

Corollary 3:

Given a finite alphabet A , the set of all Turing-recognisable languages over A is countably infinite.

Proof:

An encoding $\langle M \rangle$ of a Turing machine M is the 7-tuple $(S, A, \tilde{A}, t, i, S_{\text{acc}}, S_{\text{rej}})$, which is a finite string over a language B that contains A and is finite.

By the theorem, $B^* = B^0 \cup B^1 \cup \dots \cup B^\infty$ is countably infinite.

Since $\langle M \rangle \in B^*$, there are at most countably infinitely many Turing machines M that recognise languages over A

\Rightarrow there are at most countably infinitely many Turing-recognisable languages over A .

We know we can build Turing machines with as large a set of states S as we want

\Rightarrow the set of Turing machines that recognises languages over A cannot be finite

\Rightarrow it is countably infinite. (*q.e.d*)

Proposition: Let A be a finite alphabet. Not all languages over A are Turing-recognisable.

Proof:

By *corollary 1*, the set of all languages over A is uncountably infinite.

By *corollary 3*, the set of all Turing-recognisable languages over A is countably infinite

\Rightarrow there are many more languages over A than can be recognised by a Turing machine.

(*q.e.d*)

Remark:

This result makes a lot of sense because while we normally look at simpler, well-structured problems where there is a pattern, most languages over A have no pattern to them.

To understand more on the set of all Turing machines, we define the language

$L_{TM} = \{ \langle M, w \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing machine and } M \text{ accepts } w \}$

Here w is a string over the input alphabet A .

We will prove that L_{TM} is a Turing-recognisable language, but L_{TM} is **not** Turing-decidable.

Proposition: L_{TM} is a Turing-recognisable language.

Proof: We define a Turing machine U that recognises L_{TM} :

U = on input $\langle M, w \rangle$, where M is a Turing machine and w is a string.

1. Simulate M on string w .
2. If M ever enters its accept state then accept.
If M ever enters its reject state then reject.

U loops on input $\langle M, w \rangle$ if M loops on $w \Rightarrow U$ is a recogniser but not a decider. (*q.e.d*)

Remark:

The Turing machine U is an example of the **universal Turing machine** first proposed by Turing in 1936. This idea of a universal Turing machine led to the development of stored-program computers.

NB: Philosophically, the universal Turing machine we just constructed runs into the following big issues:

1. U itself is a Turing machine. What happens when U is given an input $\langle U, w \rangle$?
2. The encoding of a Turing machine is a string. What happens when we input $\langle M, \langle M \rangle \rangle$ or even worse $\langle U, \langle U \rangle \rangle$?

We are getting very close to Russell's paradox, the set $\Gamma = \{ D \mid D \notin D \}$ which showed the axioms of naive set theory were inconsistent and led to more complicated axioms.

In one case, these issues lead to showing the language L_{TM} cannot possibly be Turing-decidable.