

Suppose $m \leq n$, and let L denote the maximum length of any string in $A \cup B$. Suppose there is a string that is a concatenation over both A and B , and let u be one of minimum length. We claim that the length of u is at most $n^2 L^2$.

For suppose not. First, we say that position p in u is of *type* (a_i, k) if in the concatenation over A , it is represented by position k of string a_i . We define *type* (b_i, k) analogously. Now, if the length of u is greater than $n^2 L^2$, then by the pigeonhole principle, there exist positions p and p' in u , $p < p'$, so that both are of type (a_i, k) and (b_j, k) for some indices i, j, k . But in this case, the string u' obtained by deleting positions $p, p+1, \dots, p'-1$ would also be a concatenation over both A and B . As u' is shorter than u , this is a contradiction.

¹ex690.144.299