| GTI | |
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| Descriptive Complexity | |
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| Spring 2018 | |
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| Descriptive Complexity | |
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| Words as Structures | |

Existential SOL

Classical Complexity
So far, we have used time complexity (sometimes in conjunction with
nondeterminism and randomness) to get results on the complexity of certain
computational problems.
Running time (or really: number of logical steps) is a very natural notion, but
it annoyingly depends on details of the underlying computational model.
Turing machines, register machines, random access machines,
unities machines, register machines, lowboard Gödel emotions

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while programs, recursive functions, Herbrand-Gödel equations, λ -calculus, combinatory logic, Markov algorithms, Post systems

The Zoo

| -r.e. complete | Ari | thmetic Hierarchy | FO(N) | 1 | r.e. complete | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------|------------------|--|
| Halt co-r.e. | $FO\forall(N)$ | | r.e. | FOH(N) | Hait | |
| | | Recursive | | | | |
| | | Primitive Recurs | ive | | | |
| | | SO(LFP) | $SO[2^{n^{O(1)}}]$ | E | XPTIME | |
| QSAT PSPACE complete | | | | | | |
| $\operatorname{FO}[2^{n^{O(1)}}]$ | FO(PFP) | SO(TC) | $\mathrm{SO}[n^{O(1)}]$ | 1 | PSPACE | |
| co-NP complete | | PTIME Hierarchy | SO | ~ | NP complete | |
| SAT CO-N | P SO∀ | >> | NP | SOE | SAT | |
| | | NP ∩ co-NP | | | | |
| $FO[n^{O(1)}]$ | $\overline{}$ | Horn- | omplete | | Р | |
| FO(LFP) | SO(Horn) | SAT | | | | |
| $\operatorname{FO}[(\log n)^{O(1)}]$ | | "truly | | | NC | |
| $\operatorname{FO}[\log n]$ | | feasible" | 1 | | AC^1 | |
| FO(CFL) | | / | 1 | | \mathbf{sAC}^1 | |
| FO(TC) | SO(Krom) | 2SAT NL comp. | 1 | | NL | |
| FO(DTC) | 1 | 2COLOR L com | P. | | L | |
| FO(REGULAR) |) <i>[</i>] | | / | | NC^1 | |
| | | | | | | |
| FO(COUNT) | 1 | | <u>\</u> | | ThC ⁰ | |

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Robustness

Truly interesting concepts always have multiple definitions and are fairly robust under minor changes. If there are no alternative approaches, then we are probably dealing with an artifact.

For example, computability admits at least a dozen substantially different definitions.

One might wonder whether complexity classes like $\mathbb P$ or $\mathbb N\mathbb P$ admit some radically different definition that does not just come down to counting steps in some model of computation. In other words: find an alternative way to define these classes that does not depend on accidents of beancounting.

Logic to the Rescue

One way to separate oneself from vexing definitional details of machine models is to recast everything in terms of ${\rm logic}.$

The main idea is the following: measure the complexity of a problem by the complexity of the logic that is necessary to express it. In other words, write down a careful description of your problem in a as weak a formal system as you can manage, and declare the complexity of the problem to be the complexity of that system.

This is in stark contrast to the standard approach where everything is coded up in Peano arithmetic or Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory (typically using first-order logic): these are both sledge hammers, very convenient and powerful, but not subtle.



Typical Examples 8 propositional logic • equational logic • first-order logic higher-order logic These are all hugely important. Note, though, that higher-order logic tends to drift off into set-theory land: quantifying over sets and functions is a radical step that introduces a host of difficulties. Nowadays, first-order logic is the general workhorse in math and ToC. Aside: Bad Syntax 9 Q(y)P(x,y)Q(x)Lb $\mathfrak{a}_{\mathsf{T}} Q(\mathfrak{a})$



Example: Propositional Logic

 \Rightarrow

Negation is unary, all the others a binary.

A "structure" here is just an assignment of truth values to variables, an $\ensuremath{\mathsf{assignment}}$ or valuation

conditional (implies)

 $\sigma:\mathsf{Var}\to\mathbf{2}$

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Recall: Levin-Cook11We have seen that an accepting computation of a polynomial time Turing
machine M can be translated into a question of whether a certain Boolean
formula Φ_M has a satisfying truth assignment.The trick is to use lot and lots of Boolean variables to code up the whole
computation.One might wonder whether a more expressive logic would produce other
interesting arguments along these lines: translate a machine into an
"equivalent" formula.We'll do this for finite state machines, and then again for Turing machines.



FO Structures

Definition

A (first order) structure is a set together with a collection of functions and relations on that set. The signature of a first order structure is the list of arities of its functions and relations.

In order to interpret a formula we need something like

 $\mathcal{A} = \langle A; f_1, f_2, \dots, R_1, R_2, \dots \rangle$

The set A is the carrier set of the structure. We have $f_i: A^{n_i} \to A$ and $R_i \subseteq A^{m_i}$.

Abstract Data Types 14 Note that a first order structure is not all that different from a data type. To wit, we are dealing with a • collection of objects, • collection of objects, • operations on these objects, and • relations on these objects. In the case where the carrier set is finite (actually, finite and small) we can in fact represent the whole FO structure by a suitable data structure (for example, explicit lookup tables). For infinite carrier sets, things are a bit more complicated. Data types (or rather, their values) are manipulated in programs, we are here interested in describing properties of structures using the machinery of FOL.

Descriptive Complexity
Words as Structures
Existential SOL

| Words as Structures | 16 |
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| We code everything as words over some alphabet. | |
| Wild Idea: Can we think of a single word as a structure? | |
| And, of course, use logic to describe the properties of the word/structure? | |
| This may seem a bit weird, but bear with me. First, we need to fix an appropriate language for our logic. | |
| As always, we want at least propositional logic: logical not, or and, and so forth. | |
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| ariables and Atomic Formulae | 17 |
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| We will have variables x, y, z, \ldots that range over positions in a word, integers | |
| in the range 1 through n where n is the length of the word. | |
| | |
| We allow the following basic predicates between variables: | |
| x < y $x = y$ | |
| Of course, we can get, say, $x \geq y$ by Boolean operations. | |
| | |
| Most importantly, we write | |
| $Q_a(x)$ | |
| for "there is a letter a in position x ." | |
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| First-Order | 18 |
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| We allow quantification for position variables. | |
| $\exists x \varphi \forall x \varphi$ | |
| | |
| For example, the formula | |
| $\exists x, y (x < y \land Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y))$ | |
| intuitively means "somewhere there is an \boldsymbol{a} and somewhere, to the right of it, there is a $\boldsymbol{b}."$ | |
| The formula | |
| $\forall x, y \left(Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y) \Rightarrow x < y \right)$ | |
| intuitively means "all the a 's come before all the b 's." | |
| | |
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| | |



Examples 20 $aaacbbb \models \forall x (Q_a(x) \lor Q_b(x) \lor Q_c(x))$ $aaabbb \models \exists x, y (x < y \land Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y))$ $bbbaaa \not\models \exists x, y (x < y \land Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y))$ $aaabbb \models \exists x, y (x < y \land \neg \exists z (x < z \land z < y) \land Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y))$ $aaacbbb \not\models \exists x, y (x < y \land \neg \exists z (x < z \land z < y) \land Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y))$ $aaacbbb \not\models \exists x (Q_c(x) \Rightarrow \forall y (x < y \Rightarrow Q_b(y)))$



Factors and Subwords

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Example

In first-order logic, we can hardwire factors. For example, to obtain a factor $abc\,$ let

$$\varphi \equiv \exists x, y, z (y = x + 1 \land z = y + 1 \land Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y) \land Q_c(z))$$

Then $w \models \varphi$ iff $w \in \Sigma^* abc \Sigma^*$.

You might object to the use of ``y=x+1" which is not part of our language. No worries, it's just an abbreviation:

 $y = x + 1 \iff x < y \land \forall z (x < z \Rightarrow y \le z)$

This is quite typical: one defines a small language that is easy to handle, and then boosts usability by adding abbreviations.

More

Example

Instead of factors we can similarly get (scattered) subwords by dropping the adjacency condition for the positions:

 $\varphi \equiv \exists x, y, z \left(x < y \land y < z \land Q_a(x) \land Q_b(y) \land Q_c(z) \right)$

Then $w \models \varphi$ iff $w \in \Sigma^* a \Sigma^* b \Sigma^* c \Sigma^*$.

You might feel that this is a complicated formula for a simple concepts, but note that the analogous formula φ_u for a subword u has length |u| and is trivial to construct.



Some Stars

Example

We can split a word into two parts as in

 $\varphi \equiv \exists \, x \, \forall \, y \, ((y \le x \Rightarrow Q_a(y)) \land (y > x \Rightarrow Q_b(y))) \lor \forall \, x \, (Q_b(x))$

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Then $w \models \varphi$ iff $w \in a^*b^*$.

Example

Let first(x) be shorthand for $\forall z \ (x \leq z)$, and $\mathsf{last}(x)$ shorthand for $\forall z \ (x \geq z)$. Then $\varphi \equiv \exists x, y \ (\mathsf{first}(x) \land Q_a(x) \land \mathsf{last}(y) \land Q_b(y))$

Then $w \models \varphi$ iff $w \in a\Sigma^{\star}b$.









Example: Well-Order

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Again assume a total order \leq . We can express the assertion that we have a well-order in terms of the least-element principle: every non-empty set has a least element.

$$\forall X \left(\exists z X(z) \Rightarrow \\ \exists x \left(X(x) \land \forall z \left(X(z) \Rightarrow x \le z \right) \right) \right)$$

This is the critical property of the natural numbers with the standard order, and cannot be expressed in FOL.

Lastly, consider a digraph, a single binary edge relation E. We can express the assertion that there is a path from s to t as follows:

$$\forall X \left(X(s) \land \forall x, y \left(X(x) \land E(x, y) \Rightarrow X(y) \right) \Rightarrow X(t) \right)$$

Again, FOL is not strong enough to express path existence in general (and thus other concepts like connectivity).

| MSO for Words | 32 |
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| | |
| We allow second-order variables X, Y, Z, \ldots that range over sets of positions in a word. | |
| $\exists X \varphi \forall X \varphi X(x)$ | |
| | |
| Sets of positions are all there is; we do not have variables in our language for, say, binary relations on positions (we do not use full SOL). | |
| | |
| This system is called monadic second-order logic (with less-than), written MSO[<]. | |
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| Loss Than or Suscessor | 22 |

Less-Than or Successor 33 In applications, the atomic relation x < y is slightly more useful than y = x + 1, but either one would have the same expressiveness. We have already seen $y = x + 1 \iff x < y \land \forall z (x < z \Rightarrow y \le z)$ On the other hand write closed(X) for the formula $\forall z (X(z) \Rightarrow X(z + 1))$. Then $x < y \iff x \neq y \land \forall X (X(x) \land closed(X) \Rightarrow X(y))$ This is sometimes written as MSO[<] = MSO[+1].

Counting

Suppose we want at least three a's.

$$\exists x, y, z \ (x < y < z \land Q_a(x) \land Q_a(y) \land Q_a(z))$$

And at most three a's.

 $\exists x, y, z \,\forall u \, (Q_a(u) \Rightarrow u = x \lor u = y \lor u = z)$

Exactly three is now obtained by conjunction, much easier than a product operation on finite state machines.

Even/Even

Example

Write even(X) to mean that X has even cardinality and consider

 $\varphi \equiv \exists X \left(\forall x \left(Q_a(x) \iff X(x) \right) \land \mathsf{even}(X) \right)$

Then $w \models \varphi$ iff the number of a's in w is even.

We're cheating, of course; we need to show that the predicate ${\rm even}(X)$ is definable in our setting. This is tedious but not really hard:

 $\mathsf{even}(X) \iff \exists Y, Z \left(X = Y \cup Z \land \emptyset = Y \cap Z \land \mathsf{alt}(Y, Z) \right)$

Here $\operatorname{alt}(Y,Z)$ is supposed to express that the elements of Y and Z strictly alternate as in

 $y_1 < z_1 < y_2 < z_2 < \ldots < y_k < z_k$

Missing Pieces

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$$\begin{split} X &= Y \cup Z \iff \forall u \left(X(u) \Leftrightarrow Y(u) \lor Z(u) \right) \\ \emptyset &= Y \cap Z \iff \neg \exists u \left(Y(u) \land Z(u) \right) \\ \mathsf{alt}(Y,Z) \iff \exists y \in Y \forall x < y \left(\neg Z(x) \right) \land \\ &\exists z \in Z \forall x > z \left(\neg Y(x) \right) \land \\ &\forall y \in Y \exists z \in Z \left(y < z \land \forall x \left(y < x < z \Rightarrow \neg Y(x) \land \neg Z(x) \right) \right) \\ &\forall z \in Z \exists y \in Y \left(y < z \land \forall x \left(y < x < z \Rightarrow \neg Y(x) \land \neg Z(x) \right) \right) \end{split}$$

Exercise

The alt formula above does not handle the case where Y and Z are empty; fix this.

Show that one can check if the number of a's is a multiple of k, for any fixed k.

The Link

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Definition

A language L is ${\rm MSO}[<]$ definable (or simply ${\rm MSO}[<])$ if there is some sentence φ such that

$$L = \mathcal{L}(\varphi) = \{ w \in \Sigma^* \mid w \models \varphi \}.$$

Our examples suggest the following theorem that connects complexity with definability: $\label{eq:constraint}$

Theorem (Buechi 1960, Elgot 1961)

A language is regular if, and only if, it is MSO[<] definable.

Formula to Regular (Sketch)
Obviously, the proof comes in two parts:
For every regular language L we need to construct a sentence φ such that L = L(φ).
For every sentence φ we have to show that the language L(φ) is regular.
We should expect part (1) to be harder since there is no good inductive structure to exploit.
Part (2) is by straightforward induction on φ, but there is the usual technical twist: we need to deal not just with sentences but also with free variables. Since we don't have a formal semantics we will not give details of this construction.

Regular to Formula (Sketch) 39 We may safely assume that the regular language \boldsymbol{L} is given by a DFA $M = \langle Q, \Sigma, \delta; q_0, F \rangle.$ For simplicity assume Q = [n] and $q_0 = 1$. We have to construct a formula φ such that $w \models \varphi$ iff M accepts w. Consider a trace of M on input w $q_0 w_1 q_1 w_2 q_2 \ldots q_{m-1} w_m q_m.$ Here m can be arbitrarily large. We can think of states as being associated with the letters of the word as in $w_1 \quad w_2 \quad w_3 \quad \dots \quad w_m$ q_0 q_1 $q_2 \quad q_3 \quad \dots \quad q_m$ Thus, position $x=1,\ldots,m\,$ in the word is associated with state $\delta(q_0, w_1 \dots w_x).$

The Partition

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In order to express this in a MSO[<] formula, we partition the set of positions [m] into n=|Q| blocks $X_1,\,X_2,\,\ldots,\,X_n$ such that

 $X_p(x) \iff \delta(q_0, w_1 \dots w_x) = p$

Some of these blocks may be empty, but note that the number of blocks is always exactly n (which we can express as a formula).

But given state p in position x we can determine the state in position x+1 given w_{x+1} by a table lookup – which table lookup can be hardwired in a formula.

<text><text><text><equation-block><text><text><text><section-header><text>

Now consider the big conjunction of $\Phi_{p,a}$ where $p \in Q$ and $a \in \Sigma$. Add formulae that pin down the first and last state to arrive at a formula of the form $\varphi \equiv \exists X_1, \ldots, X_n \Psi$ where Ψ is first-order as indicated above.

And First-Order?

Inquisitive minds will want to know what happened to plain first-order logic? It must correspond to some subset of regular, but is there any meaningful characterization of the languages definable by FO formulae?

A language $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$ is star-free iff it can be generated from \emptyset and the singletons $\{a\}$, $a \in \Sigma$, using only operations union, concatenation and complement (but not Kleene star).

Note well: $a^{\star}b^{\star}a^{\star}$ is star-free.

Theorem

A language $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$ is FOL[<] definable if, and only if, L is star-free.

Descriptive Complexity
Words as Structures
Existential SOL



Quoi?

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We will write existential SOL as \exists SO.

 $\exists SO \text{ means we are considering formulae of the kind}$

 $\exists X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_k \varphi$

where φ is first-order: there are no second-order quantifiers other than the existential ones up front.

But now the X_i need not be monadic, in particular we will be allowed to quantify over k-ary relations: $\exists \ X^k \ \ldots$ for any $k \geq 1.$

 \exists SO over Arbitrary Structures

So far, we have focused on word structures, but it is not hard to generalize to other combinatorial objects such as ugraphs: we need a binary predicate ${\cal E}$ for edges.

3-Colorability of a ugraph is easily expressed as a $\exists SO$ formula:

$$\begin{split} \exists X, Y, Z \left(\forall \, u \, (X(u) \lor Y(u) \lor Z(u)) \land \forall \, u, v \, (E(u,v) \Rightarrow \\ \neg (X(u) \land X(v)) \land \neg (Y(u) \land Y(v)) \land \neg (Z(u) \land Z(v))) \right) \end{split}$$

Note that this is just the ordinary definition of 3-colorability, written in a formal notation. There is nothing mysterious going on.

Similar descriptions exist for all our \mathbb{NP} problems.

And Backwards?

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Suppose we have a formula

$$\psi = \exists X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k \varphi$$

where φ is first-order.

To check whether φ holds we can guess the subsets X_i of the carrier set A, and then verify in polynomial time that φ holds. More precisely, if X_i has arity k we need to guess a subset of A^k , so we are still within polynomial time. The first-order quantifiers in φ are not a problem either: each just corresponds to a loop over some finite set.

So testing a \exists SO formula for validity over some structure is in \mathbb{NP} .

$\mathbb{NP}\text{-Hardness}$ of $\exists \mathrm{SO}$

The Computation

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Suppose \mathfrak{M} is some verifier. We want to express the computation of \mathfrak{M} on some input x, given some witness w.

For simplicity assume that the running time of \mathfrak{M} on an input of size n is $N = n^k - 1$: this allows us to think of both time and space as being written in k-digit base n numbers.

We can write a configuration in a computation as a word in

 $\Gamma^{\star} (\Gamma \times Q) \Gamma^{\star}$

of length N where Γ is the tape alphabet of $\mathfrak M$ and Q the state set. So the whole computation C of $\mathfrak M$ is a $N\times N$ table of letters in Γ , augmented in one place per row by a state.

In an accepting computation C, the first and the last row look like

 $\stackrel{q_0}{{}_{\scriptstyle \circ}} x_1 \dots x_n \ _ \ w_1 \dots w_m \ _ \dots _$

 q_Y

Here x is the input, and w the corresponding witness.

Since we are dealing with existential sentences, the witness part comes for free: given input x, we can always write something like

 $\exists W \Phi(\boldsymbol{x}, W, \ldots)$

We'll just pretend w is part of the input.

 q_0 a b c \vdots 0 1 0 1 \vdots \vdots : <t

Coding a Computation

Recall that time will be expressed as a k-tuple $t = t_0, t_1, \ldots, t_{n-1}$ of elements in the carrier set $\{0, 1, \ldots, n-1\}$; ditto for space.

Let $\gamma = |\Gamma \times Q \cup Q|$.

We use $2k\text{-}\mathrm{ary}$ predicates $X_g\text{, }1\leq g\leq \gamma\text{,}$ with the intent that

$$X_g(\boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}) \iff C(\boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}) = g$$

We have for example

 $\forall \, \boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t} \, \exists \, g \, X_g(\boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}) \land \forall \, \boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}, g, g' \left(X_g(\boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}) \land X_{g'}(\boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}) \Rightarrow g = g' \right)$

Row to Row

We need to make sure that the entries in the table change only according to the rules of the Turing machine: for the most part, row k is copied to row k+1, but close to the position of the $\Gamma\times Q$ symbol there may be changes.

In essence, we need express the transition function of ${\mathfrak M}$ as a formula using assertions such as

$$X_g(\boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}) \wedge X_{g'}(\boldsymbol{s}+1, \boldsymbol{t}) \Rightarrow X_h(\boldsymbol{s}, \boldsymbol{t}+1) \wedge X_{h'}(\boldsymbol{s}+1, \boldsymbol{t}+1)$$

In English, this is something like

If at time t and in position s there is a symbol a and the head is positioned at s and the state is p, then, at time t+1, in position s there is symbol a' and the head has moved one to the right, and is looking at the same symbol that was in position s+1 at time t.

Whole Formula

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In the end, the formula will look somewhat like

 $\exists W, X_1, \ldots, X_{\gamma} \exists u \forall v \ldots \Phi(W, X_1, \ldots, X_{\gamma}, u, v, \ldots)$

and this formula will be valid iff the verifier ${\mathfrak M}$ accepts x together with some suitable witness w.

The formula is messy, but it is easy to construct given ${\mathfrak M}$ and x.

Hence we can translate any problem in \mathbb{NP} into a corresponding $\exists SO$ formula.



 Polynomial Hierarchy
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 The collection of all these problems is known as the polynomial hierarchy and seems to contain problem much harder than just NP.
 For example, the question of whether a circuit has an equivalent circuit using at most k gates is Σ₂^p.

 Alas, we do not know whether PH is a proper hierarchy.
 But this much we do know:

 • PH corresponds to SOL.
 • PSPACE corresponds to SOL plus a transitive closure operator.