Büchi’s Logical Characterisation of Regular Languages

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Outline

1. First-Order Logic of \((\mathbb{N}, <)\)

2. The logic MSO\((A)\)

3. Proof of Büchi’s theorem
Background

- Büchi’s motivation: Decision procedure for deciding truth of first-order logic statements about natural numbers and their ordering. Eg.

\[ \forall x \exists y (x < y). \]

- Used finite-state automata to give decision procedure.

- By-product: a logical characterisation of regular languages.

Theorem (Büchi 1960)

\[ L \text{ is regular iff } L \text{ can be described in Monadic-Second Order Logic.} \]
First-Order logic of \((\mathbb{N}, <)\).

- Interpreted over \(\mathbb{N} = \{0, 1, 2, 3, \ldots\}\).
- What you can say:

  \[ x < y, \ \exists x \varphi, \ \forall x \varphi, \ \neg, \land, \lor. \]

- Examples:
  1. \(\forall x \exists y(x < y)\).
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- What you can say:

\[ x < y, \quad \exists x \varphi, \quad \forall x \varphi, \quad \neg, \land, \lor. \]

- Examples:
  1. \(\forall x \exists y(x < y)\).
  2. \(\forall x \exists y(y < x)\).

Question: Is there an algorithm to decide if a given FO\((\mathbb{N}, <)\) sentence is true or not?
First-Order logic of $(\mathbb{N}, <)$.

- Interpreted over $\mathbb{N} = \{0, 1, 2, 3, \ldots\}$.
- What you can say:
  
  $$x < y, \quad \exists x \varphi, \quad \forall x \varphi, \quad \neg, \land, \lor.$$

- Examples:
  
  1. $\forall x \exists y (x < y)$.
  2. $\forall x \exists y (y < x)$.
  3. $\exists x (\forall y (y \leq x))$.
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  4. \(\forall x \forall y ((x < y) \implies \exists z (x < z < y))\).
First-Order logic of \((\mathbb{N}, <)\).

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  4. \(\forall x \forall y ((x < y) \implies \exists z (x < z < y))\).

- Question: Is there an **algorithm** to decide if a given \(\text{FO}(\mathbb{N}, <)\) sentence is true or not?
Monadic Second-Order logic over alphabet $A$: $\text{MSO}(A)$

- Interpreted over a string $w \in A^*$.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
& a & a & b & a & b & a & b & b \\
0 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\
\end{array}
\]

- Domain is set of positions in $w$: $\{0, 1, 2, \ldots, |w| - 1\}$.
- $<$ is interpreted as usual $< \text{ over numbers}$.

What we can say in the logic:

- $Q_a(x)$: "Position $x$ is labelled $a$".
- $x < y$: "Position $x$ is strictly less than position $y$".
- $\exists x \varphi$: "There exists a position $x$ ..."
- $\forall x \varphi$: "For all positions $x$ ..."
- $\exists X \varphi$: "There exists a set of positions $X$ ..."
- $\forall X \varphi$: "For all sets of positions $X$ ..."
- $x \in X$: "Position $x$ belongs to the set of positions $X$".
What language do the sentences below define?

1. $\exists x (\neg \exists y (y < x) \land Q_a(x))$.
2. $\exists y (\neg \exists x (y < x) \land Q_b(y))$.
3. $\exists x \exists y \exists z (\text{succ}(x, y) \land \text{succ}(y, z) \land \text{last}(z) \land (Q_b(x)))$.

Give sentences that describe the following languages:

1. Every $a$ is immediately followed by a $b$.
2. Strings of odd length.
MSO sentence for strings of odd length

Language $L \subseteq \{a, b\}^*$ of strings of odd length.

$$\exists X_e \exists X_o (\exists x (x \in X_e) \land (\forall x ((x \in X_e \implies \neg x \in X_o) \land (x \in X_o \implies \neg x \in X_e)) \land (x \in X_e \lor x \in X_o) \land (\text{zero}(x) \implies x \in X_e) \land (\forall y ((x \in X_e \land \text{succ}(x, y)) \implies y \in X_o)) \land (\forall y ((x \in X_o \land \text{succ}(x, y)) \implies y \in X_e)) \land (\text{last}(x) \implies x \in X_e))).$$
A First-Order Logic usually has a **signature** comprising the constants, and function/relation symbols. Eg. \((0, <, +)\).

**Terms** are expressions built out of the constants and variables and function symbols. Eg. \(0, x + y, (x + y) + 0\). They are interpreted as elements of the domain of interpretation.

**Atomic formulas** are obtained using the relation symbols on terms of the logic. Eg. \(x < y, x = 0 + y, x + y < 0\).

**Formulas** are obtained from atomic formulas using boolean operators, and existential quantification \((\exists x)\) and universal quantification \((\forall x)\). Eg. \(\neg(x < y), (x < 0) \land (x = y), \exists x(\forall y(x < y) \land (z < x))\).

Given a “structure” (i.e. a domain, a concrete interpretation for each constant and function/relation symbol) and an assignment for variables to values in the domain) to interpret the formulas in, each formula is either true or false.

A formula is called a **sentence** if it has no free (unquantified)
Second-Order Logic

- In **Second-Order** logic, one allows quantification over relations over the domain (not just elements of the domain). Eg. \( \exists R(R(x, y) \implies x < y) \).

- In **Monadic** second-order logic, one allows quantification over monadic relations (i.e. relations of arity one, or subsets of the domain). Eg. \( \exists X(x \in X \implies 0 < x) \).
Formal Semantics of MSO

- An interpretation for the logic will be a pair \((w, \Pi)\) where \(w \in A^*\) and \(\Pi\) is an assignment of individual variables to a position in \(w\), and set variables to a set of positions of \(w\).

\[\Pi : Var \rightarrow pos(w) \cup 2^{pos(w)}\]

- \(\Pi[i/x]\) denotes the assignment which maps \(x\) to \(i\) and agrees with \(\Pi\) on all other individual and set variables.

- Similarly for \(\Pi[S/X]\).
The satisfaction relation $w, \Pi \models \varphi$ is given by:

- $w, \Pi \models Q_a(x)$ iff $w(\Pi(x)) = a$
- $w, \Pi \models x < y$ iff $\Pi(x) < \Pi(y)$
- $w, \Pi \models x \in X$ iff $\Pi(x) \in \Pi(X)$
- $w, \Pi \models \neg \varphi$ iff $w, \Pi \not\models \varphi$
- $w, \Pi \models \varphi \lor \varphi'$ iff $w, \Pi \models \varphi$ or $w, \Pi \models \varphi'$
- $w, \Pi \models \exists x \varphi$ iff exists $i \in \text{pos}(w)$ s.t. $w, \Pi[i/x] \models \varphi$
- $w, \Pi \models \exists X \varphi$ iff exists $S \subseteq \text{pos}(w)$ s.t. $w, \Pi[S/X] \models \varphi$
Languages definable by MSO

- We say $L \subseteq A^*$ is definable in $\text{MSO}(A)$ if there is a sentence $\varphi$ in $\text{MSO}(A)$ such that $L(\varphi) = L$.

**Theorem (Büchi 1960)**

$L \subseteq A^*$ is regular iff $L$ is definable in $\text{MSO}(A)$. 
First-Order Logic of $\langle \mathbb{N}, <\rangle$

The logic MSO($A$)

Proof of Büchi’s theorem

From automata to MSO sentence

Let $L \subseteq A^*$ be regular. Let $A = (Q, s, \delta, F)$ be a DFA for $L$.

To show $L$ is definable in MSO($A$).

Idea: Construct a sentence $\varphi_A$ describing an accepting run of $A$ on a given word.

That is: $\varphi_A$ is true over a given word $w$ precisely when $A$ has an accepting run on $w$.

Let $Q = \{q_1, \ldots, q_n\}$, with $q_1 = s$.

Define $\varphi_A$ as

$$\exists X_1 \cdots \exists X_n (\forall x (\exists a \in A, i,j \in \{1,\ldots,n\}, \delta(q_i,a) = q_j (((x \in X_i \land Q_a(x) \land \neg last(x)) \implies \exists y (\text{succ}(x,y) \land y \in X_j)))) \land$$

$$\land_i \neq j (x \in X_i \implies \neg x \in X_j) \land \lor_i \ x \in X_i) \land$$

$$\neg \text{zero}(x) \implies x \in X_1) \land$$

$$(\lor_i (\text{last}(x) \implies \lor_{a \in A, \delta(q_i,a) \in F} (Q_a(x) \land x \in X_i))))).$$
Example

Consider language $L \subseteq \{a, b\}^*$ of strings of even length.

DFA $\mathcal{A}$ for $L$:

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<tr>
<th>a</th>
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<th>b</th>
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$\varphi \mathcal{A}$:

$$\exists X_e \exists X_o (\forall x ( (x \in X_e \implies \neg x \in X_o) \land (x \in X_o \implies \neg x \in X_e) \land (x \in X_e \lor x \in X_o) \land (\text{zero}(x) \implies x \in X_e) \land ((x \in X_e \land Q_a(x) \land \neg \text{last}(x)) \implies \exists y (\text{succ}(x, y) \land y \in X_o)) \land ((x \in X_e \land Q_b(x) \land \neg \text{last}(x)) \implies \exists y (\text{succ}(x, y) \land y \in X_e)) \land ((x \in X_o \land Q_a(x) \land \neg \text{last}(x)) \implies \exists y (\text{succ}(x, y) \land y \in X_e)) \land ((x \in X_o \land Q_b(x) \land \neg \text{last}(x)) \implies \exists y (\text{succ}(x, y) \land y \in X_e)) \land (\text{last}(x) \implies ((Q_a(x) \land x \in X_o) \lor (Q_b(x) \land \neg x \in X_o))))).$$
From MSO sentence to automaton

- Idea: Inductively describe the language of extended models of a given MSO formula $\varphi$ by an automaton $A_\varphi$.
- Extended models wrt set of first-order and second-order variables $T = \{x_1, \ldots, x_m, X_1, \ldots, X_n\}$: $(w, I)$
- Can be represented as a word over $A \times \{0, 1\}^{m+n}$.

For example above extended word satisfies the formula $Q_a(x_1) \land (x_2 \in X_1)$. 

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Inductive construction of $\mathcal{A}_\varphi^T$.

- If $\varphi$ is a formula whose free variables are in $T$, then we have the notion of whether $w' \models \varphi$ based on whether the $(w, I)$ encoded by $w'$ satisfies $\varphi$ or not.
- Let the set of valid extended words wrt $T$ be $valid^T(A)$.
- We can define an automaton $\mathcal{A}_{val}^T$ which accepts this set.
- Claim: with every formula $\varphi$ in $\text{MSO}(A)$, and any finite set of variables $T$ containing at least the free variables of $\varphi$, we can construct an automaton $\mathcal{A}_\varphi^T$ which accepts the language $L_T(\varphi)$.
- Proof: by induction on structure of $\varphi$.

$Q_a(x), \ x < y, \ x \in Y, \ \neg \varphi, \ \varphi \lor \psi, \ \exists x \varphi, \ \exists X \varphi.$
Interpreted over $\mathbb{N} = \{0, 1, 2, 3, \ldots\}$.

What you can say:

$x < y, \: \exists x \varphi, \forall x \varphi, \: \neg, \land, \lor$.

Examples:

1. $\forall x \exists y (x < y)$.
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Question: Is there an algorithm to decide if a given FO$(\mathbb{N}, <)$ sentence is true or not?
Büchi’s decision procedure for $\text{MSO}(\mathbb{N}, <)$

- Büchi considered finite automata over infinite strings (so called $\omega$-automata).
- An infinite word is accepted if there is a run of the automaton on it that visits a final state infinitely often.
- Büchi showed that $\omega$-automata have similar properties to classical automata: are closed under boolean operations, projection, and can be effectively checked for emptiness.
- MSO characterisation works similarly for $\omega$-automata as well.
- Given a sentence $\varphi$ in $\text{MSO}(\mathbb{N}, <)$ we can now view it as an $\text{MSO}(\{a\})$ sentence.
- Construct an $\omega$-automaton $A_\varphi$ that accepts precisely the words that satisfy $\varphi$.
- Check if $L(A_\varphi)$ is non-empty.
- If non-empty say “Yes, $\varphi$ is true”, else say “No, it is not true.”
We saw another characterisation of the class of regular languages, this time via logic:

**Theorem (Büchi 1960)**

\[ L \subseteq A^* \text{ is regular iff } L \text{ is definable in } \text{MSO}(A). \]

We saw an application of automata theory to solve a decision procedure in logic:

**Theorem (Büchi 1960)**

*The Monadic Second-Order (MSO) logic of \((\mathbb{N}, <)\) is decidable.*