

Chapter 5

Myhill-Nerode

The last characterization of regular languages that we consider is given by the Myhill-Nerode theorem.

5.1 Definition

The following definitions (taken from [12]) will lead us to the statement of the Myhill-Nerode theorem.

Let \equiv be an equivalence relation on Σ^* . Let L be a language over Σ .

Definition 5.1.1. The **equivalence class** of $u \in \Sigma^*$ w.r.t. \equiv is the set of all v such that $u \equiv v$. It is denoted by $[u]_{\equiv}$.

Definition 5.1.2.

(i) \equiv is **right congruent** if and only if for all $u, v \in \Sigma^*$ and $a \in \Sigma$,

$$u \equiv v \Rightarrow u \cdot a \equiv v \cdot a.$$

(ii) \equiv **refines** L if and only if for all $u, v \in \Sigma^*$,

$$u \equiv v \Rightarrow (u \in L \iff v \in L).$$

(iii) \equiv is of **finite index** if and only if it has finitely many equivalence classes, i.e.

$$\{[u]_{\equiv} \mid u \in \Sigma^*\} \text{ is finite}$$

Definition 5.1.3. A relation is Myhill-Nerode if and only if it satisfies properties (i), (ii) and (iii).

Fix everything below this line

Definition 5.1.4. *Given a language L , the coarsest Myhill-Nerode relation \equiv_L is the Myhill-Nerode relation that subsumes every other Myhill-Nerode relation, i.e.*

$$\forall u, v. u \equiv v \Rightarrow u \equiv_L v.$$

Listing 5.1: Myhill-Nerode relation

Definition $MN\ w1\ w2 := \text{forall } w3, w1++w3 \setminus \text{in } L == (w2++w3 \setminus \text{in } L).$

Theorem 5.1.1. *Myhill-Nerode Theorem. A language L is regular if and only if \equiv_L is of finite index.*

5.2 Finite Partitionings and Equivalence Classes

CoQ does not have quotient types. We pair up functions and proofs of certain properties to emulate quotient types.

A finite partitioning is a function from Σ^* to some finite type F . We use this concept to model equivalent classes in CoQ. A finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation is a finite partitioning f that also respects the Myhill-Nerode relation, i.e.,

$$\forall u, v \in \Sigma^*. f(u) = f(v) \Leftrightarrow u \equiv_L v.$$

Listing 5.2: Finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation

Definition $MN_rel\ (f: \text{Fin_eq_cls}) := \text{forall } w1\ w2, f\ w1 == f\ w2 \Leftrightarrow MN\ w1\ w2.$

Theorem 5.2.1. *\equiv_L is of finite index if and only if there exists a finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation.*

Proof. If \equiv_L is of finite index, we use the set equivalence classes as a finite type and construct f such that

$$\forall w. f(w) = [w]_{\equiv}.$$

f is a finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation by definition.

Conversely, if we have a finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation, we can easily see that \equiv_L must be of finite index since f 's values directly correspond to equivalence classes. The image of f is finite. Therefore, \equiv_L is of finite index. \square

A more general concept is that of a refining finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation:

$$\forall u, v \in \Sigma^*. f(u) = f(v) \Rightarrow u \equiv_L v.$$

Listing 5.3: Refining finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation

Definition $\text{MN_ref}(f: \text{Fin_eq_cls}) := \text{forall } w1\ w2, f\ w1 == f\ w2 \rightarrow \text{MN } w1\ w2.$

We require all partitionings to be surjective. Therefore, every equivalence class x has at least one class representative which we denote $cr(x)$. Mathematically, this is not a restriction since there are no empty equivalence classes. In our constructive setting we would have to give a procedure that builds a minimal finite type F' from F and a corresponding function f' from Σ^* to F' such that f' is surjective and extensionally equal to f .

5.3 Minimizing Equivalence Classes

We will prove that refining finite partitionings can be converted into finite partitionings. For this purpose, we employ the table-filling algorithm to find indistinguishable states under the Myhill-Nerode relation ([9]). However, we do not rely on an automaton. In fact, we use the finite type F , i.e., the equivalence classes, instead of states.

Given a refining finite partitioning f , we construct a fixed-point algorithm. The algorithm initially outputs the set of equivalence classes that are distinguishable by the inclusion of their class representative in L . We denote this initial set $dist_0$.

$$dist_0 := \{(x, y) \in F \times F \mid cr(x) \in L \Leftrightarrow cr(y) \notin L\}.$$

To find more distinguishable equivalence classes, we have to identify equivalence classes that lead to distinguishable equivalence classes.

Definition 5.3.1. *We say that a pair of equivalence classes (x, y) **transitions** to (x', y') with a if and only if*

$$f(cr(x) \cdot a) = x' \wedge f(cr(y) \cdot a) = y'.$$

We denote (x', y') by $ext_a(x, y)$.

The fixed-point algorithm tries to extend the set of distinguishable equivalence classes by looking for a so-far undistinguishable pair of equivalence classes that transitions to a pair of distinguishable equivalence classes.

Definition 5.3.2.

$$\text{unnamed}(\text{dist}) := \text{dist}_0 \cup \text{dist} \cup \{(x, y) \mid \exists a. \text{ext}_a(x, y) \in \text{dist}\}$$

Lemma 5.3.1. *unnamed is monotone and has a fixed-point.*

Proof. Monotonicity follows directly from the monotonicity of \cup . The number of sets in $F \times F$ is finite. Therefore, *unnamed* has a fixed point. □

Let **distinct** be the fixed point of *unnamed*. Let **equiv** be the complement of *distinct*. □

 Finish
construc-
tion

Theorem 5.3.1. *f_{min} is a finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation on L .*

 Add for-
maliza-
tion

5.4 Finite Automata and Myhill-Nerode

We prove theorem 5.1.1 by proving it equivalent to the existence of an automaton that accepts L .

5.4.1 Finite Automata to Myhill-Nerode

Given DFA A , for all words w we define $f(w)$ to be the last state of the run of w on A .

Lemma 5.4.1. *f is a refining finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation on $\mathcal{L}(A)$.*

Proof. The set of states of A is finite. For all u, v and w we have that if $f(u) = f(v) = x$, i.e., the runs of u and v on A end in the exact same state x . From this, we get that for all w , runs of $u \cdot w$ and $v \cdot w$ on A also end in the same state. Therefore, $u \cdot w \in \mathcal{L}(A)$ if and only if $v \cdot w \in \mathcal{L}(A)$. □

Theorem 5.4.1. *If L is accepted by DFA A , then there exists a finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation on L .*

Proof. From lemma 5.4.1 we get a refining finite partitioning f of the Myhill-Nerode relation on $\mathcal{L}(A)$. Since L is accepted by A , $L = \mathcal{L}(A)$. Therefore, f is a refining finite partitioning of the Myhill-Nerode relation on L . By theorem 5.3.1 there also exists a finite partition of the Myhill-Nerode relation on L . □

5.4.2 Myhill-Nerode to Finite Automata