Lecture 10
Herbrand's theorem and ground resolution

Introduction to Logic for Computer Science

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These slides are minor variants of those made by Prof Worrell and Dr Haase for their logic course at Oxford.

Recap

Let F be a quantifier-free formula.

Prenex form: $Q_1 x_1 \, Q_2 x_2 \, \cdots Q_n x_n \, F$, where $Q_i \in \{\forall, \exists\}$.

Skolem form: $\forall x_1 \, \forall x_2 \, \cdots \forall x_n \, F$.

Every first-order formula can be translated into an equi-satisfiable formula in Skolem form in poly. time.

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Example

Let $\sigma = \langle c, d,\ f, g,\ P, Q\rangle$ with unary f and binary g, the set of ground terms is

$$\{c, d, f(c), f(d), g(c, c), g(c, d), g(d, c), g(d, d), f(f(c)), f(f(d)), \ldots\}.$$

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Ex: Find a signature σ such that its set of ground terms is isomorphic to $\mathbb{N}$.

Herbrand structures

Definition

Let σ be a signature with at least one constant symbol. A σ-structure $\mathcal{H}$ is a **Herbrand structure** if the following hold:

- The universe $U_{\mathcal{H}}$ is the set of ground terms over σ.
- For every constant symbol c, we have $c_{\mathcal{H}} = c$.
- For every function symbol f, $f_{\mathcal{H}}(t_1, \ldots, t_n) = f(t_1, \ldots, t_n)$.

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Ex2: Prove the lemma.

Jaques Herbrand (1908 – 1931)

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Theorem

Let $F = \forall x_1 \forall x_2 \ldots \forall x_n F^*$ *be a formula in Skolem form. Then* F *is satisfiable if and only if* F *has a Herbrand model.*

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Suppose $\mathcal{A} \models F$.

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Suppose $\mathcal{A} \models F$. Define a Herbrand model $\mathcal{H}$ by setting the interpretation of each predicate symbol P as follows:

$$(t_1, \ldots, t_k) \in P_{\mathcal{H}} \text{ iff } \mathcal{A} \models P(t_1, \ldots, t_k).$$

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Now show that for all closed G in Skolem form, if $\mathcal{A} \models G$, then $\mathcal{H} \models G$. Use induction on the number of $\forall$ in G.

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Proof.

Assume that F is closed. Suppose $\mathcal{A} \models F$.

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We show that for all *closed* $G = \forall x_1 \, \forall x_2 \, \ldots \forall x_m \, G^*$ with quantifier free G^*, if $\mathcal{A} \models G$, then $\mathcal{H} \models G$. We use induction on m.

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But then $\mathcal{H} \models \forall x \, G'$. $\square$

Ground resolution

Herbrand expansion of $F = \forall x_1 \forall x_2 \dots \forall x_n F^*$:

$$E(F) := \{F^*[t_1/x_1][t_2/x_2]\dots[t_n/x_n] : t_1, \dots, t_n \text{ ground terms}\}.$$

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A closed formula in Skolem form is unsatisfiable if and only if there is a propositional resolution proof of $\square$ from $E(F)$.

Ex1: What does this imply in terms of developing a satisfiability checker for first-order formulas?

Ex2: Prove the theorem.

Hint: Prove that Herbrand' theorem implies the following theorem. Then, use the Compactness theorem for propositional logic.

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Proof.

By Herbrand's theorem, F is satisfiable if and only if F has a Herbrand model. Now

$$\mathcal{H} \models F \text{ iff } \mathcal{H}_{[x_1 \mapsto t_1]\cdots[x_n \mapsto t_n]} \models F^* \text{ for all ground terms } t_1, \ldots, t_n$$

$$\text{iff } \mathcal{H} \models F^*[t_1/x_1]\ldots[t_n/x_n] \text{ for all ground } t_i \text{ (by Trans. Lemma)}$$

$$\text{iff } \mathcal{H} \models E(F)$$

$$\text{iff } E(F) \text{ is satisfiable as prop. formula.}$$

$\square$

Theorem (Ground Resolution)

A closed formula in Skolem form is unsatisfiable if and only if there is a propositional resolution proof of $\Box$ *from* $E(F)$.

Proof.

By the Compactness theorem, $E(F)$ is unsatisfiable if and only if some finite subset of $E(F)$ is unsatisfiable. The latter happens if and only if $\Box$ can be derived from $E(F)$ using resolution. $\Box$