

# Languages, automata and computation II

## Tutorial 4

Winter semester 2023/2024

In this tutorial we study automata theory in sets with atoms.

### Sets with atoms

In this tutorial we explore sets with atoms. Fix a countable set  $A$  and consider the relational structure  $\mathbb{A} = (A, =)$  over the signature consisting only of equality. Elements of  $\mathbb{A}$  are called *atoms* and automorphisms  $\alpha$  of this structure are the bijections of  $A$ . Automorphisms are extended to sets homomorphically, e.g.,  $\alpha(x, y) = (\alpha x, \alpha y)$ .

A *set with atoms* is any set built from set constructors and atoms from  $\mathbb{A}$ . An automorphism  $\alpha$  *fixes* a set with atoms  $x$  if  $\alpha x = x$ . Fix a tuple  $\bar{a} \in A^n$ . An  $\bar{a}$ -*automorphism* is an automorphism fixing  $\bar{a}$ . A set with atoms  $x$  is *supported by*  $\bar{a}$  if it is fixed by every  $\bar{a}$ -automorphism, and it is *equivariant* if it is supported by the empty tuple  $()$ . A set with atoms is *finitely supported* if it is supported by some tuple of atoms, and it is *legal* if it is finitely supported and all its elements are legal (this is a recursive definition).

The *orbit* of element  $x$  is the set  $\text{orbit}(x) = \{\alpha x \mid \text{automorphism } \alpha\}$  of elements which can be obtained by applying some automorphism to  $x$ . Thus an equivariant set  $x$  is a union of orbits (of its elements), and an equivariant set is *orbit finite* if this union is finite. The set of orbits of a set  $x$  is  $\text{Orbits}(x) = \{\text{orbit}(y) \mid y \in x\}$  (this is a partition of  $x$ ). For instance, for given  $a, b \in \mathbb{A}$  with  $a \neq b$ , we have  $\text{orbit}(a, a) = \{(c, d) \in \mathbb{A}^2 \mid c = d\}$  and  $\text{orbit}(a, b) = \{(c, d) \in \mathbb{A}^2 \mid c \neq d\}$ . Since there are no more orbits in  $\mathbb{A}^2$ , we have  $\text{Orbits}(\mathbb{A}^2) = \{\text{orbit}(a, a), \text{orbit}(a, b)\}$  and  $\mathbb{A}^2$  is the union of two orbits.

**Exercise 1.** Fix the equality atoms  $(\mathbb{A}, =)$ . For each of the following sets with atoms decide whether they are 1) legal, 2) equivariant, 3) orbit finite.

1.  $\mathbb{A}^2$ .
2.  $\mathbb{A}^* := \mathbb{A}^0 \cup \mathbb{A}^1 \cup \mathbb{A}^2 \cup \dots$ .
3.  $\mathbb{A}^\omega := \{a_1 a_2 \dots \mid a_1, a_2, \dots \in \mathbb{A}\}$ .
4.  $2^\mathbb{A} := \{B \mid B \subseteq \mathbb{A}\}$  (powerset).
5.  $2_{\text{fin}}^\mathbb{A} := \{B \mid B \subseteq \mathbb{A}, B \text{ finite}\}$  (finite powerset).
6.  $2_{\text{fs}}^\mathbb{A} := \{B \mid B \subseteq \mathbb{A}, B \text{ finitely supported}\}$  (finitely supported powerset).

7.  $2_{\text{eq}}^{\mathbb{A}} := \{B \mid B \subseteq \mathbb{A}, B \text{ equivariant}\}$  (equivariant powerset).

*Solution:* 1.  $\mathbb{A}^2$  is legal, equivariant, and it has two orbits.

2.  $\mathbb{A}^*$  is legal, equivariant, and it has infinitely many orbits, since words of different length cannot be in the same orbit.
3.  $\mathbb{A}^\omega$  is equivariant and it has infinitely many orbits. It is not legal since it has elements without a finite support such as  $w = a_1 a_2 \cdots$  where all the  $a_i \in \mathbb{A}$  are pairwise distinct.
4. The unrestricted powerset is illegal, equivariant, and orbit-infinite.
5. The finite powerset is legal, equivariant, and orbit-infinite, since subsets of different sizes cannot be in the same orbit.
6. The finitely supported powerset is legal, equivariant, and orbit-infinite.
7. The equivariant powerset is legal, equivariant, and contains just two elements:  $\emptyset$  and  $\mathbb{A}$ .

□

**Exercise 2.** An atom structure  $\mathbb{A}$  is called *oligomorphic* if  $\mathbb{A}^n$  is orbit-finite for every  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ . Are the following atom structures oligomorphic?

1.  $(\mathbb{N}, =)$ .
2.  $(\mathbb{Z}, \leq)$ .
3.  $(\mathbb{Q}, \leq)$ .
4.  $(\mathbb{Q}, +)$ .

*Solution:* 1. Yes.

2. No, since already  $\mathbb{Z}^2$  has infinitely many orbits. Automorphisms of this structure are integer translations  $\alpha(x) = x + k$ ,  $k \in \mathbb{Z}$ . Consequently, all pairs in the orbit of  $(x, y) \in \mathbb{Z}^2$  have the same  $y - x$  value. In particular  $(0, 0)$ ,  $(0, 1)$ ,  $(0, 2)$ ,  $\dots$ , are all in pairwise distinct orbits.
3. Yes.
4. Automorphisms of  $(\mathbb{Q}, +)$  satisfy  $\alpha(0) = 0$  and  $\alpha(x + y) = \alpha(x) + \alpha(y)$ . Consequently, for every rational  $x \in \mathbb{Q}$ , if we write  $x = p/q$  for integers  $p, q \in \mathbb{Z}$  we have  $p \cdot x = q$  and by applying  $\alpha$  to both sides  $\alpha(p \cdot x) = p \cdot \alpha(x)$  and  $\alpha(q) = q \cdot \alpha(1)$ . Consequently,

$$\alpha(x) = x \cdot \alpha(1).$$

Consequently  $\alpha$  is uniquely determined by how it acts on 1, and thus the automorphisms of this structure are of the form  $\alpha(x) = k \cdot x$  for some  $k \in \mathbb{Q}$ . It follows that applying  $\alpha$  to a pair  $(x, y)$  preserves the ratio  $\frac{y}{x}$ . Thus  $\mathbb{Q}^2$  has infinitely many orbits.

□

**Exercise 3.** Consider an orbit-finite set  $X$  and an equivariant relation  $R \subseteq X \times X$ . For every  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ , let  $R_n = R^0 \cup R^1 \cup R^2 \cup \dots \cup R^n$ . Show that the following chain computing the reflexive-transitive closure of  $R$  terminates:

$$R_0 \subseteq R_1 \subseteq \dots \subseteq X \times X.$$

*Solution:* Each  $R_n$  is an equivariant subset of  $X \times X$ :  $R_0$  is just the identity relation, which is equivariant, and equivariant relations are closed under composition and union. Since  $X \times X$  is orbit-finite ( $X$  being orbit-finite and the equality atoms being oligomorphic),  $R_n$  is a union of finitely many orbits of  $X \times X$ . One can then show that there is some  $n \leq |\text{Orbits}(X \times X)|$  s.t.  $R_n = R_{n+1} = \dots$ .  $\square$

## Orbit-finite automata

Fix an oligomorphic atom structure  $\mathbb{A}$ , which will usually consist of a countable set with equality  $(\mathbb{A}, =)$ . A *orbit-finite automaton* (OFA) is a tuple  $A = (\Sigma, Q, I, F, \Delta)$  where  $\Sigma$  is a orbit-finite *input alphabet* (often  $\Sigma = \mathbb{A}$ ),  $Q$  is a orbit-finite set of *states*,  $I, F \subseteq Q$  are equivariant subsets of  $Q$  (thus orbit-finite), called *initial*, resp., *final* states, and  $\Delta \subseteq Q \times \Sigma Q$  is an equivariant set of *transitions* (thus orbit-finite).

**Exercise 4.** Consider an orbit-finite automaton with input alphabet  $\hat{\Sigma} := \Sigma \times \mathbb{A}$  where  $\Sigma$  is finite. Consider the following *projection* mapping  $\pi : \hat{\Sigma}^* \rightarrow \Sigma^*$  which forgets the data part of a word:

$$\pi : (\sigma_1, a_1) \cdots (\sigma_n, a_n) \mapsto \sigma_1 \cdots \sigma_n.$$

Show that the projection  $\pi L \subseteq \Sigma^*$  of a data language  $L \subseteq \hat{\Sigma}^*$  recognised by an orbit-finite automaton is a regular language.

*Solution:* Let  $A = (\hat{\Sigma}, Q, I, F, \Delta)$  be a OFA. Build a NFAB whose states are orbits of  $Q$ , initial states are orbits of  $I$ , and final states are orbits of  $F$ . A transition  $(p, (\sigma, a), q) \in \Delta$  of  $A$  induces a transition  $\text{orbit}(p) \xrightarrow{\sigma} \text{orbit}(q)$  of  $B$ . One then shows that  $L(B) = \pi L(A)$ .  $\square$

The following is a summary of (non)-closure properties of languages of finite data words recognised by OFA and its deterministic variant.

	$\cup$	$\cap$	$\cdot^R$	$\Sigma^* \setminus -$
Deterministic OFA	✓	✓	×	✓
Nondeterministic OFA	✓	✓	✓	×

**Exercise 5.** Show a nondeterministic OFA language which is not recognised by a deterministic OFA.

*Solution:* Consider the language of all words  $w \in \mathbb{A}^*$  s.t. the last letter appears at least twice:

$$L = \{a_1 \cdots a_n \in \mathbb{A}^* \mid \text{there is } 1 \leq i < n \text{ s.t. } a_i = a_n\}.$$

This language is OFA recognisable, in dimension one: The automaton guesses the occurrence of  $a_i$  and checks that it appears at the end of the word.

This language is not recognisable by a deterministic OFA. By way of contradiction, let  $A$  be a deterministic OFA recognising  $L$ . Build a long word of pair-wise distinct letters  $w = a_1 \cdots a_n \notin L$  and look at the corresponding run of the automaton

$$I \ni q_0 \xrightarrow{a_1} q_1 \xrightarrow{a_2} \cdots \xrightarrow{a_n} q_n.$$

There is some  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  s.t. some  $a_i$  is not in the support of the last state,

$$a_i \notin \text{supp } q_n.$$

Let  $b \in \mathbb{A}$  be a fresh input symbol. Since  $w \cdot b \notin L$ , the extended run is rejecting:

$$I \ni q_0 \xrightarrow{a_1} q_1 \xrightarrow{a_2} \cdots \xrightarrow{a_n} q_n \xrightarrow{b} q \notin F.$$

Let  $\alpha$  be any atom automorphism fixing  $\text{supp } q_n$  s.t.  $\alpha(b) = a$ . In particular,  $\alpha(q_n) = q_n$ . The following modified run

$$I \ni q_0 \xrightarrow{a_1} q_1 \xrightarrow{a_2} \cdots \xrightarrow{a_n} q_n = \alpha(q_n) \xrightarrow{\alpha(b)} \alpha(q) \notin F.$$

shows  $w \cdot a \notin L(A)$  since  $F$  is equivariant (and thus the same applies to its complement) and the automaton is deterministic. Since  $w \cdot a \in L$ , this contradicts  $L(A) = L$ .  $\square$

The previous exercise is subsumed by the following one (since deterministic OFA are closed under complement).

**Exercise 6.** Show that the class of nondeterministic OFA languages is not closed under complement.

*Solution:* Consider the language  $L \subseteq \mathbb{A}^*$  containing all words where a data value appears at least twice, which is easily seen to be OFA-recognisable. By way of contradiction, assume that its complement is recognised by some OFA  $A$ . Consider a very long word  $w = a_1 \cdots a_n \in \Sigma^*$  of pairwise distinct data values, and look at some accepting run of  $A$  when reading it

$$I \ni q_0 \xrightarrow{a_1} q_1 \xrightarrow{a_2} \cdots \xrightarrow{a_n} q_n \in F.$$

For  $n$  sufficiently large there are indices  $1 \leq i < j < k \leq n$  s.t.  $a_i, a_k \notin \text{supp } q_j$ . There exists an atom automorphism  $\alpha$  which fixes  $\text{supp } q_j$  (and thus  $\alpha(q_j) = q_j$ ) s.t.  $\alpha(a_i) = a_k$ . The following run is also accepting

$$I \ni \alpha(q_0) \xrightarrow{\alpha(a_1)} \cdots \xrightarrow{\alpha(a_j)} \alpha(q_j) = q_j \xrightarrow{a_{j+1}} \cdots \xrightarrow{a_n} q_n \in F.$$

and thus  $w' = \alpha(a_1) \cdots \alpha(a_j) a_{j+1} \cdots a_n \in L(A)$ . However the data value  $a_k$  appears at least twice in  $w'$ , thus  $w' \notin L$ , which is a contradiction.  $\square$

**Exercise 7.** Show that the class of deterministic OFA languages is not closed under reversal.

*Solution:* The language “the last letter appears at least twice” from the solution of Exercise 5 cannot be recognised by a deterministic OFA, however its reversal can.  $\square$

**Exercise 8.** Show that the class of non-guessing OFA languages is not closed under reversal.

*Solution:* Consider the language  $L$  of all words  $w \in \mathbb{A}^*$  s.t. “the first letter appears exactly once”. This can be recognised by a deterministic OFA, which is non-guessing. Its reversal  $L^R$  contains all words where “the last letter appears exactly once”. We show that it cannot be recognised without guessing. By way of contradiction let  $A$  be a non-guessing OFA recognising  $L^R$ . Consider a long word  $w = a_1 \cdots a_n \in \mathbb{A}^*$  with pairwise distinct data values. Since  $w \in L(A)$ , there is an accepting run

$$I \ni q_0 \xrightarrow{a_1} \cdots \xrightarrow{a_{n-1}} q_{n-1} \xrightarrow{a_n} q_n \in F.$$

There is  $a_i \notin \text{supp } q_{n-1}$ . Since the automaton is without guessing  $\text{supp } q_{n-1} \subseteq \{a_1, \dots, a_{n-1}\}$ , and since  $a_n$  is fresh also  $a_n \notin \text{supp } q_{n-1}$ . There is an automorphism  $\alpha$  that 1) fixes all elements in  $\text{supp } q_{n-1}$  (and in particular  $\alpha(q_{n-1}) = q_{n-1}$ ), and 2) maps  $a_i$  to  $\alpha(a_i) = a_n$ . The following run is also accepting

$$I \ni \alpha(q_0) \xrightarrow{\alpha(a_1)} \cdots \xrightarrow{\alpha(a_{n-1})} \alpha(q_{n-1}) \xrightarrow{a_n} q_n \in F,$$

however it accepts a word where the last letter  $a_n$  appears twice, which is a contradiction.  $\square$

**Exercise 9** (Universality is undecidable for nondeterministic OFA). Consider the data alphabet  $\hat{\Sigma} = \Sigma \times \mathbb{A} \cup \{\$ \}$  with  $\Sigma$  finite and  $\$ \notin \Sigma$ . Consider the following data language

$$L = \{w\$w \mid w = (b_1, a_1) \cdots (b_n, a_n) \text{ and the } a_i\text{'s are pairwise distinct}\}.$$

Show that the complement  $\hat{\Sigma}^* \setminus L$  of  $L$  can be recognised by

1. A nonguessing OFA of dimension two (two registers in the sense of register automata).
2. A nondeterministic OFA of dimension one, which uses guessing.

*Solution:* A case analysis on all kind of mistakes in the encoding yield the required automaton.  $\square$

**Exercise 10** (Emptiness is PSPACE-complete for OFA). Show that the emptiness problem for OFA is PSPACE complete.

*Proof.* For the PSPACE upper bound, we just orbitise the OFA  $A$  producing an NFA  $B$  (of exponential size) for which the emptiness question has the same answer, and then we check in NL that  $B$  is nonempty. This gives a NPSPACE algorithm for nonemptiness of  $A$ , and thus a PSPACE algorithm by courtesy of Savitch’s theorem.

Regarding PSPACE-hardness, we reduce from emptiness of intersection of many NFA’s  $A_1, \dots, A_n$ , which is a PSPACE-hard problem. The idea is to construct a register automaton  $A$  without input such that a tuple of registers  $\bar{r}_i$  encodes the current control location of  $A_i$ . We can assume that  $A_i$  has  $n$  states thus a tuple of  $n+1$  registers  $\bar{r}_i$  suffices: Automaton  $A_i$  is in state  $j \in \{1, \dots, n\}$  iff register  $j$  in  $\bar{r}_i$  equals register 0 in  $\bar{r}_i$ .  $\square$

**Exercise 11.** Consider the following decision problem. In input we are given a nondeterministic OFA  $A$  and a deterministic OFA  $B$ . In output we answer yes iff  $L(A) \subseteq L(B)$ . Is this problem decidable? What if  $B$  is an unambiguous OFA?

*Proof.* Yes. We can complement  $B$  into some deterministic OFA  $B'$ , and then check that  $L(A) \cap L(B')$  is empty.

If  $B$  is merely unambiguous this does not work anymore (unambiguous OFA are not closed under complement, even in the space of all OFA). However we can turn  $A$  into a deterministic OFA  $A'$  and  $B$  into a unambiguous OFA  $B'$  s.t. the answer to language inclusion is the same. Now by complementing  $A'$  into  $A''$  we can check universality of

$$L(B') \cap L(A') \cup L(A'').$$

The latter language can be recognised by a unambiguous OFA: 1)  $L(A'')$  is deterministic, so unambiguous, 2)  $L(B') \cap L(A')$  is unambiguous, 3) the two previous languages are disjoint, so that their union is also unambiguous.  $\square$