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Word Equations as Abstract Domain for String Manipulating Programs

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Abstract Program Properties

- We are interested in satisfiability of program properties w.r.t. some predicate set Δ over program data. The set Δ is to be expressed in a chosen language \mathcal{L}_{Δ} .
- Then any program trace can be considered in terms of abstracted structures wrt preserving properties in Δ , i.e. abstracted to \mathcal{L}_{Δ} .

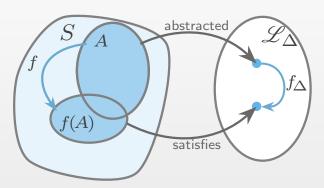
Example

- Checking division by $0 \Rightarrow$ $\mathcal{L}_{\Delta} = \{ \text{IsZero}, \text{IsNonZero}, \text{Unknown}, \text{Error} \}.$
- Checking overflows in arithmetics $\Rightarrow \mathcal{L}_{\Delta}$ can be an interval predicate set $\{(x \in (a, b)) \mid a, b \in \mathbb{R} \cup \{-\infty, \infty\}\} \cup \{\text{Error}\}.$



Function Lifting

- Every function $f: S \to S$, where S is the program data domain, is to be lifted to the abstract values domain.
- The lifted image of f (denoted f_{Δ}) must respect the original function f properties.

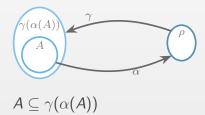


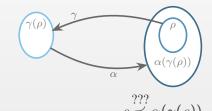
Galois Connection in Abstract Interpretation

Let S and \mathcal{L}_{Δ} be sets of concrete and abstract data values. We say that $a \propto \rho$ iff $a \in S$ satisfies the predicate $\rho \in \mathcal{L}_{\Delta}$.

The two functions are crucial to analyse the abstract properties:

- Abstraction α: 2^S → ℒ_Δ;
 α(A) = most specific predicate ρ ∈ ℒ_Δ s. t. ∀a (a ∈ A ⇒ a ∝ ρ);
- Concretisation $\gamma : \mathcal{L}_{\Delta} \to 2^S$; $\gamma(\rho) = \{ a \in S \mid a \propto \rho \}.$





Such a relation between any two sets in called a Galois connection.



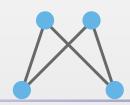
Partial Order on \mathscr{L}_{Δ} and Lattice Axioms

 \mathscr{L}_{Δ} is equipped by partial order \preceq and a pair of functions $\alpha: 2^S \to \mathscr{L}_{\Delta}$, $\gamma: \mathscr{L}_{\Delta} \to 2^S$ over-approximate elements of 2^S w.r.t. \preceq and \subseteq .

- $A \subseteq \gamma(\alpha(A))$;
- $\rho \leq \alpha(\gamma(\rho))$.

Collecting semantics

Given $\rho_1, \rho_2 \in \mathcal{L}_{\Delta}$, a joined value ρ' s.t. $\rho_1 \leq \rho'$ and $\rho_2 \leq \rho'$ is to be unique $\Rightarrow \rho'$ is a unique least upper bound of ρ_1, ρ_2 .



An ordering with multiple least upper bounds cannot produce an unambiguous semantics of the joined values.

Partial Order on \mathscr{L}_{Δ} and Lattice Axioms

 \mathscr{L}_{Δ} is equipped by partial order \leq and a pair of functions $\alpha: 2^{S} \to \mathscr{L}_{\Delta}$, $\gamma: \mathscr{L}_{\Delta} \to 2^{S}$ over-approximate elements of 2^{S} w.r.t. \prec and \subseteq .

- $A \subseteq \gamma(\alpha(A))$;
- $\rho \leq \alpha(\gamma(\rho))$.

In a lattice, every two elements of \mathcal{L}_{Δ} have supremums (\vee) and infinums (\wedge) w.r.t. the partial order \leq .

Lattice Axioms

- $(x \lor (x \land y) = x) \& (x \land (x \lor y) = x);$
- $(x \lor y = y \lor x) \& (x \land y = y \land x);$
- $(x \lor (y \lor z) = (x \lor y) \lor z) & (x \land (y \land z) = (x \land y) \land z).$



Existing Lattices for Strings

Let Σ be a letter alphabet, $S \subseteq \Sigma^*$.

algebra

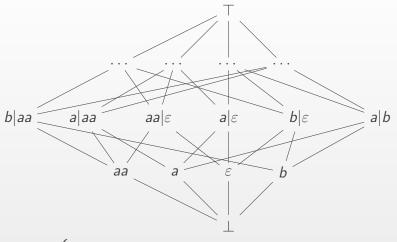
- The simplest lattice over predicates $\{X \doteq \xi \mid \xi \in \Sigma^*\}$ (denoted $\mathcal{L}att_{Eq}$). Finite height, imprecise.
- mapping to commutative $\{$ Lattice tracking string lengths: $\{|X| = n \mid n \in \mathbb{N}\}$. Lattice tracking letter occurrences in strings:
 - $\{(|X|_q>0)\mid q\in\Sigma\}.$

Lattice tracking prefixes and suffixes of strings: incomplete

 $\{\exists \tau_1, \tau_2(X = \xi_1 \tau_1) \& (X = \tau_2 \xi_2) \mid \xi_i \in \Sigma^* \}.$ • Lattice checking membership in regular languages: $\{X \in \tau \mid \tau \text{ is a regular expression}\}.$

Lattice tracking program-specific predicates (JSAI, Kashyap et al, 2014). Desirable to be parameterizable with predicates.

Regular Languages Lattice



requires $\begin{cases} \text{Both infinite ascending chains (e.g. } a, a | a^2, \dots) \\ \text{and infinite descending chains (e.g. } a^*, (a^2)^*, \dots). \end{cases}$



The Research Questions Arise

- Find an expressible language describing string predicates set, whose elements form a lattice of string abstract values:
 - being complete (and, moreover, finite-height);
 - extending the trivial lattice $\mathcal{L}att_{Eq}$ considered above;
 - capturing non-commutative string properties.
- Improve flexibility of the given language set using lattice operations.

We suggest a word equation language as a candidate for such a set of abstract values.



Given two alphabets:

- Σ is a set of constant (e.g. lowercase Latin) characters;
- ullet $\mathcal V$ is a set of variables (e.g. capitalized Latin characters).

Consider two constant words:

aababaa aababaa



Given two alphabets:

- Σ is a set of constant (e.g. lowercase Latin) characters;
- V is a set of variables (e.g. capitalized Latin characters).

Replace some of occurrences of their subwords with variables:

Given two alphabets:

- Σ is a set of constant (e.g. lowercase Latin) characters;
- V is a set of variables (e.g. capitalized Latin characters).

Insert the equality sign between the resulted words:

Given two alphabets:

- Σ is a set of constant (e.g. lowercase Latin) characters;
- \bullet V is a set of variables (e.g. capitalized Latin characters).

We have obtained a word equation.

A solution of the equation is the following substitution:

$$X \mapsto a^2, \quad Y \mapsto a^2ba, \quad Z \mapsto b$$



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A solution of the equation is the following substitution:

$$X \mapsto a^2, \quad Y \mapsto a^2ba, \quad Z \mapsto b$$

Another solution of the equation:

$$X \mapsto \varepsilon, Y \mapsto a, Z \mapsto \varepsilon$$
, where ε is the empty word.



Word Equations

Given a finite alphabet Σ of constant characters and an alphabet \mathcal{V} of variables; ε stands for the empty word. Small Greek letters stand for words in Σ^* .

Definition

A word equation is an equation of the form $\Psi \doteq \Phi$, where $\Psi, \Phi \in \{\Sigma \cup \mathcal{V}\}^*$. One may see the equation as a pair $\langle \Phi, \Psi \rangle$.

Given a word equation $\Psi \doteq \Phi$, where $\Psi, \Phi \in \{\Sigma \cup \mathcal{V}\}^*$. A solution of the equation is a morphism $\sigma : \{\Sigma \cup \mathcal{V}\}^* \to \Sigma^*$ s.t. $\Psi \sigma = \Phi \sigma$, where the morphism σ respects the concatenation operation, and $\forall a \in \Sigma \ (a\sigma = a)$.



Word Equations in Program Analysis

How do word equations naturally arise in the context of program analysis?

The variables X, X₁, Y, U, Z range over strings. Their values may be completely unknown or partially known in compile (analyse) time.

$X \doteq UbaYabZ$

```
if ( includes(X, 'ba' + Y + 'ab') )
  then { ..... }
  else { ..... }
```

$aX_1 \doteq X_1 a$

Word Equations in Program Analysis

Example source: P.A. Abdulla, M.F. Atig, Y. Chen, B.P. Diep, L. Holik, A. Rezine, Ph. Rümmer: Flatten and conquer: a framework for efficient analysis of string constraints, PLDI, 2017, ACM, pp. 602–617.

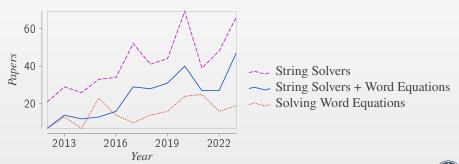
• Quadratic equation $WX \doteq aWY$ (W := g(Z)) appears as a constraint generated by rule eq(X, X) = true, and its solution set includes $W \in a^*$, which is incompatible with any trace of g-computation except the trivial one.



String Solvers

In recent years:

- Many studies are conducted on developing automated reasoning tools capable of proving or disproving statements involving words.
 - Their task is to automatically determine the satisfiability of that formula.



String Solvers

• Some string solving tools using word equations as constraint sets:

_	HAMPI	bounded
_	Norn	acyclic
_	OSTRICH	straight-line
_	Sloth	straight-line & acyclic
_	Woorpje	bounded
_	CertiStr	acyclic
_	MSCP-A	regularly-cyclic
_	CVC5, Z3Str3	acyclic & bounded
_	Z3-Trau	chain-free
	Straight-	Acyclic

One-

var

Quadratic

line

WL vs. RL

The word equation language WL vs. the regular expression language RL: intersect but are not subsets each of other:

$$\begin{cases} X = a^n, Y = (a^n b)^m a^n \\ \text{for equation} \end{cases} \text{ e.g. } a^* \text{ e.g. } (a|b)^* \text{ over } \{a, b, c\}$$

- There is no word equation with solution-set represented by $(a|b)^*$ over the alphabet $\{a,b,c\}$.
 - J. Karhumäki, F. Mignosi, W. Plandowski. The expressibility of languages and relations by word equations. Journal of the ACM (JACM), 47(3), pp: 483-505, (2000).



Unary Quantifier-Free Predicates

Given a predicate P expressed by a word equation E, let us assume that E is a one-variable word equation.

- What string properties can be expressed by such equations?
- How can be such equations normalized, in order to represent language properties consistently?

Non-trivial question: Can the solution-set be constructively described simpler as compared to the description provided by the original equation itself?

Equations $aX \doteq Xa$, $aaX \doteq Xaa$, and $aXX \doteq XXa$ all have the same solution set a^* .



One-Variable Equations*

Theorem (Nowotka-Saarela, 2018).

Every one-variable word equation has either infinitely many or at most three solutions.

Definition

A word $\eta \in \Sigma^+$ is said to be **primitive**, if for any $\xi \in \Sigma^*$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$ s.t. $\eta = \xi^n$ the equality n = 1 holds.

If an *X*-variable word equation has infinitely many solutions, then its whole solution-set is described with the fractional powers

$$\left\{ \underbrace{(\xi\zeta)^n\xi \mid n\in\mathbb{N}}_{\text{primitive word}} \right\}$$

Hence, such an equation can be normalised to $\xi \zeta X \doteq X \zeta \xi$.



Join and Meet for One-Variable Equations

Given the language

WL₀ =
$$\{\bot, \top, \{X \doteq \zeta\}, \{\xi_1\xi_2X \doteq X\xi_2\xi_1\} \mid \zeta, \xi_i \in \Sigma^* \& \xi_1\xi_2 \text{ is primitive}\}$$
 and the order \preceq induced by the solution set inclusion, we are required to check that the following situation is impossible:



If supremums and infinums are uniquely determined, then WL_0 is a lattice w.r.t. \prec .

Base Lattice WL_0 and its Sublattices

Lemma

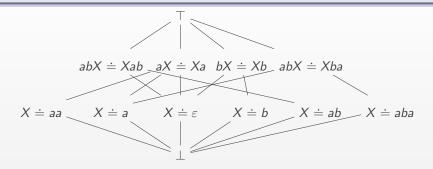
Normalised one-variable equations with infinite solution sets and trivial equations of the form $X \doteq \eta$, together with \top , \bot form a complete lattice, that is:

- Given any constant words ξ_1 , ξ_2 , at most one infinite-solution one-variable word equation in the normal form is satisfied by both.
- Given any two infinite-solution word equations $\xi_1 \xi_2 X \doteq X \xi_2 \xi_1, \, \xi_3 \xi_4 X \doteq X \xi_4 \xi_3, \, \text{at most one word in } \Sigma^*$ satisfies both.

Base lattice WL_0 includes all elements $\{X \doteq \xi\}$, $\{\xi_1\xi_2X \doteq X\xi_2\xi_1\}$; its finite sublattices $WL_0(\mathcal{P})$ depend on programs \mathcal{P} , i.e. on the finite set of strings explicitly occurring in \mathcal{P} .



A Lattice Based on $\{\varepsilon, a, a^2, b, ab, aba\}$



 A non-trivial one-variable word equation with an infinite solution set can be reduced to an equivalent one

$$\underbrace{\eta_1\eta_2X\doteq X\eta_2\eta_1}_{\text{($\eta_1\eta_2$ is primitive)}}.$$

normal-form condition

• $((\eta_1\eta_2)^nX \doteq X(\eta_2\eta_1)^n) \Leftrightarrow (\eta_1\eta_2X \doteq X\eta_2\eta_1) \ (n \geq 1)$, hence the widening problem is resolved.

Lifting JS String Operations to Abstract Domain

Simple example — string concatenation in JavaScript. We assume that $x \neq \bot$, $y \neq \bot$, otherwise concatenation results in an error. x + y =

$$\begin{array}{l} x + y = \\ \left\{ \{ X \doteq \xi_1 \xi_2 \}, \text{ if } x = \{ X \doteq \xi_1 \}, y = \{ X \doteq \xi_2 \}; \\ \left\{ \xi_4 \xi_5 X \doteq X \xi_5 \xi_4 \right\}, \text{ if } x = \left\{ X \doteq \xi_1 \right\} \& \ y = \left\{ \xi_2 \xi_3 X \doteq X \xi_3 \xi_2 \right\} \\ & \text{ and } \xi_4, \xi_5 \text{ are s.t. } \xi_5 \xi_4 = \xi_3 \xi_2 \text{ and } \exists n (\xi_1 \xi_2 = (\xi_4 \xi_5)^n \xi_4); \\ \left\{ \xi_4 \xi_5 X \doteq X \xi_5 \xi_4 \right\}, \text{ if } x = \left\{ \xi_1 \xi_2 X \doteq X \xi_2 \xi_1 \right\} \& \ y = \left\{ X \doteq \xi_3 \right\} \\ & \text{ and } \xi_4, \xi_5 \text{ are s.t. } \xi_4 \xi_5 = \xi_1 \xi_2 \text{ and } \exists n (\xi_1 x i_3 = (\xi_4 \xi_5)^n \xi_4); \\ \left\{ \xi_5 \xi_6 X \doteq X \xi_6 \xi_5 \right\}, \text{ if } x = \left\{ \xi_1 \xi_2 X \doteq X \xi_2 \xi_1 \right\} \& \ y = \left\{ \xi_3 \xi_4 X \doteq X \xi_4 \xi_3 \right\} \\ & \text{ and } \xi_5, \xi_6 \text{ are s.t. } \xi_5 \xi_6 = \xi_1 \xi_2 \text{ and } \exists n (\xi_1 \xi_3 = (\xi_1 \xi_2)^n \xi_5); \\ \top, \text{ otherwise.} \end{array}$$

Below we consider in details the only non-trivial case, when *x* and *y* are infinite-solution equations.

Lifting JS String Operations to Abstract Domain

$$\begin{cases} x + y = \\ \begin{cases} \dots \\ \{\xi_5 \xi_6 X \doteq X \xi_6 \xi_5\}, \text{ if } x = \{\xi_1 \xi_2 X \doteq X \xi_2 \xi_1\} \& y = \{\xi_3 \xi_4 X \doteq X \xi_4 \xi_3\} \\ & \text{and } \xi_2 \xi_1 = \xi_3 \xi_4 \\ & \text{and } \xi_5, \xi_6 \text{ are s.t. } \xi_5 \xi_6 = \xi_1 \xi_2 \text{ and } \exists n \big(\xi_1 \xi_3 = (\xi_1 \xi_2)^n \xi_5\big); \\ \top, \text{ otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Where do ξ_5 , ξ_6 come from?



String Morphisms and Fixpoints

Classical Lemma

If σ is a solution to equation $\Psi \doteq \Phi$, and h is a morphism, then $h \circ \sigma$ is a solution to $h(\Psi) \doteq h(\Phi)$.

Corollary: string morphisms $h: \Sigma \to \Sigma^*$, extended to WL_0 elements by normalising the morphic images of the equation sides, are monotone lattice mappings. Namely,

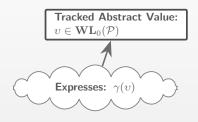
$$(E_1 \leq E_2) \Rightarrow (h(E_1) \leq h(E_2)).$$

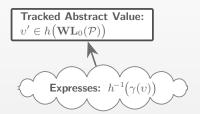
By Knaster–Tarski theorem, morphisms fixpoints form a complete sublattice of WL_0 .



Expressibility via Transformations

Given a monotone mapping h, we can track properties expressed by inverse morphisms of concretisations of the abstract values, refining expressibility of the basic abstract domain.



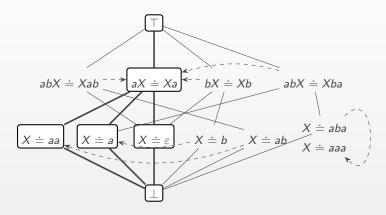


There $h^{-1}: 2^S \to 2^S$ is defined as usual:

- $\forall s \in S\left(h^{-1}\left(\{s\}\right) = \left\{s' \mid h(s') = s\right\}\right);$
- $h^{-1}(\mathcal{M}_1 \cup \mathcal{M}_2) = h^{-1}(\mathcal{M}_1) \cup h^{-1}(\mathcal{M}_2)$.

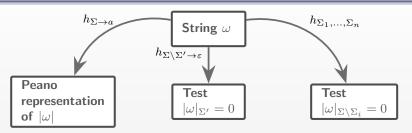


Fixpoint Example



The sublattice generated by the morphism h(x) = a tracks string lengths in a given program.

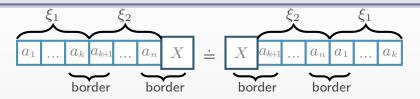
Expressibility of Fixpoint Lattices



- $h_{\Sigma \to a} \stackrel{\triangle}{=}$ a morphism that maps a to itself and other letters to ε ;
- $h_{\Sigma \setminus \Sigma' \to \varepsilon} \stackrel{\triangle}{=}$ a morphism that maps all the letters from Σ' to a and all the other letters to ε .
- Let $\Sigma = \Sigma_1 \cup \Sigma_2 \cup ... \Sigma_n$, where $\forall i, j (i \neq j \Rightarrow \Sigma_i \cap \Sigma_j = \emptyset)$. $h_{\Sigma_1,...,\Sigma_k} \stackrel{\Delta}{=}$ a morphism that maps all the elements of the disjoint sets to a single letter.



Inverse Images of String Morphisms



An inverse mapping of a morphism h is border-preserving wrt \mathcal{L} , if for any element $\{\xi_1\xi_2X \doteq X\xi_2\xi_1\}$ of \mathcal{L} and for any $a \in \Sigma$, h(a) either contains no border of $\xi_1\xi_2X \doteq X\xi_2\xi_1$, or is equal to ξ_2 , and $\xi_1 = \varepsilon$.

Lemma

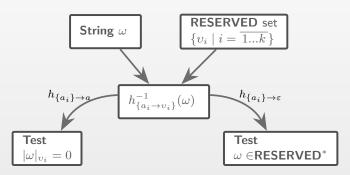
Given lattice $WL_0(\mathcal{P})$ and a string morphism h satisfying the conditions above, for any order induced on Σ , h_{\min}^{-1} is a lattice morphism.



Expressibility of Inverse Mappings

Let RESERVED be a set of reserved words v_i (keywords, constants, etc), s.t. morphism $h_{\{a_i \to v_i\}}$ mapping fresh letters from Σ' to v_i is border-preserving.

Then an inverse image lattice $h_{\{a_i \to v_i\}}^{-1}$ can be used to track occurrences of the keywords inside strings.



Word Equations in Abstract Interpretation (Program Analysis)

Simple Example: abstract interpretation over $WL_0(\mathcal{P})$ -lattice shows the sanitization given in line 5 is sound (line 7 is unreachable).

```
1 z = \xi;

2 x = ' < \text{script'} + z;

3 if (x! = z + z) \{

4 x = x + x \};

5 replaceAll(x,'\text{ip'},'\text{ipv4'});

6 if (\text{contains}(x,'\text{script'})) \{

7 return 'Possible code injection'; \}
```



Word Equations in Abstract Interpretation (Program Analysis)

The sanitization given in line 5 is sound.

```
z \mapsto \{X \doteq \xi\}
    z = \xi;
                                                                          x \mapsto \{X \doteq \eta\}
2 x = ' < \text{script}' + z;
3 if (x!=z+z) {
                                                                          (does not change)
4 x = x + x };
                                                         \{X \doteq \eta\} \vee \{X \doteq \eta + \eta\}
                = \{ prm(\eta)X \doteq X prm(\eta) \}; x \mapsto \{ prm(\eta)X \doteq X prm(\eta) \}
                                                                 x \mapsto^* \left\{ \eta' X \doteq X \eta' \right\}
5
    replaceAll(x,'ip','ipv4');
    if (contains(x,'script')) {
                                                 (never holds for the abstract value of x)
        return 'Possible code injection'; }
                                                                                 (is pruned)
```

- $prm(\eta)$ is a primitive* root of η ;
- $\eta = ' < \text{script'} + \xi; \quad \eta' = \text{replaceAll}(prm(\eta), 'ip', 'ipv4').$
- predicate contains(x,'script') fails for any value of X satisfying

$$\eta' X \doteq X \eta'$$
.



Conclusion

- An infinite-solution subset of one-variable word equations together with predicates $\mathcal{L}att_{Eq} = \{X \doteq \xi\}$ form a finite-height lattice WL₀. Sublattices of the lattice WL₀ can be used for abstract interpretation of string-manipulating programs.
- Monotone lattice mappings by means of string morphisms and special cases of inverses of string morphisms generate fixpoint lattices upon WL₀, which can track additional program properties, non-expressible in the word equations language directly.

Work-In-Progress

- A word-equation-lattice-based framework for analysing real-world string-manipulating programs.
- Lattice modifications capturing relations between values.

A simple instance:

$$\bigg\{ \mathsf{WL}_0(\mathcal{P})[X] \times \mathsf{WL}_0(\mathcal{P})[Y] \times \big\langle \top, \bot, \{XY \doteq YX\} \big\rangle \bigg\}.$$



Thanks for Attention

• Any questions?



 \mathcal{WL} — existential string theory

(concatenation + equality = word equations).

Theory	Replace All	letter	length	RL	Complexity
Theory	(Const Args)	count	count		
WL + RL	Х	Х	X	1	PSPACE
\mathcal{WL} +len	X	Х	1	X	???
\mathcal{WL} +count	X	✓	X	X	Undec.
\mathcal{WL} +repl	✓	Х	X	Х	Undec.

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