

Languages and Algorithms for Artificial Intelligence (Module 3)

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1 Introduction

Computational task Description of a problem.

Computational task

Computational process Algorithm to solve a task.

Computational
process

Algorithm (informal) A finite description of elementary and deterministic computation steps.

1.1 Notations

Set of the first n natural numbers Given $n \in \mathbb{N}$, we have that $[n] = \{1, \dots, n\}$.

1.1.1 Strings

Alphabet Finite set of symbols.

Alphabet

String Finite, ordered, and possibly empty tuple of elements of an alphabet.

String

The empty string is denoted as ε .

Strings of given length Given an alphabet S and $n \in \mathbb{N}$, we denote with S^n the set of all the strings over S of length n .

Kleene star Given an alphabet S , we denote with $S^* = \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} S^n$ the set of all the strings over S .

Kleene star

Language Given an alphabet S , a language \mathcal{L} is a subset of S^* .

Language

1.1.2 Tasks encoding

Encoding Given a set A , any element $x \in A$ can be encoded into a string of the language $\{0, 1\}^*$. The encoding of x is denoted as $\lfloor x \rfloor$ or simply x .

Encoding

Task function Given two countable sets A and B representing the domain, a task can be represented as a function $f : A \rightarrow B$.

Task

When not stated, A and B are implicitly encoded into $\{0, 1\}^*$.

Characteristic function Boolean function of form $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$.

Characteristic
function

Given a characteristic function f , the language $\mathcal{L}_f = \{x \in \{0, 1\}^* \mid f(x) = 1\}$ can be defined.

Decision problem Given a language \mathcal{M} , a decision problem is the task of computing a boolean function f able to determine if a string belongs to \mathcal{M} (i.e. $\mathcal{L}_f = \mathcal{M}$).

Decision problem

1.1.3 Asymptotic notation

Big O A function $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ is $O(g)$ if g is an upper bound of f .

Big O

$$f \in O(g) \iff \exists \bar{n} \in \mathbb{N} \text{ such that } \forall n > \bar{n}, \exists c \in \mathbb{R}^+ : f(n) \leq c \cdot g(n)$$

Big Omega A function $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ is $\Omega(g)$ if g is a lower bound of f .

Big Omega

$$f \in \Omega(g) \iff \exists \bar{n} \in \mathbb{N} \text{ such that } \forall n > \bar{n}, \exists c \in \mathbb{R}^+ : f(n) \geq c \cdot g(n)$$

Big Theta A function $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ is $\Theta(g)$ if g is both an upper and lower bound of f .

Big Theta

$$f \in \Theta(g) \iff f \in O(g) \text{ and } f \in \Omega(g)$$

2 Turing Machine

2.1 k -tape Turing Machine

Tape Infinite one-directional line of cells. Each cell can hold a symbol from a finite alphabet Γ . Tape

Tape head A tape head reads or writes one symbol at a time and can move left or right on the tape.

Input tape Read-only tape where the input will be loaded.

Work tape Read-write auxiliary tape used during computation.

Output tape Read-write tape that will contain the output of the computation.

Remark. Sometimes the output tape is not necessary and the final state of the computation can be used to determine a boolean outcome.

Instructions Given a finite set of states Q , at each step, a machine can: Instructions

Read from the k tape heads.

Replace the symbols under the writable tape heads, or leave them unchanged.

Change state.

Move each of the k tape heads to the left or right, or leave unchanged.

k -tape Turing Machine (TM) A Turing Machine working on k tapes (one of which is the input tape) is a triple (Γ, Q, δ) : k -tape Turing Machine (TM)

- Γ is a finite set of tape symbols. We assume that it contains a blank symbol (\square), a start symbol (\triangleright), and the digits 0, 1.
- Q is a finite set of states. The initial state is q_{init} and the final state is q_{halt} .
- δ is the transition function that describes the instructions allowed at each step. It is defined as:

$$\delta : Q \times \Gamma^k \rightarrow Q \times \Gamma^{k-1} \times \{\text{L}, \text{S}, \text{R}\}^k$$

By convention, when the state is q_{halt} , the machine is stuck (i.e. it cannot change state or operate on the tapes):

$$\delta(q_{\text{halt}}, \{\sigma_1, \dots, \sigma_k\}) = (q_{\text{halt}}, \{\sigma_1, \dots, \sigma_k\}, (\text{S}, \dots, \text{S}))$$

Theorem 2.1.1 (Turing Machine equivalence). The following computational models have, with at most a polynomial overhead, the same expressive power: 1-tape TMs, k -tape TMs, non-deterministic TMs, random access machines, λ -calculus, unlimited register machines, programming languages (Böhm-Jacopini theorem), ...

2.2 Computation

Configuration Given a TM $\mathcal{M} = (\Gamma, Q, \delta)$, a configuration C is described by:

Configuration

- The current state q .
- The content of the tapes.
- The position of the tape heads.

Initial configuration Given the input $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$, the initial configuration \mathcal{I}_x is described as follows:

- The current state is q_{init} .
- The first (input) tape contains $\triangleright x \square \dots$. The other tapes contain $\triangleright \square \dots$.
- The tape heads are positioned on the first symbol of each tape.

Final configuration Given an output $y \in \{0, 1\}^*$, the final configuration is described as follows:

- The current state is q_{halt} .
- The output tape contains $\triangleright y \square \dots$.

Computation (string) Given a TM $\mathcal{M} = (\Gamma, Q, \delta)$, \mathcal{M} returns $y \in \{0, 1\}^*$ on input $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$ (i.e. $\mathcal{M}(x) = y$) in t steps if:

Computation
(string)

$$\mathcal{I}_x \xrightarrow{\delta} C_1 \xrightarrow{\delta} \dots \xrightarrow{\delta} C_t$$

where C_t is a final configuration for y .

Computation (function) Given a TM $\mathcal{M} = (\Gamma, Q, \delta)$ and a function $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^*$, \mathcal{M} computes f iff:

Computation
(function)

$$\forall x \in \{0, 1\}^* : \mathcal{M}(x) = f(x)$$

If this holds, f is a computable function.

Computation in time T Given a TM \mathcal{M} and the functions $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^*$ and $T : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$, \mathcal{M} computes f in time T iff:

Computation in time
 T

$$\forall x \in \{0, 1\}^* : \mathcal{M}(x) \text{ returns } f(x) \text{ in at most } T(|x|) \text{ steps}$$

Decidability in time T Given a function $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$, the language \mathcal{L}_f is decidable in time T iff f is computable in time T .

Decidability in time
 T

2.3 Universal Turing Machine

Turing Machine encoding Given a TM $\mathcal{M} = (\Gamma, Q, \delta)$, the entire machine can be described by δ through tuples of form:

$$Q \times \Gamma^k \times Q \times \Gamma^{k-1} \times \{L, S, R\}^k$$

It is therefore possible to encode δ into a binary string and consequently create an encoding $\sqcup \mathcal{M} \sqcup$ of \mathcal{M} .

The encoding should satisfy the following conditions:

1. For every $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$, there exists a TM \mathcal{M} such that $x = \sqcup \mathcal{M} \sqcup$.

2. Every TM is represented by an infinite number of strings. One of them is the canonical representation.

Theorem 2.3.1 (Universal Turing Machine (UTM)). There exists a TM \mathcal{U} such that, for every binary strings x and α , it emulates the TM defined by α on input x :

Universal Turing Machine (UTM)

$$\mathcal{U}(x, \alpha) = \mathcal{M}_\alpha(x)$$

where \mathcal{M}_α is the TM defined by α .

Moreover, \mathcal{U} simulates \mathcal{M}_α with at most $CT \log(T)$ time overhead, where C only depends on \mathcal{M}_α .

2.4 Computability

2.4.1 Undecidable functions

Theorem 2.4.1 (Existence of uncomputable functions). There exists a function $uc : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^*$ that is not computable by any TM.

Uncomputable functions

Proof. Consider the following function:

$$uc(\alpha) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } \mathcal{M}_\alpha(\alpha) = 1 \\ 1 & \text{if } \mathcal{M}_\alpha(\alpha) \neq 1 \end{cases}$$

If uc was computable, there would be a TM \mathcal{M} that computes it (i.e. $\forall \alpha \in \{0, 1\}^* : \mathcal{M}(\alpha) = uc(\alpha)$). This will result in a contradiction:

$$uc(\perp \mathcal{M} \perp) = 0 \iff \mathcal{M}(\perp \mathcal{M} \perp) = 1 \iff uc(\perp \mathcal{M} \perp) = 1$$

Therefore, uc cannot be computed. □

Halting problem Given an encoded TM α and a string x , the halting problem aims to determine if \mathcal{M}_α terminates on input x . In other words:

Halting problem

$$\text{halt}(\perp(\alpha, x) \perp) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \mathcal{M}_\alpha \text{ stops on input } x \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Theorem 2.4.2. The halting problem is undecidable.

Proof. Note: this proof is slightly different from the traditional proof of the halting problem.

Assume that **halt** is decidable. Therefore, there exists a TM $\mathcal{M}_{\text{halt}}$ that decides it.

We can define a new TM \mathcal{M}_{uc} that uses $\mathcal{M}_{\text{halt}}$ such that:

$$\mathcal{M}_{uc}(\alpha) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \mathcal{M}_{\text{halt}}(\alpha, \alpha) = 0 \text{ (i.e. } \mathcal{M}_\alpha(\alpha) \text{ diverges)} \\ \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } \mathcal{M}_\alpha(\alpha) = 1 \\ 1 & \text{if } \mathcal{M}_\alpha(\alpha) \neq 1 \end{cases} & \text{if } \mathcal{M}_{\text{halt}}(\alpha, \alpha) = 1 \text{ (i.e. } \mathcal{M}_\alpha(\alpha) \text{ converges)} \end{cases}$$

This results in a contradiction:

- $\mathcal{M}_{uc}(\perp \mathcal{M}_{uc} \perp) = 1 \iff \mathcal{M}_{\text{halt}}(\perp \mathcal{M}_{uc} \perp, \perp \mathcal{M}_{uc} \perp) = 0 \iff \mathcal{M}_{uc}(\perp \mathcal{M}_{uc} \perp) \text{ diverges}$
- $\mathcal{M}_{\text{halt}}(\perp \mathcal{M}_{uc} \perp, \perp \mathcal{M}_{uc} \perp) = 1 \Rightarrow \mathcal{M}_{uc} \text{ is not computable by Theorem 2.4.1.}$

□

Diophantine equation Polynomial equality with integer coefficients and a finite number of unknowns.

Diophantine equation

Theorem 2.4.3 (MDPR). Determining if an arbitrary diophantine equation has a solution is undecidable.

2.4.2 Rice's theorem

Semantic language Given a language $\mathcal{L} \subseteq \{0, 1\}^*$, \mathcal{L} is semantic if:

Semantic language

- Any string in \mathcal{L} is an encoding of a TM.
- If $\llbracket \mathcal{M} \rrbracket \in \mathcal{L}$ and the TM \mathcal{N} computes the same function of \mathcal{M} , then $\llbracket \mathcal{N} \rrbracket \in \mathcal{L}$.

A semantic language can be seen as a set of TMs that have the same property.

Trivial language A language \mathcal{L} is trivial iff $\mathcal{L} = \emptyset$ or $\mathcal{L} = \{0, 1\}^*$

Theorem 2.4.4 (Rice's theorem). If a semantic language is non-trivial, then it is undecidable (i.e. any decidable semantic language is trivial).

Rice's theorem

Proof idea. Assuming that there exists a non-trivial decidable semantic language \mathcal{L} , it is possible to prove that the halting problem is decidable. Therefore, \mathcal{L} is undecidable. □

3 Complexity

Complexity class Set of tasks that can be computed within some fixed resource bounds. Complexity class

3.1 Polynomial time

Deterministic time (DTIME) Let $T : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ and \mathcal{L} be a language. \mathcal{L} is in **DTIME**($T(n)$) iff there exists a TM that decides \mathcal{L} in time $O(T(n))$. Deterministic time (**DTIME**)

Polynomial time (P) The class **P** contains all the tasks computable in polynomial time: Polynomial time (**P**)

$$\mathbf{P} = \bigcup_{c \geq 1} \mathbf{DTIME}(n^c)$$

Remark. **P** is closed to various operations on programs (e.g. composition of programs)

Remark. In practice, the exponent is often small.

Remark. **P** considers the worst case and is not always realistic. Other alternative computational models exist.

Church-Turing thesis Any physically realizable computer can be simulated by a TM with an arbitrary time overhead. Church-Turing thesis

Strong Church-Turing thesis Any physically realizable computer can be simulated by a TM with a polynomial time overhead. Strong Church-Turing thesis

Remark. If this thesis holds, the class **P** is robust (i.e. does not depend on the computational device) and is therefore the smallest class of bounds.

Deterministic time for functions (FDTIME) Let $T : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ and $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^*$. f is in **FDTIME**($T(n)$) iff there exists a TM that computes it in time $O(T(n))$. Deterministic time for functions (**FDTIME**)

Polynomial time for functions (FP) The class **FP** is defined as: Polynomial time for functions (**FP**)

$$\mathbf{FP} = \bigcup_{c \geq 1} \mathbf{FDTIME}(n^c)$$

Remark. It holds that $\forall \mathcal{L} \in \mathbf{P} \Rightarrow f_{\mathcal{L}} \in \mathbf{FP}$, where $f_{\mathcal{L}}$ is the characteristic function of \mathcal{L} . Generally, the contrary does not hold.

3.2 Exponential time

Exponential time (EXP/FEXP) The **EXP** and **FEXP** classes are defined as: Exponential time (**EXP/FEXP**)

$$\mathbf{EXP} = \bigcup_{c \geq 1} \mathbf{DTIME}(2^{n^c}) \quad \mathbf{FEXP} = \bigcup_{c \geq 1} \mathbf{FDTIME}(2^{n^c})$$

Theorem 3.2.1. The following hold:

$$\mathbf{P} \subset \mathbf{EXP} \quad \mathbf{FP} \subset \mathbf{FEXP}$$

3.3 NP class

Certificate Given a set of pairs $\mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{L}}$ and a polynomial $p : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$, we can define the language \mathcal{L} such that:

$$\mathcal{L} = \{x \in \{0, 1\}^* \mid \exists y \in \{0, 1\}^{p(|x|)} : (x, y) \in \mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{L}}\}$$

Given a string w and a certificate y , we can exploit $\mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{L}}$ as a test to check whether y is a certificate for w :

$$w \in \mathcal{L} \iff (w, y) \in \mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{L}}$$

Nondeterministic TM (NDTM) TM that has two transition functions δ_0, δ_1 and, at each step, non-deterministically chooses which one to follow. A state q_{accept} is always present:

- A NDTM accepts a string iff one of the possible computations reaches q_{accept} .
- A NDTM rejects a string iff none of the possible computations reach q_{accept} .

Nondeterministic time (NDTIME) Let $T : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ and \mathcal{L} be a language. \mathcal{L} is in **NDTIME**($T(n)$) iff there exists a NDTM that decides \mathcal{L} in time $O(T(n))$.

Remark. A NDTM \mathcal{M} runs in time $T : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ iff for every input, any possible computation terminates in time $O(T(n))$.

Complexity class NP

NDTM formulation The class **NP** contains all the tasks computable in polynomial time by a nondeterministic TM:

$$\mathbf{NP} = \bigcup_{c \geq 1} \mathbf{NDTIME}(n^c)$$

Verifier formulation Let $\mathcal{L} \subseteq \{0, 1\}^*$ be a language. \mathcal{L} is in **NP** iff there exists a polynomial $p : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ and a polynomial TM \mathcal{M} (verifier) such that:

$$\mathcal{L} = \{x \in \{0, 1\}^* \mid \exists y \in \{0, 1\}^{p(|x|)} : \mathcal{M}(\perp(x, y)) = 1\}$$

In other words, \mathcal{L} is the language of the strings that can be verified by \mathcal{M} in polynomial time using a certificate y of polynomial length.

Theorem 3.3.1. $\mathbf{P} \subseteq \mathbf{NP} \subseteq \mathbf{EXP}$