NFA determinization

Data Structures and Algorithms for Computational Linguistics III
(ISCL-BA-07)

Çağrı Çöltekin
ccoltekin@sfs.uni-tuebingen.de

University of Tübingen
Seminar für Sprachwissenschaft

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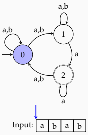
Recap

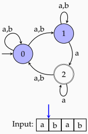
- Finite state automata come in two flavors
  - Deterministic (DFA): linear recognition time
  - Deterministic (NFA): sometimes more intuitive, easy to define, but exponential time (worst case) recognition
- The DFA and NFA are equivalent: for any language recognized by an NFA there is also a DFA recognizing the same language
- Then, the question is: how can we *determinize* an NFA to obtain an equivalent DFA

NFA recognition (again)



1. Start at q_0
2. Take the next input, mark all possible next states, repeat
3. If an accepting state is marked at the end of the input, accept

NFA recognition (again)



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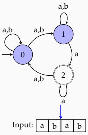

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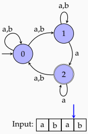

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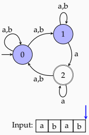

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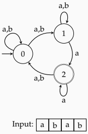

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The process is *deterministic*, and *finite-state*.

Determinization

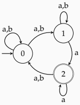
the subset construction

Intuition: remember the parallel NFA recognition. We can consider an NFA being a deterministic machine which is at a set of states at any given time.

- *Subset construction* (sometimes called power set construction) uses this intuition to convert an NFA to a DFA
- The algorithm can be modified to handle ϵ-transitions (or we can eliminate ϵ's as a preprocessing step)

The subset construction

by example



transition table with subsets

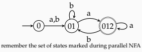
	symbol a	b
∅	∅	∅
→ {0}	{0, 1}	{0, 1}
{1}	{1, 2}	{1}
* {2}	{0, 2}	{0}
{0, 1}	{0, 1, 2}	{0, 1}
* {0, 2}	{0, 1, 2}	{0, 1}
* {1, 2}	{0, 1, 2}	{0, 1}
* {0, 1, 2}	{0, 1, 2}	{0, 1}

The subset construction

by example: the resulting DFA

transition table without useless/inaccessible states

	symbol a	b
→ {0}	{0, 1}	{0, 1}
{0, 1}	{0, 1, 2}	{0, 1}
* {0, 1, 2}	{0, 1, 2}	{0, 1}

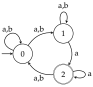


Do you remember the set of states marked during parallel NFA recognition?

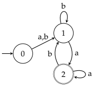
The subset construction

by example: side by side

NFA



DFA

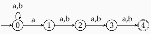


- What language do they recognize?

The subset construction

wrapping up

- In worst case, resulting DFA has 2^n nodes
- Worst case is rather rare, number of nodes in an NFA and the converted DFA are often similar
- In practice, we do not need to enumerate all 2^n subsets
- We've already seen a typical problematic case:

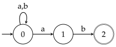


- We can also skip the unreachable states during subset construction

Yet another exercise

Determinize the following automaton

NFA:



Summary

- FSA are efficient tools with many applications
- FSA have two flavors: DFA, NFA (or maybe three: ε-NFA)
- DFA recognition is linear, recognition with NFA may require exponential time
- Reading suggestion: **hopcroft1979**, **jurafsky2009**

Next:

- Minimization

Acknowledgments, credits, references