Deriving (finite) intersection non-emptiness, courtesy of Brzozowski

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1 Syntax and Semantics

Definition 1 (Generalized Regex). Let E be an expression defined by the grammar:

$$E ::= \varnothing \mid \varepsilon \mid \Sigma \mid E \cdot E \mid E \vee E \mid E \wedge E$$

Semantically, we have:

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathcal{L}(\ \varnothing\ ) &= \varnothing & \mathcal{L}(\ R \cdot S\ ) &= \mathcal{L}(R) \times \mathcal{L}(S)\\
\mathcal{L}(\ \varepsilon\ ) &= \{\varepsilon\} & \mathcal{L}(\ R \vee S\ ) &= \mathcal{L}(R) \cup \mathcal{L}(S)\\
\mathcal{L}(\ a\ ) &= \{a\} & \mathcal{L}(\ R \wedge S\ ) &= \mathcal{L}(R) \cap \mathcal{L}(S)
\end{aligned}$$

Definition 2 (Brzozowski, 1964). To compute the quotient $\partial_a(L) = \{b \mid ab \in L\}$, we:

$$\begin{aligned}
\partial_a(\ \varnothing\ ) &= \varnothing & \delta(\ \varnothing\ ) &= \varnothing\\
\partial_a(\ \varepsilon\ ) &= \varnothing & \delta(\ \varepsilon\ ) &= \varepsilon\\
\partial_a(\ b\ ) &= \begin{cases} \varepsilon & \text{if } a = b\\ \varnothing & \text{if } a \neq b \end{cases} & \delta(\ a\ ) &= \varnothing\\
\partial_a(\ R \cdot S\ ) &= (\partial_a R) \cdot S \vee \delta(R) \cdot \partial_a S & \delta(\ R \cdot S\ ) &= \delta(R) \wedge \delta(S)\\
\partial_a(\ R \vee S\ ) &= \partial_a R \vee \partial_a S & \delta(\ R \vee S\ ) &= \delta(R) \vee \delta(S)\\
\partial_a(\ R \wedge S\ ) &= \partial_a R \wedge \partial_a S & \delta(\ R \wedge S\ ) &= \delta(R) \wedge \delta(S)
\end{aligned}$$

Theorem 1 (Recognition). *For any regex R and $\sigma : \Sigma^*$, $\sigma \in \mathcal{L}(R) \iff \varepsilon \in \mathcal{L}(\partial_\sigma R)$, where:*

$$\partial_\sigma(R) : RE \to RE = \begin{cases} R & \textit{if } \sigma = \varepsilon\\ \partial_b(\partial_a R) & \textit{if } w = ab, a : \Sigma \end{cases}$$

Theorem 2 (Generation). *For any $(\varepsilon, \wedge)$-free regex, R, to generate a witness $\sigma \sim \mathcal{L}(R)$:*

$$\texttt{follow}(R) : RE \to 2^\Sigma = \begin{cases} \{R\} & \textit{if } R \in \Sigma\\ \texttt{follow}(S) & \textit{if } R = S \cdot T\\ \texttt{follow}(S) \cup \texttt{follow}(T) & \textit{if } R = S \vee T \end{cases}$$

$$\texttt{choose}(R) : RE \to \Sigma^* = \begin{cases} R & \textit{if } R \in \Sigma\\ \big(s \sim \texttt{follow}(R)\big) \cdot \texttt{choose}(\partial_s R) & \textit{if } R = S \cdot T\\ \texttt{choose}(R' \sim \{S, T\}) & \textit{if } R = S \vee T \end{cases}$$

Theorem 3 (Bar-Hillel, 1961). *For any context-free grammar (CFG), $G = \langle V, \Sigma, P, S\rangle$, and nondeterministic finite automata, $A = \langle Q, \Sigma, \delta, I, F\rangle$, there exists a CFG $G_\cap = \langle V_\cap, \sigma_\cap, P_\cap, S_\cap\rangle$ such that $\mathcal{L}(G_\cap) = \mathcal{L}(G) \cap \mathcal{L}(A)$.*

Definition 3 (Salomaa, 1973). We can construct $G_\cap$ like so:

$$\frac{q \in I \quad r \in F}{\big(S \to qSr\big) \in P_\cap}\sqrt{} \qquad \frac{(A \to a) \in P \qquad (q \overset{a}{\to} r) \in \delta}{\big(qAr \to a\big) \in P_\cap}\uparrow \qquad \frac{(w \to xz) \in P \qquad p, q, r \in Q}{\big(pwr \to (pxq)(qzr)\big) \in P_\cap}\bowtie$$

Theorem 4 (Considine, 2025). *For every CFG, G, and every acyclic NFA (ANFA), A, there exists a decision procedure $\varphi : CFG \to ANFA \to \mathbb{B}$ such that $\varphi(G, A) \models [\mathcal{L}(G) \cap \mathcal{L}(A) \neq \varnothing]$ which requires $\mathcal{O}\big((\log|Q|)^c\big)$ time using $\mathcal{O}(n^k)$ parallel processors for some $c, k < \infty$.*

Proof Sketch. To determine whether $w : V$ can parse some path $p \rightsquigarrow r$ in A, we have two cases:

1. Either $p \overset{s}{\to} r$, in which case it suffices to check whether $(w \to s) \in P$, or,
2. There is some midpoint q, $p \rightsquigarrow q \rightsquigarrow r$ such that $(w \to xz) \in P$, and $\overbrace{\underbrace{p \rightsquigarrow q}_{x}, \underbrace{q \rightsquigarrow r}_{z}}^{w}$.

This suggests a dynamic programming solution. Let M be a matrix of type $RE^{|Q|\times|Q|\times|V|}$ indexed by Q. Since we assumed δ is acyclic, there exists a topological sort imposing a total order on Q such that M is strictly upper triangular (SUT). We will initialize it as follows:

$$M_0[r, c, v] = \bigcup_{a\in\Sigma}\{a \mid (v \to a) \in P \wedge q_r \overset{a}{\to} q_c\} \tag{1}$$

The algebraic operations $\oplus, \otimes : RE^{2|V|} \to RE^{|V|}$ will be defined:

$$[\ell \oplus r]_v = [\ell_v \vee r_v] \tag{2}$$

$$[\ell \otimes r]_w = \bigvee_{x,z}\{\ell_x \cdot r_z \mid (w \to xz) \in P\} \tag{3}$$

By abuse of notation, we will redefine the matrix exponential over this domain as follows:

$$\exp(M) = \sum_{i=0}^{\infty} M_0^i = \sum_{i=0}^{|Q|} M_0^i \text{ (since } M \text{ is SUT.)} \tag{4}$$

To solve for the fixpoint, we can instead use exponentiation by squaring:

$$S(2n) = \begin{cases} M_0, & \text{if } n = 1, \\ S(n) + S(n)^2 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases} \tag{5}$$

Therefor, we only need $\log|Q|$ squaring steps to determine the fixpoint. Finally,

$$S_\cap = \bigvee_{q\in I,\, q'\in F} M[q, q', S] \text{ and } \varphi = [S_\cap \neq \varnothing] \tag{6}$$

To decode a witness in case of non-emptiness, we simply `choose` (φ). $\square$