ is the empty string ("") in Ruby
  - $|s|$ is the length of string $s$
    - $|\text{Hello}| = 5$, $|\varepsilon| = 0$
  - Note
    - $\emptyset$ is the empty set (with 0 elements)
    - $\emptyset \neq \{ \varepsilon \} \neq \varepsilon$

- Example strings over alphabet $\Sigma = \{0, 1\}$ (binary):
  - 0101
  - 0101110
  - $\varepsilon$
Definition: String concatenation

- **String concatenation** is indicated by juxtaposition
  
  \[ s_1 = \text{super} \]
  \[ s_2 = \text{hero} \]

  - Sometimes also written \( s_1 \cdot s_2 \)

- For any string \( s \), we have \( s \varepsilon = \varepsilon s = s \)
  
  - You can concatenate strings from different alphabets; then the new alphabet is the union of the originals:
    
    - If \( s_1 = \text{super} \) from \( \Sigma_1 = \{s,u,p,e,r\} \) and \( s_2 = \text{hero} \) from \( \Sigma_2 = \{h,e,r,o\} \), then \( s_1 s_2 = \text{superhero} \) from \( \Sigma_3 = \{e,h,o,p,r,s,u\} \)
Definition: Language

- A **language** $L$ is a set of strings over an alphabet

- Example: All strings of length 1 or 2 over alphabet $\Sigma = \{a, b, c\}$ that begin with $a$
  - $L = \{ a, aa, ab, ac \}$

- Example: All strings over $\Sigma = \{a, b\}$
  - $L = \{ \varepsilon, a, b, aa, bb, ab, ba, aaa, bba, aba, baa, \ldots \}$
  - Language of all strings written $\Sigma^*$

- Example: All strings of length 0 over alphabet $\Sigma$
  - $L = \{ s \mid s \in \Sigma^* \text{ and } |s| = 0 \}$
    - “the set of strings $s$ such that $s$ is from $\Sigma^*$ and has length 0”
    - $= \{ \varepsilon \} \neq \emptyset$
Definition: Language (cont.)

Example: The set of phone numbers over the alphabet \( \Sigma = \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, (, ), -\} \)
- Give an example element of this language: \( (123) 456-7890 \)
- Are all strings over the alphabet in the language? No
- Is there a Ruby regular expression for this language?
  \( /\(\d{3,3}\)\)\d{3,3}-\d{4,4}/ \)

Example: The set of all valid Ruby programs
- Later we’ll see how we can specify this language
- (Regular expressions are useful, but not sufficient)
Operations on Languages

Let $\Sigma$ be an alphabet and let $L$, $L_1$, $L_2$ be languages over $\Sigma$

- **Concatenation** $L_1L_2$ is defined as
  - $L_1L_2 = \{ xy \mid x \in L_1 \text{ and } y \in L_2 \}$

- **Union** is defined as
  - $L_1 \cup L_2 = \{ x \mid x \in L_1 \text{ or } x \in L_2 \}$

- **Kleene closure** is defined as
  - $L^* = \{ x \mid x = \epsilon \text{ or } x \in L \text{ or } x \in LL \text{ or } x \in LLL \text{ or } \ldots \}$
Quiz 1: Which string is not in $L_3$

$L_1 = \{a, \text{ab}, c, d, \varepsilon\}$ where $\Sigma = \{a,b,c,d\}$
$L_2 = \{d\}$
$L_3 = L_1 \cup L_2$

A. a
B. abd
C. $\varepsilon$
D. d
Quiz 1: Which string is not in \( L_3 \)

\[
L_1 = \{a, \, ab, \, c, \, d, \, \varepsilon\} \quad \text{where} \quad \Sigma = \{a, b, c, d\}
\]

\[
L_2 = \{d\}
\]

\[
L_3 = L_1 \cup L_2
\]

A. a
B. abd
C. \( \varepsilon \)
D. d
Quiz 2: Which string is not in $L_3$

$L_1 = \{a, ab, c, d, \varepsilon\}$ where $\Sigma = \{a, b, c, d\}$

$L_2 = \{d\}$

$L_3 = L_1L_2^*$

A. a
B. abd
C. adad
D. abdd
Quiz 2: Which string is not in $L_3$

$L_1 = \{a, ab, c, d, \varepsilon\}$ where $\Sigma = \{a,b,c,d\}$
$L_2 = \{d\}$
$L_3 = L_1 L_2^*$

A. a  
B. abd  
C. adad  
D. abdd
Similarly to how we expressed Micro-OCaml we can define a grammar for regular expressions $R$

$R ::= \emptyset$  
The empty language

| $\varepsilon$ | The empty string |
| $\sigma$ | A symbol from alphabet $\Sigma$ |
| $R_1 R_2$ | The concatenation of two regexps |
| $R_1 | R_2$ | The union of two regexps |
| $R^*$ | The Kleene closure of a regexp |
Regular Languages

- Regular expressions denote languages. These are the regular languages
  - *aka* regular sets
- Not all languages are regular
  - Examples (without proof):
    - The set of palindromes over $\Sigma$
    - $\{a^n b^n \mid n > 0 \}$ (a $^n$ = sequence of n a’s)
- Almost all programming languages are not regular
  - But aspects of them sometimes are (e.g., identifiers)
  - Regular expressions are commonly used in parsing tools
Given an alphabet $\Sigma$, the regular expressions over $\Sigma$ are defined inductively as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>regular expression</th>
<th>denotes language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\emptyset$</td>
<td>$\emptyset$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\epsilon$</td>
<td>${\epsilon}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each symbol $\sigma \in \Sigma$</td>
<td>${\sigma}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Constants**
Semantics: Regular Expressions (2)

Let $A$ and $B$ be regular expressions denoting languages $L_A$ and $L_B$, respectively. Then:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>regular expression</th>
<th>denotes language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$AB$</td>
<td>$L_A L_B$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A</td>
<td>B$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A^*$</td>
<td>$L_A^*$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Operations

- There are no other regular expressions over $\Sigma$
Terminology etc.

- Regexps apply operations to symbols
  - Generates a set of strings (i.e., a language)
    - (Formal definition shortly)
  - Examples
    - $a \rightarrow \{a\}$
    - $a|b \rightarrow \{a\} \cup \{b\} = \{a, b\}$
    - $a^* \rightarrow \{\varepsilon\} \cup \{a\} \cup \{aa\} \cup \ldots = \{\varepsilon, a, aa, \ldots \}$

- If $s \in$ language $L$ generated by a RE $r$, we say that $r$ accepts, describes, or recognizes string $s$
Precedence

Order in which operators are applied is:

- Kleene closure $* >$ concatenation $> union |$
- $ab|c = (a b) | c \rightarrow \{ab, c\}$
- $ab^* = a (b^*) \rightarrow \{a, ab, abb \ldots\}$
- $a|b^* = a | (b^*) \rightarrow \{a, \varepsilon, b, bb, bbb \ldots\}$

We use parentheses $( )$ to clarify

- E.g., $a(b|c), (ab)^*, (a|b)^*$
- Using escaped $\backslash(\text{if parens are in the alphabet}$
Ruby Regular Expressions

Almost all of the features we’ve seen for Ruby REs can be reduced to this formal definition

- `/Ruby/` – concatenation of single-symbol REs
- `/(Ruby|Regular)/` – union
- `/(Ruby)/` – Kleene closure
- `/(Ruby)+/` – same as `(Ruby)(Ruby)*`
- `/(Ruby)?/` – same as `(ε|(Ruby))` (// is ε)
- `/[a-z]/` – same as `(a|b|c|...|z)`
- `/[^0-9]/` – same as `(a|b|c|...)` for `a,b,c,... ∈ Σ - {0..9}`
- `^, $` – correspond to extra symbols in alphabet
Implementing Regular Expressions

- We can implement a regular expression by turning it into a finite automaton
  - A “machine” for recognizing a regular language
Finite Automaton

Elements
- States $S$ (start, final)
- Alphabet $\Sigma$
- Transition edges $\delta$
Finite Automaton

- Machine starts in start or initial state
- Repeat until the end of the string \( s \) is reached
  - Scan the next symbol \( \sigma \in \Sigma \) of the string \( s \)
  - Take transition edge labeled with \( \sigma \)
- String \( s \) is accepted if automaton is in final state when end of string \( s \) is reached
Finite Automaton: States

- **Start state**
  - State with incoming transition from no other state
  - Can have only one start state

- **Final states**
  - States with double circle
  - Can have zero or more final states
  - Any state, including the start state, can be final
Finite Automaton: Example 1

0 0 1 0 1 1

Accepted?
Yes
Finite Automaton: Example 2

0 0 1 0 1 0

Accepted?
No
Quiz 3: What Language is This?

A. All strings over \( \{0, 1\} \)
B. All strings over \( \{1\} \)
C. All strings over \( \{0, 1\} \) of length 1
D. All strings over \( \{0, 1\} \) that end in 1
Quiz 3: What Language is This?

A. All strings over \{0, 1\}
B. All strings over \{1\}
C. All strings over \{0, 1\} of length 1
D. All strings over \{0, 1\} that end in 1

regular expression for this language is (0|1)*1
Finite Automaton: Example 3

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)
Finite Automaton: Example 3

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>string</th>
<th>state at end</th>
<th>accepts</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aabcc</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finite Automaton: Example 3

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

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<td>acca</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
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Finite Automaton: Example 3

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

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<tr>
<td>acca</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quiz 4: Which string is not accepted?

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)

A. bcca
B. abbabc
C. ccc
D. ε
Quiz 4: Which string is **not** accepted?

- A. bcca
- B. abbbc
- C. ccc
- D. $\varepsilon$

(a,b,c notation shorthand for three self loops)
Finite Automaton: Example 3

What language does this FA accept?

a*b*c*

S3 is a dead state – a nonfinal state with no transition to another state.
Language?

$a^*b^*c^*$ again, so FAs are not unique
Dead State: Shorthand Notation

- If a transition is omitted, assume it goes to a dead state that is not shown.

Language?
- Strings over \{0,1,2,3\} with alternating even and odd digits, beginning with odd digit.
Finite Automaton: Example 5

Description for each state

- **S0** = “Haven't seen anything yet” OR “Last symbol seen was a b”
- **S1** = “Last symbol seen was an a”
- **S2** = “Last two symbols seen were ab”
- **S3** = “Last three symbols seen were abb”
Finite Automaton: Example 5

Language as a regular expression?
- \((a|b)^*abb\)
Over $\Sigma=\{a,b\}$, this FA accepts only:

A. A string that contains a single $a$.
B. Any string in $\{a,b\}$.
C. A string that starts with $b$ followed by $a$’s.
D. Zero or more $b$’s, followed by one or more $a$’s.
Quiz 5

Over $\Sigma=\{a,b\}$, this FA accepts only:

A. A string that contains a single a.
B. Any string in $\{a,b\}$.
C. A string that starts with b followed by a’s.
D. Zero or more b’s, followed by one or more a’s.
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0, 1\}$

- That accepts strings containing two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s
- That accepts strings with an odd number of 1s
- That accepts strings containing an even number of 0s and any number of 1s
- That accepts strings containing an odd number of 0s and odd number of 1s
- That accepts strings that DO NOT contain odd number of 0s and an odd number of 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings with an odd number of 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

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Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

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Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

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Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings containing two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings containing two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0, 1\}$

- That accepts strings end with two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0, 1\}$

- That accepts strings end with two consecutive 0s followed by two consecutive 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings containing an **odd** number of 0s and **odd** number of 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings containing an odd number of 0s and odd number of 1s

4 states:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0s</th>
<th>1s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
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</table>
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings that DO NOT contain odd number of 0s and an odd number of 1s
Exercises: Define an FA over $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$

- That accepts strings that **DO NOT** contain odd number of 0s and an odd number of 1s

Flip each state